To: Commissioners, First 5 Ventura County

From: Lauren Arzu, Acting Co-Executive Director, (on behalf of the Administration and Finance Committee)

Date: September 18, 2025

Re: **Recommendation to Adopt a Policy and Procedures for Responding to Immigration and Customs Enforcement Requests**

Background

In recent months, local immigration enforcement activities have increased. These actions are having a significant chilling effect on immigrant families, many of whom are increasingly fearful of engaging with public systems and accessing the services and supports they need. Research and community feedback indicate that families may avoid seeking healthcare, early education, basic needs, and other critical programs.

For First 5 Ventura County, this raises serious concerns. If families hesitate to participate in our programs due to fear of immigration enforcement, children may lose access to vital early childhood services that support their health, development, and school readiness. Moreover, uncertainty about how staff should respond to potential enforcement actions can undermine both family trust and staff confidence.

Adopting a clear policy ensures that:

- Families know that their safety, dignity, and confidentiality are prioritized.
- Staff have consistent, practical guidance on how to respond to immigration enforcement requests.
- Our organization remains aligned with best practices, legal standards, and our mission to create safe, nurturing environments for young children.

First 5 Ventura County is committed to the safety and well-being of the children and families we serve. In alignment with this commitment, we propose establishing a formal **Policy and Procedures for Responding to Immigration and Customs Enforcement Requests**, which have been reviewed and approved by legal counsel.

Recommendation

The recommended action is to approve the Policy and Procedures for Responding to Immigration and Customs Enforcement Requests as attached, and delegate authority to Lauren Arzu, Acting Co-Executive Director, to update the contacts listed in the policy when a permanent Executive Director is appointed.

Proposed: September 18, 2025

PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT REQUESTS

BACKGROUND

This document provides guidelines on how to respond if you encounter Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents while working at or near First 5 Ventura County property, including administrative offices and program sites.

This policy and its procedures are not intended to interfere with the enforcement of federal immigration law. They are intended to keep services accessible to all families and partners while upholding core constitutional principles of educational equity and access.

POLICY

First 5 Ventura County is steadfast in our commitment to ensure all children are born healthy, thrive in nurturing environments, and enter school prepared and eager to learn. Achieving this vision requires that children's physical, emotional, and psychological safety be protected, as these are essential to their overall health and well-being.

First 5 Ventura County refrains from commenting on the names, locations and/or immigration status of persons participating in our program or employed by our organization. First 5 Ventura County will never ask for or collect information about client immigration status. Without a valid judicial warrant or court order, F5VC will not cooperate with immigration enforcement actions and will not permit access to nonpublic areas of our facilities. For safety reasons, our staff are instructed not to physically interfere if agents enter without legal authorization.

PROCEDURES

Generally, F5VC program sites and administrative offices are considered non-public areas. Staff should not allow ICE agents access to non-public areas without a judicial warrant and must not release client information without a warrant or court order.

If any situation involving ICE occurs while performing work duties on F5VC property or off site, or if employees become aware that ICE agents are seeking to obtain F5VC records or to enter F5VC property, including the presentation of a warrant or subpoena, staff are to immediately notify an Acting Co-Executive Director (ED) and ask the law enforcement officer to wait outside for their arrival. The ED or their designee will consult with and follow the guidance of F5VC's attorney, the Ventura County Counsel's Office.

Front Line Staff:

- Notify the Acting F5VC Co-Executive Director immediately.
- Inform ICE agents that they may not enter non-public areas, clearly identified with signs, to arrest or search without proper credentials and a judicial warrant signed by a judge (*not* an administrative warrant issued by a federal agency such as ICE).

- State: “Our organization’s policy states that I am not allowed to speak with you. I am referring you to the Acting Co-Executive Director or Designee who will speak to you.” Do not answer additional questions – you may provide a copy of this document.
- If comfortable doing so (or defer to your supervisor):
    - Request the name and badge/ID number and contact information of the officer, and the purpose of the visit.
    - Ask the officer to wait outside the area until the staff member can consult with their supervisor or an Acting ED.
    - Request and keep a copy or take a picture of the document(s) the officer presents as authority for access.
        - Prior to reaching for your cell phone, clearly announce your intent to do so: *“I am going to reach into my back pocket/purse/backpack etc. for my cell phone.”*
- Shall not comply with law enforcement’s request for access to a non-public area.
    - but must not attempt to physically prevent entry.
- Shall neither assist the officer in identifying clients nor assist clients in any way in evading officers (i.e., don’t help clients hide, lie, or flee).
    - If asked what to do by the client, may offer “Red Card” to the client (or read it out loud). Staff shall inform clients that they cannot provide legal guidance and that the decision on how to respond is up to the client, their representative, or guardian.
- After the encounter, take written notes summarizing the incident, including the officer’s request, any documents presented, names of any impacted persons, and the officer's actions. Send a copy of these notes and documents to the Acting Co-Executive Directors.
- If an officer insists on entry to a non-public area prior to the arrival of the director, staff shall:
    - Make clear their objection to the officer’s conduct but **not attempt to physically prevent entry.**
    - Document the incident and immediately inform the highest-level manager in the facility.

Supervisors and Directors:

- Call County Counsel.
- Request the agent’s credentials, make a copy, and ask why the agents are requesting access.
- Request a copy of the warrant or subpoena signed by a federal or state judge, which specifies the name of the person under arrest or area to be searched.
- Provide a copy of this policy to the officer.
- Immediately notify the Acting Co-Executive Director or designee and provide a copy of the warrant or subpoena and all relevant information.
- If the federal immigration enforcement agents satisfy the above criteria for a judicial warrant and have produced their identification, the Acting Co-Executive Director or his/her designee shall oversee the agents’ investigation. Such oversight includes prohibiting access to information, records, and areas beyond that specified in the warrant.

First 5 Ventura County Employees Know Your Rights

- You have the right to remain silent.

- You do not need to disclose your immigration status.
- You have the right to refuse a search of your personal belongings.
- You will not give ICE any employee records or personal information without the appropriate subpoena or warrant.
- You will direct all requests to the Acting Co-Executive Directors, and legal counsel.

Additional Considerations: Types of Documents Officers May Present
First 5 Ventura County's obligation will depend on the type of documentation presented by the agent making the request. Without expressing consent, respond according to the requirements of the documentation presented (See attached sample documents). ***If the agent has***:

1. A judicial warrant (either a search-and-seizure warrant or an arrest warrant)
A warrant is a document authorizing law enforcement to make an arrest, search premises, or take some other action detailed in the document. Prompt compliance with the warrant is usually required, but, where feasible, staff should consult with designated staff or County Counsel.

- A federal judicial warrant is issued by a "U.S. District Judge" or "U.S. Magistrate Judge" from "U.S. District Court." See examples attached to this packet. A state judicial warrant is issued by a Superior Court Judge.
- You are required to comply with a judicial warrant and must allow ICE to search.
- The agent is allowed to enter only the areas specified in the warrant. Staff will accompany the agent(s) while they are present on First 5 property.
- If the agent appears to be conducting any activity that falls outside the scope of the warrant, inform the agent(s) that they do not have First 5's consent to the activity.

2. An administrative warrant
Immediate compliance is ***not*** required.

- An administrative warrant is a document issued by a federal agency, such as the "Department of Homeland Security," an "Immigration Judge," or an "Immigration Officer" (see attached example in this packet).
- You are not required to provide access to non-public areas to arrest or search. You are not required to give ICE any information.
- You should politely request that the agent leave the property. If the agent(s) attempt to enter without a warrant, you should calmly say:

  "I do not consent to your entry; this area is not open to the public. Please wait while I contact our legal counsel."
  "Thank you for your cooperation. As I said, this is First 5 private property. Since you don't have written permission or a judicial warrant to enter our building (our suite), I'm going to have to ask you to leave to avoid disrupting the normal operations of our office (…or our event)."

3. A Subpoena to Produce Documents or Other Evidence
Immediate compliance is ***not*** required.

- An ICE subpoena is a document requesting that an agency/organization turn over documents or evidence.
- You do not need to provide documents on the spot and are not required to give ICE consent to search.
- Provide the subpoena to the Acting Co-Executive Director or designee and the County Counsel's Office.

4. A Notice to Appear ("NTA")
This is a document that is not directed at First 5 Ventura County. Staff are under no obligation to deliver or facilitate service of this document to the person named in the document. If you receive a copy of the document, give it to a designated staff person, as soon as possible.

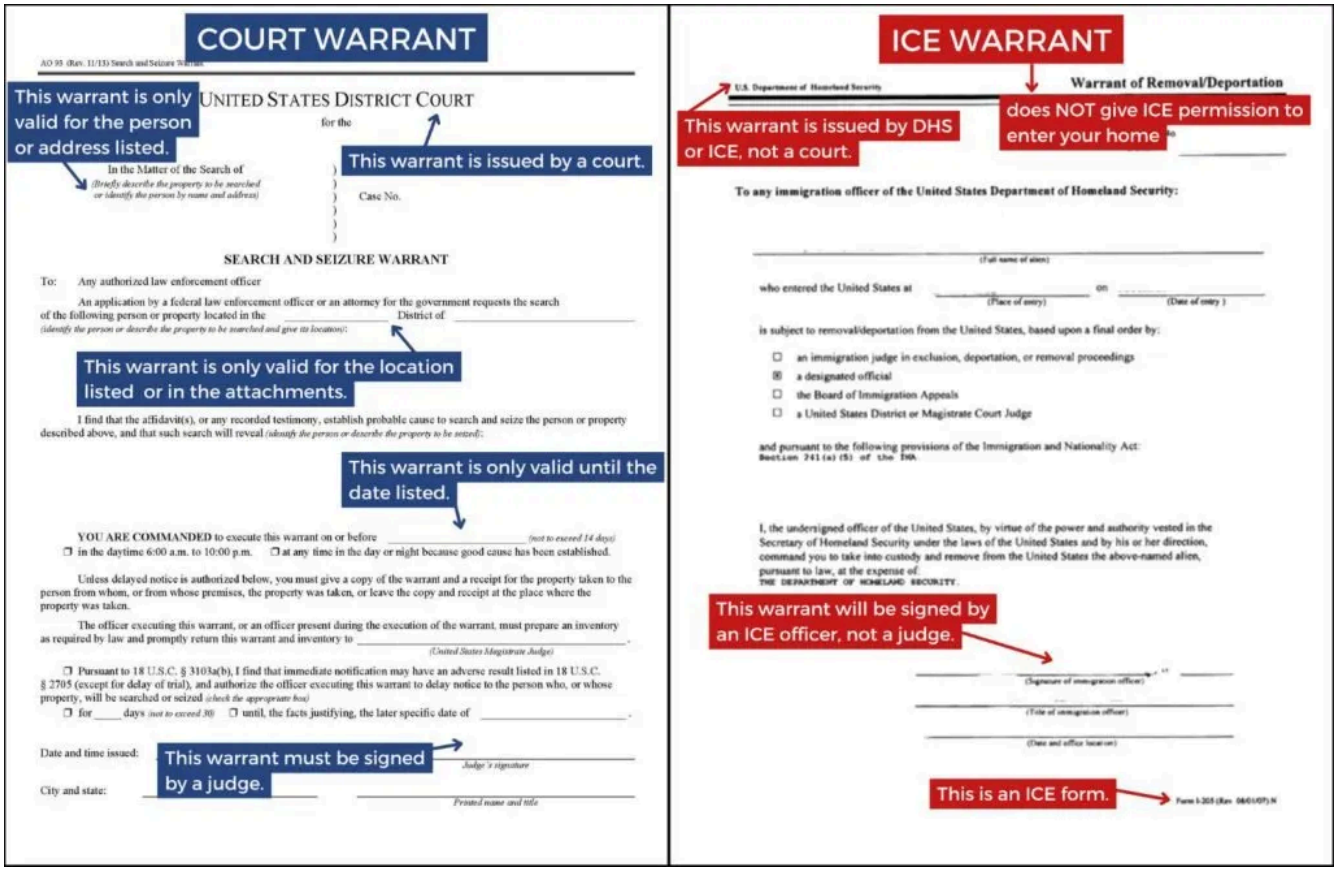
You are not required to provide access to non-public areas to arrest or search. You are not required to give ICE any information. You may ask ICE to leave.

5. A Court Order
Provide the court order to the Acting Co-Executive Director or designee and the County Counsel's Office for review.

Additional Considerations: ICE Encounter Outside and F5VC Facility
If ICE is present at a public event, remain calm and don't run away.
Refer to the "Know Your Rights" section and/or Red Card and let the lead agency respond to any questions. Do not produce any families or documents. Contact the First 5 Acting Co-Executive Director or designee as soon as possible.

Contact information for the Acting Co-Executive Directors will be provided to staff but will not be made public.

Sample Court Warrant and ICE Warrant



These documents are samples of a court warrant (left) and an ICE warrant (right). **Government officials must have your permission OR a court warrant – a document signed by a judge – before they can enter your home.** ICE warrants are ICE forms signed by ICE officers and do NOT give them permission to enter your home without your consent.

What are the differences?

- A court warrant is issued by a court. An ICE warrant is issued by ICE or U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

- A court warrant is signed by a judge. An ICE warrant is signed by an ICE officer.

If a government official is at your door, you are not required to open the door unless the official has a court warrant, and you can ask to see a warrant before you open the door. For example, you can ask the official to slide the warrant under the door, or to show it to you through a window or door viewer.

Even if the warrant is a court warrant, you can review it carefully before opening the door to make sure it lists your name and address, has not expired, and is signed by a judge.

If government officials do not have a warrant, you can decide whether to open the door or not.

You can also call your lawyer if you have one, and find legal help here. You can also read other safety measures.