

Know Your Rights: Immigration Enforcement at IU

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What will you do if you spot ICE/CBP on campus? What will you do if agents show up at your classroom or office? It's important to consider these scenarios in advance when you are calm and can think about your best options.

It is important to understand your obligations, but also to be aware of your rights under federal and state law. The legal landscape is changing quickly, particularly with SB 76.

You can (and should) read it for yourself:

<https://iga.in.gov/pdf-documents/124/2026/senate/bills/SB0076/SB0076.07.ENGH.pdf>

Pages 3 and 4 relate directly to K-12 schools and universities. It demands that

A governmental body or a postsecondary educational institution may not in any way limit or restrict the enforcement of federal immigration laws, regardless of whether the enforcement related activity is carried out by a federal, state, or local law enforcement agency, to less than the full extent permitted by federal law as long as the enforcement actions do not violate federal or state law.

This means that IUPD could serve as proxies for ICE/CBP by gathering information, giving them access to spaces, or even arresting and detaining members of the IU community.

What are my constitutional rights? Do they apply to non-citizens?

Under the US Constitution, you—as an individual, regardless of your citizenship status—are entitled to certain rights.

- The right to free speech
- The right to remain silent
- The right to observe and take photographs/videos of law enforcement
- The right to associate with anyone of your choice and to keep your social networks private
- In the absence of a valid judicial warrant, the right to liberty and to maintain possession of your personal belongings
- The right to privacy in non-public spaces (like your home, office, or lab)
- The right to remain silent and to refuse to sign documents without a lawyer

While ICE/CBP/IUPD may not honor your rights, you should always insist on using them.

What is a judicial warrant?

To be valid, a judicial warrant must be signed by a judge, not just an ICE agent (which is an “administrative” warrant). It must have the legal name of the targeted person, the correct date, and a list of places to be searched and/or items to be seized.

If you are in a non-public space (like your office), you have a right to lock the door and to ask that the warrant be slipped under the door or held up to a window. You have a right to read the warrant before making any decisions. Instant compliance is not required.

Is ICE/CBP allowed to be on campus? What about private areas like offices?

Until recently, the federal government considered institutions like schools, churches, and hospitals to be “sensitive” and therefore off-limits to federal law enforcement. That is no longer the case. Furthermore, IU is a public university and many areas of campus are fully open to the public.

Classrooms and offices are supposed to be private unless a university official authorizes access. You do not have to be “helpful” and unlock doors that are ordinarily locked.

What should I know about state laws?

In the state of Indiana, if you are stopped by the police or any law enforcement agent, you are only required to provide three pieces of information:

- Your legal name
- Your date of birth
- Your home address

If someone shows you a photograph and asks, “Do you know this person?” you do not have to answer. If an ICE agent demands to know a student’s address or class schedule, you do not have to answer. In fact, that information is protected under FERPA.

You have a right to carry pepper spray for self-defense. On campus, you do not have the right to carry a firearm, even if you have a permit. <https://policies.iu.edu/policies/ps-03-firearms-weapons/index.html>

How will I know if ICE is on campus?

Do not expect to receive this information from IU. Get connected with your colleagues and classmates so you can share information as necessary. **Very important: do not use any IU systems (like email) to communicate about immigration enforcement.** IU emails are subject to FOIA requests and administrative surveillance.

When providing information to other members of the community, it is important to be as accurate as possible to avoid creating panic. This acronym is helpful to remember:

- S Size: How many people (or vehicles) do you see?
- A Action: What are they doing?
- L Location: Where are they? The more specific, the better.
- U Uniforms: What do they look like? What are they wearing?
- T Time and date: Is this happening right now? (critical info)
- E Equipment: Do you see weapons? Cameras? Drones?

What should I do about my classes if students are too scared to attend?

Do not expect guidance from IU about this. As an instructor, you know your best options for attendance and mode of instruction (in-person vs. online). Professors are in charge of their classes, not administrators.

It is best not to ask your colleagues and students about their citizenship status. You can't give ICE information that you don't have.

What else should I know if I am interacting with an ICE/CBP agent?

Do not lie to them. As much as possible, stay calm. Walk away (don't run) or keep your distance if you are observing them.

If you are taking a video, keep your device steady and focused on the agents. As soon as you can, upload it to a secure server (not an IU server).

If you are concerned or afraid about immigration enforcement actions happening on campus, do not call IUPD. If they have to choose between helping ICE and helping you, they are going to choose ICE.

While SB 76 says that you are not required to comply with orders that are not lawful, that is a matter to settle in court... not in the moment. If ICE or IUPD is violating your rights, do not get into a confrontation. That is very dangerous and you could be arrested for obstruction. If you can, assert your rights verbally so your words can be recorded.

These are some useful phrases to practice before you need them:

- I do not consent to this search
- I am choosing to remain silent
- I am only observing
- I am not resisting
- Am I free to go? (If they say yes, walk away)

Are there any other plans I should be making?

Depending on your situation, you may want to consider who would take over your class(es) if you were detained. Individuals have a right to contest immigration detention if they were misidentified or have legal status to be in the US (i.e. citizenship, permanent residency, a valid visa, etc.). However, proving that status could take days or even weeks. You may want to consider who would take care of your house, finances, loved ones, and/or pets.

Always remember that you are not alone. The best thing you can do for yourself is to build trusting relationships with your colleagues and students. We are in this together.