

ICE Preparedness Checklist for Congregational Leaders

A practical, faith-grounded checklist for congregations preparing for possible ICE activity in their communities.

1. Grounding & Discernment (Start Here)

- ☐ Pray and reflect with leadership on **why** your congregation is engaging this work (faith commitments, not optics)
 - ☐ Name openly that **this is long-term work**, not a short-term crisis response
 - ☐ Commit to anti-racism, accompaniment, and humility as spiritual disciplines
 - ☐ Acknowledge that not all congregations can do all actions, and no efforts should be duplicated
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2. Relationship-Building (Before Any Crisis)

- ☐ Identify immigrant-led or persons of color-led organizations, schools, food shelves, or community groups in your area
 - ☐ Request listening meetings (not strategy meetings) with those partners
 - ☐ Ask explicitly:
 - “What support is helpful?”
 - “What actions are harmful or unwanted?”
 - ☐ Do **not** assume trust—recognize that churches must earn it
 - ☐ Maintain relationships even when no crisis is visible
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3. Asset Mapping (Congregational Inventory)

People

- ☐ Members with daytime availability
- ☐ Members with vehicles
- ☐ Language skills (especially Spanish)
- ☐ Legal, medical, social work, or organizing experience

Resources

- ☐ Discretionary or emergency funds that can be released quickly
- ☐ Physical space (meetings, childcare, storage)
- ☐ Technology (phones, printers, secure communication access)

Limits (Name These Clearly)

- ☐ What your congregation cannot do safely
 - ☐ Who should *not* be visible (e.g., undocumented members, known leaders)
 - ☐ Buildings that cannot be secured
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4. Choose a Lane (Do Not Skip This Step)

- ☐ Discern ONE primary lane for your congregation:
 - ☐ Mutual aid (food, rent, utilities, rides)
 - ☐ Space provision (meetings, childcare, storage)
 - ☐ Accompaniment (with legal training)
 - ☐ Education & internal organizing
 - ☐ Financial pass-through support
 - ☐ Clearly communicate your lane to members
 - ☐ Say **no** to requests that fall outside your lane
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5. Safety & Security Protocols

- ☐ Identify a **small, trained response team** (not everyone)
- ☐ Train them to:
 - Recognize valid vs. invalid warrants
 - Video interactions
 - Maintain a non-anxious presence
 - Know when *not* to engage

☐ Establish who:

- Speaks to law enforcement
- Documents encounters
- Alerts leadership

☐ Practice protocols before a crisis

6. Legal Preparedness

☐ Build relationships with local immigration attorneys **now**

☐ Identify one or two legal contacts for rapid consultation

☐ Learn local realities:

- ICE behavior patterns
- Local law enforcement cooperation levels

☐ Do not assume private property will be respected

☐ Keep legal guidance updated and shared securely

7. Technology & Communication

☐ Move sensitive coordination to secure platforms (e.g., Signal)

☐ Train members *before* urgency hits

☐ Avoid storing sensitive personal data in shared documents

☐ Use hyper-local communication when possible

8. Financial Readiness

☐ Prepare leadership to release funds quickly

☐ Reduce unnecessary documentation requirements

- ☐ Trust relationships over excessive vetting
 - ☐ Prioritize giving money through trusted organizers when possible
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9. Accompaniment & Power Awareness

- ☐ Center impacted people's choices—even when you disagree
 - ☐ Avoid savior narratives and publicity
 - ☐ Accept that gratitude is not owed
 - ☐ Be willing to step back as often as you step forward
 - ☐ Let immigrant communities decide when visibility is safe
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10. Risk Assessment (Ongoing)

- ☐ Encourage members to assess their **daily** risk tolerance
 - ☐ Normalize changing capacity and boundaries
 - ☐ Do not pressure anyone into visibility or arrest
 - ☐ Name privilege honestly—and use it strategically, not performatively
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11. Congregational Formation

- ☐ Teach that preparation neutralizes threats
 - ☐ Address white saviorism directly
 - ☐ Frame accompaniment as discipleship
 - ☐ Emphasize sustainability over urgency
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12. Regional & Denominational Coordination

- ☐ Coordinate through presbyteries, synods, dioceses, or interfaith groups
 - ☐ Share resources without centralizing sensitive information
 - ☐ Avoid duplicating existing community efforts
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Final Reminder

- ☐ You are not called to do everything
- ☐ You are called to be faithful, prepared, and accountable
- ☐ The work is collective—and it is holy