Considerations for States and Districts Preparing for and Responding to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Actions

Schools and districts across the country are supporting students, families, and communities impacted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions. We offer some considerations to support planning for impacts and responding to events. These considerations *are* (a) based on lessons learned in our broader crisis response efforts and in impacted districts and (b) meant to prompt action planning. These considerations are *not* legal advice or directives. Local impacts and resources will differ, and district leadership teams should guide decision-making and direct specific school response efforts in consultation with state education agencies, legal experts, and local law enforcement.

Define the Scope of Impact

As with any crisis response, planning should start with an assessment of anticipated or actual impact. By understanding the scale of the impact, districts can allocate resources more efficiently and consider a multi-tiered approach to responding. The scope of the impact can be assessed using formal and informal school and community data sources, including **school data** (e.g., Social-emotional screeners, attendance patterns, nurse or counselor logs, student and family surveys), and **community data** (e.g., requests for food or housing assistance, workforce attendance at local businesses, local arrests). Using local data, district teams should consider the following:

- % of students and staff who may be hesitant to come to school,

- % of students and staff who may be worried about family members while they are at school, and

- % of students or families who may need additional financial resources if family income is disrupted.

Based on this initial assessment of scope, districts should organize response efforts using a multi-tiered logic. What supports will *most* students and families need? What supports will *some* (smaller groups of) families need? What supports will a *few* families–those most directly affected–need?

General Crisis Response Considerations

Crisis events or the threat of events can lead to increases in emotional, cognitive, physical, and behavioral symptoms for children and adults. Districts should anticipate that some or all of these symptoms will be present for impacted students, educators, and family members:

Emotional: clinginess, separation anxiety, sadness, guilt, worry

Cognitive: difficulty concentrating or learning new information, intrusive thoughts or memories, regression in developmental stages

Physical: sleep disturbances or nightmares, hyperactivity, physical complaints (e.g., stomach aches, regression in toileting skills)

Behavioral: Crying, aggressive behavior, tantrums, substance misuse, reliving events through play, increased risk-taking

These responses are normal symptoms of trauma exposure and are not necessarily indicative of long-term impacts immediately following an incident; however, they may temporarily disrupt learning and lead to increases in challenging behaviors at school. Districts can prepare for this by acknowledging the increase in symptoms and supporting educators and students by:

- **Maintaining routines as much as possible**: Consistent scheduling and academic routines provide a sense of normalcy and comfort and decrease the cognitive load needed to navigate the school day.

- **Increasing opportunities for connection**: Increasing opportunities for student and educator (e.g., greetings at the door) and student-to-student opportunities for connection (e.g., peer support groups) provide a sense of community and support and can help reduce feelings of isolation and normalize the experiences of impacted students and educators.

- **Increasing prompting and teaching of self-care routines:** Explicitly teach and prompt routines related to sleep, nutrition, physical activity, and present moment focus (including limiting social media consumption). These routines support a reduction in trauma response symptoms and can increase an individual's sense of control.

- **Maintaining an instructional and restorative approach to responding to challenging behaviors:** By recognizing that challenging behaviors may be students' way of communicating that they feel unsafe or worried, educators can validate the feelings while teaching students how to express those feelings in more adaptive ways.

Specific School or District Considerations for Responding to Impacts of ICE Activities

Though specific actions for each school and district will vary based on local needs and resources, we offer several considerations for action that may help reduce the impact of or support recovery from ICE actions.

Educate the School Community
Clearly communicate to all educators and all staff (e.g., transportation, custodial, and food service), students, and families what actions the district can and cannot take to protect individuals targeted in ICE activities, so all individuals can understand their own level of risk and make informed decisions about their actions
- In coordination with reputable legal counsel, explicitly teach all educators, students, and families what they should or should not do if approached by ICE personnel (or any unknown individual)
- Consider the need for clarification or modifications to district or school policies (e.g., building visitors, volunteer access, information sharing, etc.)

Coordinate Communication and Supports
- Centralize and increase communications from the school and district to support retention of information. Communicate the same information multiple times and in multiple formats, and provide one centralized location for community members to find the most updated information.
- Plan to direct donations or gifts to allow for flexible and effective response efforts
- Communicate district actions and policies with local or regional community supports to align school district and community efforts

Maintain Supportive Learning Environments
- Provide sample talking points for educators to use to support students' understanding of changes in routines and local events in an age-appropriate way
- Plan for supporting ongoing learning for students who may miss instructional time (e.g., remote instruction, at-home learning materials, etc.)
- Explicitly teach (or re-teach) students and families:
  - Predictable routines (including any changes based on the current context),
  - Expectations for respect and kindness–using locally relevant language, and
  - How to ask for support if needed
- Increase:
  - bullying prevention and supports and provide reminders to educators and students about the importance of respectful and caring behavior,
  - adult supportive presence in buildings, and
  - on-demand availability of mental health supports for students and educators

Assess and Meet Student and Family Needs

- Assess trauma exposure using established triage procedures as needed and increase the frequency of social-emotional screening procedures to identify needs early and adjust supports appropriately
- Provide individualized supports as incidents occur- include check-ins with siblings, neighbors, family friends, team members, classmates, or others who are closely connected with impacted individuals

Considerations for State or Regional External Support

Many districts will have the capacity to respond to student and family needs without external support; however, some may find that local resources are overwhelmed and require additional resources or support. State or regional support teams can most effectively support district response and recovery efforts by:

- Emphasizing and reinforcing local control and decision-making in all response efforts while providing supportive guidance as needed.

- Clearly communicating what supports are available from state or regional agencies and how districts can access those supports.

- Prompting a small number of actions (see above) that are aligned with existing practices. This is not the time for new initiatives or priorities.

- Providing opportunities for educators, district leaders, and state or regional coaches to network formally or informally with others who are experiencing similar events.

- Providing on-site support for additional student supports as requested and/or facilitate connections to outside and community resources.

Additional Resources and Supports

- American Civil Liberties Union: Immigrant Rights
- Safe Haven Tool Kit from California Federation of Teachers
- https://www.pbis.org/crisis-recovery
- Tip-Sheet for Coping with the Mental Health Impacts of Peaceful Protests and Civil Disturbance
- Coping with Protests and Civil Disturbance
- Facilitating Civil and Productive Classroom Conversations: Guidance and Lesson Plans