



# PROTECTING IMMIGRANT YOUTH

**It is essential that we enact policies that support our youth in becoming healthy, productive adults.** Unfortunately, many localities engage in unnecessary, and sometimes unlawful, practices that negatively impact the development of young people. Information-sharing between local law enforcement and immigration authorities, overuse of law enforcement officials at schools, and opaque, often inaccurate gang databases that unfairly target people of color—these are all practices that destabilize communities, and too often, lead to detention and deportation of young immigrants in the United States.

**We seek to protect young immigrants and their families by limiting their risk of being apprehended, detained, and deported where possible.** This instability causes immeasurable harm, destroys families, disrupts neighborhoods, and undermines trust between community members and their schools, law enforcement, and governments.

Here are **seven ways lawmakers can act** to keep immigrant youth safe:

1. Use teachers, counselors, and administrators to maintain school discipline—instead of school resource officers (“SROs”)—and ensure that school disciplinary procedures and policies are not discriminatory.
2. Restrict access by federal immigration agents to schools and student records.
3. Eliminate gang databases and gang labelling.
4. End state and local collaboration with ICE.
5. Ensure that youth have attorneys trained in immigration law.
6. Heed state confidentiality laws and make sure justice officials do not break them by sharing information with ICE.
7. Keep youth at home instead of in detention while awaiting trial.

Here are **nine ways you can take action** today:

1. Advocate for school policies that provide alternatives to arrests, expulsions and suspensions for behavioral infractions such as defiance, dress code violations, failure to follow classroom rules, and “gang behavior.”
2. Make sure your school is aware of the current ICE policy against carrying out actions on school grounds.
3. Advocate with your school that it require federal agents seeking information or access to students to first produce a warrant signed by a judge that the school district’s attorney must review.
4. Find out if your state or county has a gang database. Advocate to eliminate it or at a minimum make this information transparent.
5. Encourage your justice administrators (probation, detention etc.) not to honor ICE “holds,” to end any existing interagency agreements with ICE, and not to share information with or refer youth to ICE.
6. Contact your state defense bar and ensure they require training on immigration law for juvenile defenders.
7. Work with your locality to provide funding for youth to have access to immigration attorneys.
8. Advocate that justice system actors not use immigration status as a basis to detain youth or as a risk factor in a risk-assessment instrument (RAI).
9. Provide alternative means for parents who may be fearful of coming to court due to their own immigration vulnerabilities to demonstrate their support for their child.

### **Need more information?**

Annie E. Casey Foundation’s [“Noncitizen Youth in the Juvenile Justice System”](#) (2014).

Annie E. Casey Foundation’s [“Noncitizen Youth in the Juvenile Justice System: 2018 Update.”](#)

ILRC factsheet, [“The School to Prison to Deportation Pipeline”](#) (2018).

National Juvenile Justice Network’s (NJJN) policy platform, [“Supporting Immigrant Youth Caught in the Crosshairs of the Justice System”](#) (2018).

ILRC practice advisory, [“Immigration Options for Undocumented Immigrant Children”](#) (2018).

NJJN’s Policy Platform: [“Confidentiality of Youth in the Juvenile Justice System”](#) (2016).

NJJN’s [“School Discipline and Security Personnel: A Tip Sheet for Advocates on Maximizing School Safety and Student Success”](#) (2015).