

Safeguarding the Integrity of Our Courts: The Impact of ICE Courthouse Operations in New York State

ICE enforcement operations in and around courthouses negatively affect a vast array of stakeholders in New York’s justice system: victims, witnesses, defendants, family members, district attorney offices, anti-violence advocates, public defenders, problem-solving courts and staff, and judges. These disruptions to the New York State judicial system results in systemic denial to New York state residents of their full and equal access to courts and guaranteed protections of their rights.

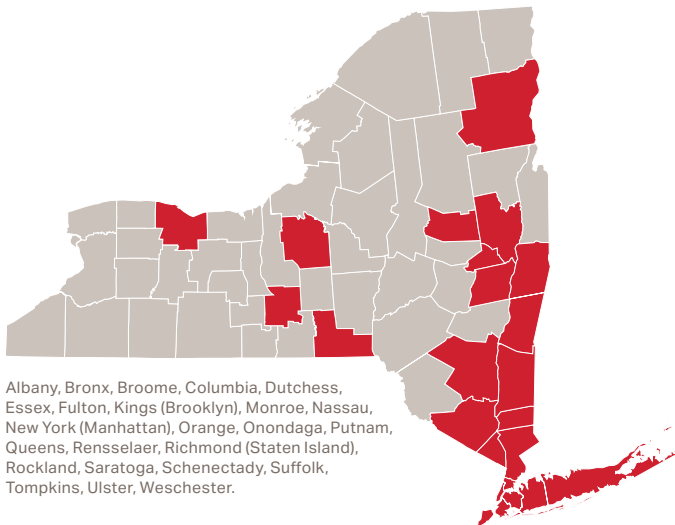
Immigrant Defense Project Reports: ICE Courthouse Operations



“New York’s justice system works best when everyone has access. Immigrants who are victims of domestic violence, wage theft, fraud, or violent crime should be able to seek justice regardless of their status, and they should be able to come to court for that purpose without fear that their appearance will lead to civil arrest by ICE.”

Madeline Singas, Nassau County District Attorney

Counties Reporting ICE Courthouse Operations



Fewer immigrants sought legal services and protection from violence through the courts.

From 2016 to 2017

Family Justice Centers, operated by the NYC Mayor’s Office to End Gender-Based Violence and located near district attorneys’ offices or courthouses, saw a

↓10% in new, foreign-born visitors

Legal service providers surveyed

46%

reported working with immigrants who expressed fear of serving as a complaining witness.

A Sanctuary for Families internal survey

78.6%

of respondents have clients (at least 100) who reported an increase in abusers threatening to call ICE.

Since the beginning of 2017, IDP has received courthouse arrest reports from **19 counties outside of the city**, with the largest number coming from Westchester. While most arrests in 2017 focused on larger county or city courthouses, ICE appeared to increase operations in town and village courts in 2018.

“When I asked her what happened, she reported that the father of her children raped her in a parking lot and then severely beat her about the head with his fists and metal things. She has neurological damage and what appears to be permanent vision loss as a result. When I asked her why she did not report it or ask us to help her get a restraining order at Family Court, she told me she was afraid of being picked up by ICE.”

Andrea Panjwani of the Center for Safety & Change, Inc.

Decline in U Visa Certification Requests in New York Family Courts

100%↓
in Manhattan

83%↓
in Staten Island

72%↓
in Queens

U Visas are non-immigrant visas available for victims of crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse while in the U.S. and who are willing to assist law enforcement and government officials in the investigation or prosecution of the crime.

“From our domestic violence shelters, [Child Advocacy Centers] and [Crime Victim Assistance Program], we receive constant referrals for clients . . . who want to know what options and rights they have if they are too afraid to enter government buildings because of ICE, but need protection from their abusers who threaten to report them to ICE and/or take their children away from them.”

Evangeline M. Chan, Director, Immigration Law Project, Safe Horizon

2017 ICE in NYS Courts Legal Service and Advocates Survey

67%
of providers surveyed have had clients who decided not to seek help from the courts

48%
worked with immigrants who failed to seek custody or visitation

37%
worked with someone who failed to pursue an order of protection

To read the full report and learn more about the campaign to get ICE Out of the Courts, visit <https://www.immdefense.org/ice-courts-nys/>.