

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11. Congregational Formation

- Teach that preparation neutralizes threats
- Address white saviorism directly
- Frame accompaniment as discipleship
- Emphasize sustainability over urgency

12. Regional & Denominational Coordination

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

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