



**Date:** January 29, 2026  
**To:** Mayor's Cabinet Members  
**From:** Mayor Katie B. Wilson  
**Subject:** **Directive Regarding Federal Immigration Enforcement**

I. **Background on Updated City Protocols on Federal Immigration Enforcement**

This is your city. All Seattle residents belong here and have a right to be here and to live a dignified life. As your mayor, I am proud that Seattle is a Welcoming City. Our City staff protect and serve everyone in the community. We promote policies and programs to foster inclusion for all residents and visitors regardless of their immigration or refugee status.

The City is committed to protecting the safety, privacy, and constitutional rights of Seattleites, providing effective policing, and directing the City's limited resources to matters of greatest concern to city government. City employees, including police, do not enforce federal civil immigration laws and cannot ask about an individual's immigration status unless otherwise required by law or court order.

The purpose of this Mayoral Directive is to (1) reinforce Seattle's commitment to safety, privacy, and individual rights while complying with applicable law, (2) provide guidance to City departments regarding process and procedure should federal enforcement agents contact City staff or arrive on City property, and (3) direct departments to strengthen protections for all City residents and visitors.

II. **We do not enforce immigration laws**

The federal government bears sole responsibility to enforce civil immigration laws. To protect the rights and safety of everyone in our community, the City does not assist with federal immigration enforcement unless otherwise required by law or court order.

Our local law enforcement does not act as an extension of federal immigration enforcement. City and state laws prohibit Seattle police from participating or assisting with federal civil immigration enforcement operations unless required by law or court order. The City does not act under federal direction even amid heightened enforcement activity.

**Separating Local Policing from Federal Enforcement**

Community trust in local government and law enforcement is essential to an effective public safety system. This requires that local police remain distinct from federal immigration enforcement.

When residents feel safe reporting crimes, cooperating as witnesses, and engaging with officers, the entire community benefits. Heightened fears of deportation and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity can discourage people from seeking help and participating in investigations. This undermines the trust that local agencies rely on to keep communities safe. Entangling local law enforcement agencies with federal immigration enforcement programs diverts already limited resources and blurs the lines of accountability between local, state, and federal governments.

The Seattle Police Department's primary responsibility is the life and safety of everyone. When officers arrive, they first ensure the scene is safe for everyone present, then provide medical aid to any person(s) as soon as possible.

### **Protecting Constitutional Rights**

Any local government participation in federal immigration enforcement programs also raises constitutional concerns. These include the prospect of Seattle residents or workers detained in violation of the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution, targeted on the basis of race or ethnicity in violation of the Equal Protection Clause, or denied due process rights based on immigration status.

### **Privacy**

Across the City, we must safeguard the privacy of our residents whose personal information is entrusted to us to deliver essential services, regardless of their immigration status. The [City's Privacy Principles](#) provide an ethical framework by which City departments commit to collecting, managing, and protecting the public's personal data transparently and responsibly.

Because the City is also committed to government transparency and the public disclosure of city records, we must carefully balance these interests with our commitment to privacy and only collect necessary personal information.

Minimizing personal data collection from residents helps prevent data from unintended secondary use. City of Seattle officials do not collect or record information about immigration status or otherwise engage in activities to ascertain immigration status, unless required by court order or law.

## **III. Directive for Implementation**

### **I, Mayor Katie B. Wilson, direct that:**

1. **Lead Staff.** All City departments must identify a department representative on immigration issues (DRI), and an additional backup, to the Mayor's Office General Counsel Caedmon Magboo Cahill, Deputy General Counsel Michelle Nance, and OIRA representative Oksana Bilobran by February 5, 2026. These contacts must be updated when a new department representative is assigned.

The DRI will support department compliance with this directive and develop an updated emergency response protocol for the department in case of federal immigration enforcement activity or federal immigration enforcement requests for information.

2. **Compliance.** All City employees are required to comply with applicable state and City laws, including those governing interactions with residents and the federal government regarding immigration status. Applicable laws and City policy are found below.
3. **Visits by any federal immigration authority.**

**Entry into any non-public City facility almost always requires a judicial warrant or court order.** Only certain federal warrants and laws require access to City facilities and information.

Any City employee who comes into contact with a federal immigration authority on City premises shall immediately contact:

1. The highest-ranking City official or designated supervisor on site; and
2. The City agency or designated department representative (DRI) or, if unavailable, their backup.

The DRI shall immediately notify Mayor's Office General Counsel Caedmon Magboo Cahill and Deputy General Counsel Michelle Nance via [MOS\\_Legalnotice@seattle.gov](mailto:MOS_Legalnotice@seattle.gov) or Teams. If you are unable to contact your DRI and need immediate support, please contact Caedmon and Michelle directly. If you believe the situation poses a danger to life or property, call 9-1-1.

Examples requiring contact with the Mayor's Office General Counsel include:

- Requests to access non-public areas in City buildings and venues (i.e., areas not open to the public such as staff work areas that require card key access and other areas designated as "private" or "employee only").
- Requests to access areas where a registration-only program is taking place (i.e., a childcare or after school program).
- If you have a question on whether an area in your department is non-public or how to support City contracted spaces, please seek advice from the Mayor's Office Legal Counsel (Mayor's Office General Counsel Caedmon Magboo Cahill and Deputy General Counsel Michelle Nance) at [MOS\\_Legalnotice@seattle.gov](mailto:MOS_Legalnotice@seattle.gov) or via Teams.

**In all cases, City employees are directed to ask federal immigration authorities to wait to enter any non-public areas until the Mayor's Office is contacted and responds.** The Mayor's Office Legal Counsel, in consultation with the City Attorney's Office as appropriate, will review credentials and submission of written authority to conduct action and determine appropriate approval or denial of the request and will provide legal guidance on how to proceed. Communications with the Mayor's Office (including emails to [MOS\\_Legalnotice@seattle.gov](mailto:MOS_Legalnotice@seattle.gov)) seeking legal advice regarding visits by federal immigration authorities should be clearly marked as Attorney-Client Privileged.

4. **Clear marking of entrances to non-public areas.** Departments will work with their DRI, Department Director, and Executive Operations Manager to identify entrances to relevant non-public areas on City property to be clearly marked “employees only,” “key card access only,” “by registration only,” etc.

5. **Requests for information or other direct communications from any federal immigration authority.**

City department directors are directed to refer all requests from ICE or other federal authorities related to immigration enforcement to the Mayor’s Office legal team at [MOS\\_Legalnotice@seattle.gov](mailto:MOS_Legalnotice@seattle.gov), or when urgent legal advice is needed, to reach out to Mayor’s Office General Counsel Caedmon Magboo Cahill via Teams. These communications with the Mayor’s Office (including emails to [MOS\\_Legalnotice@seattle.gov](mailto:MOS_Legalnotice@seattle.gov)) seeking legal advice should be clearly marked as Attorney-Client Privileged.

Both formal and informal requests may be made to City employees for resident records or information, either by other City departments or by external agencies. These requests should be documented and reported to the DRI for each department. Requests from external agencies should follow legally defined processes and procedures for sharing data, such as the public disclosure process or other legal pathways.

6. **Department Policies and Procedures.**

By March 1, 2026, each City department must create a plan consistent with this directive that

1. Provides department staff clarity on proper procedures, tailored to the unique function of the department, regarding federal immigration authority requests and activities on City property and requests to access City data including data held by contracting agencies.
2. Clarifies which department areas are public vs. non-public.
3. Confirms the department has communicated with contractors regarding proper procedures in response to a federal request for records and federal enforcement activities on agency premises related to immigration enforcement.

7. **Observing ICE or federal immigration activity on public City property.** If a City employee observes ICE/federal immigration activity on City property, they should immediately contact their DRI who can log this activity with the Executive Operations Manager. If there is reason to believe a person is facing an immediate safety risk, City staff are directed to call 9-1-1 and then alert their DRI.

8. **Information about possible ICE/federal immigration presence and avoiding rumors.** City employees should avoid sharing rumors about unverified presence of any federal immigration enforcement authority or any expected surge in future ICE or federal immigration activity in the City. City employees who receive information about the possible presence of any federal immigration enforcement activity in the City or on City property should share that information with their DRI, who can log it with Executive Operations Managers, or alert the Mayor's Office Legal Counsel. City employees should not share any unverified information with the public.
  
9. **Periodic review of policies, practices, and materials.** Given the rapidly changing circumstances related to federal enforcement activities in Seattle, all City department directors shall regularly maintain their department policies, practices, and materials (such as websites and community education materials). Department directors shall confirm such policies, practices, and materials are updated to maintain consistency with City and state law related to federal immigration enforcement and also make updates when new policies or practices are disseminated from the Mayor's Office. Absent new updates that rise to the level of formal amendments to this directive, this ongoing policy, practices, and materials review shall happen every 6 months in a calendar year at a minimum. If any questions arise, please reach out to your relevant Mayor's Office Executive Team lead, or Mayor's Office General Counsel Caedmon Magboo Cahill. The Mayor's Office and departments will work with the City Attorney's Office as necessary to resolve questions.
  
10. **Privacy Review**

All departments must uphold the [City's Privacy Principles](#) toward this aim, limiting data exposure and secondary use of data. Departments must review this directive and associated data sharing considerations with their staff. By March 1, 2026, all departments must complete an inventory of their data collection, management, and sharing practices to limit inadvertent disclosure of information to federal immigration enforcement authorities. This inventory must identify:

- Categories of personal data collected
- Systems or platforms where such data is stored

In addition to an inventory, departments should also submit by March 1, 2026, a proposed plan to implement additional actions to reduce data exposure such as:

- **Limit Data Collection:** Minimize the amount of resident personal data collected to the greatest extent possible.
- **Retention & Deletion:** Delete data that has met its legal retention requirements according to [City retention schedules](#).
- **Review Data Sharing Agreements & Vendor Contracts:** Review existing data sharing agreements to ensure data protections and use terms are updated to reflect [City standard provisions](#). Vendor contracts should be reviewed upon renewal and should include [City](#)

[standard terms](#) around data use and sharing limitations. Practices that include data sharing through automated interfaces or informal practices must be reviewed and documented to limit exposure of City-held information to external entities.

- **Security:** Review and update permissions and access controls to data stores such as SharePoint, documents in OneDrive, and departmental software solutions.

As part of implementation planning, departments must confirm that all practices comply with the applicable laws found at the end of this directive. Any potential pathways—technical, contractual, or procedural—through which federal immigration authorities could access non-public data must be identified and reported to the Mayor’s Office. Departments shall identify corrective measures, including modifying data capturing and data-sharing protocols and updating staff procedures, to prevent City systems from facilitating civil immigration enforcement or unauthorized access by federal agencies or personnel. For privacy-related questions, consultation, or support please reach out to [privacy@seattle.gov](mailto:privacy@seattle.gov).

Depending on the scope and scale of any needed changes to existing data collection efforts, please work with your assigned Executive Operations Manager in the Mayor’s Office to discuss proposed deadlines for completing specific implementation tasks.

11. **Training.** City of Seattle Immigration Enforcement Compliance and Readiness Training developed by OIRA will be made available to all staff and provides guidance regarding interactions with federal enforcement agencies and relevant City and state law and policies.
12. **Community engagement.** OIRA and the Mayor’s Office will meet regularly with representatives from immigrant and refugee communities to hear from these impacted communities regarding their priorities and concerns, to share information regarding the City’s policies and approach described above, and to create a path for consistent dialogue.

#### IV. **Applicable Laws and Policies**

##### **City of Seattle laws and policies**

Seattle’s laws affirm the City’s commitment to policies and practices that support immigrant and refugee communities and allow them to access City services.

##### **City services are for all residents**

City employees will serve all residents and City services will be accessible to all residents, regardless of immigration status. [Seattle Resolution 31730](#), passed in 2017, states the City will not withhold services based on ancestry, race, ethnicity, national origin, color, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, physical or mental disability, religion, or immigration status. *See also* [Seattle Resolution 30672](#) (2004), [Seattle Resolution 31775](#) (2017), [Seattle Resolution 32168](#) (2025).

### **City's "don't ask" law**

City officers and employees are prohibited from asking about immigration status, unless otherwise required by law or by court order. See Chapter 4.18 of the Seattle Municipal Code.

Often referred to as the City's "don't ask" law, SMC 4.18.015, as enacted by [Seattle Ordinance 121063](#) in 2003, directs that no City officer or employee shall inquire into the immigration status of any person, or engage in activities designed to ascertain the immigration status of any person, unless required by law or court order. It includes one exemption for police officers where officers have a reasonable suspicion to believe that a person: (1) has previously been deported from the United States; (2) is again present in the United States; and (3) is committing or has committed a felony criminal-law violation.

### **Seattle Police Department Policies**

[Seattle Police Department \(SPD\) Policy 6.020](#) reinforces that the City's police do not enforce federal immigration law. SPD policy explicitly states that employees will not inquire about any person's citizenship or immigration status, request specific documents for the sole purpose of determining a person's immigration status, or initiate, maintain, or participate in any police action based on an individual's immigration status. Any communication with the Department of Homeland Security must go through the chain of command. If dispatched to a location where apparent immigration enforcement is underway, SPD officers will document the activity with in-car and body-worn video, attempt to contact the reporting party using Language Line interpreting services as needed, validate the status of apparent federal law enforcement agents through official identification, address related public safety concerns like traffic and crowd management, provide or facilitate first aid, and secure scenes of potentially unlawful acts to gather evidence for transmittal to prosecutors.

### **Washington State Law**

In 2019, the Washington State legislature passed the [Keep Washington Working Act](#) (KWWA), and in 2020 it passed the [Courts Open to All Act](#) (COTA). The KWWA includes the following provisions:

- Prohibits state and local law enforcement agencies from inquiring into or collecting information about an individual's immigration or citizenship status, or place of birth, unless there is a connection between such information and an investigation into a violation of state or local criminal law.
- Prohibits state and local law enforcement agencies from providing information to federal immigration authorities for civil immigration enforcement or providing nonpublicly available personal information about an individual to federal immigration authorities in noncriminal matters, unless required by law.
- Provides that an individual may not be detained solely for the purpose of determining immigration status, and that an individual must not be taken into custody, or

held in custody, solely for the purposes of determining immigration status or based solely on a civil immigration warrant or an immigration hold request.

- Prohibits contracts or agreements that would permit a state agency or local government or law enforcement officer to house or detain individuals for federal civil immigration violations.

In addition, the COTA includes the following provisions:

- Prohibits judges, court staff, court security personnel, prosecutors, and prosecutor's office personnel, with some exceptions, from inquiring into or collecting immigration or citizenship status information, or place of birth, from an individual unless there is a connection between such information and an investigation into a violation of state or local criminal law.
- Prohibits judges, prosecutors, and the other staff and personnel described above from providing nonpublicly available personal information about an individual to federal immigration authorities for the purpose of civil immigration enforcement, and from notifying federal immigration authorities of the presence of individuals attending proceedings or accessing court services in court facilities, unless required by federal law or court order.
- Prohibits, with some exceptions, civil arrests at or near court facilities in Washington State.

### **Federal Law**

Immigration law and enforcement is exclusively a federal function.

### **V. Contact for Further Information**

If you have any questions, please contact Mayor's Office General Counsel Caedmon Magboo Cahill or Deputy General Counsel Michelle Nance via [MOS\\_LegalNotice@seattle.gov](mailto:MOS_LegalNotice@seattle.gov) or Teams.