



IMMIGRATION “WELLNESS CHECKS” FOR FOR CHILDREN

What sponsors, household members,
and young people need to know

JULY 2025

Community members across the country are reporting visits from immigration and other federal officers seeking to meet with certain children who entered the United States unaccompanied. These children are often referred to as “unaccompanied children” (UCs) because at the time they were arrested by immigration (such as crossing the border), they were not with a parent or legal guardian. Although these visits are sometimes described as “wellness checks,” they are part of a broader, coordinated effort to locate and deport some vulnerable young people and their sponsors.

It is crucial for families and immigrant communities to stay informed, exercise their rights, and seek legal support when needed.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT “WELLNESS CHECKS”

The news media outlet [Reuters](#) reported in late February that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had been directed to target UCs, often working alongside other federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Advocates [obtained additional information](#) about the directive, showing that it involves several DHS agencies, including ICE, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO). The initiative focuses on identifying UCs who were released from government custody and have not had contact with the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) since their release. The ICE memo states that the goal

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of “wellness checks” is to locate UCs to ensure they are complying with immigration obligations and investigate whether they may be victims of human trafficking or other forms of exploitation. The memo lists three priority categories of UCs:

- 1. “Flight Risk”:** This category includes UCs who (1) did not attend their immigration hearing and received a removal order; (2) have not been reachable by ORR after being released to a sponsor; (3) ran away from an ORR facility; or (4) were released to sponsors who are either not related by blood or who have sponsored more than three UCs.
- 2. “Public Safety”:** This category includes UCs who are considered a threat to public safety, including people who fraudulently claimed to be UCs at the time they entered the U.S. or UCs who have terrorist ties/activities, and UCs with arrests or egregious criminal backgrounds.
- 3. “Border Security”:** This category includes UCs with removal orders.

Anecdotal reports from attorneys and immigrant families demonstrate **there is no standardized procedure for these operations**. Because there is no standardized procedure, visits have occurred in various locations.

Most visits have occurred at UCs’ homes. In some cases, officers called ahead of the visits; in others, they arrived at the home unannounced. Those who received advance notification of a visit were sometimes told to come into an office for a follow-up meeting. In other cases, officers left a notice on the door of the UC’s home, directing the sponsor or the UC to contact the officer by email or phone. Officers have been reported conducting visits both in uniform and plainclothes, adding to the confusion and intimidation. Less frequently, officers visited children’s schools.

When the UC has an immigration attorney, officers may try to contact the UC’s attorney either to verify the child’s well-being or to arrange a visit at the attorney’s office. Other times, officers have shown up to the attorney’s office unannounced.

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NOTE

Note that the officers conducting these “wellness checks” have been instructed to pursue any possible criminal charges (for example, smuggling) and enforce removal orders. If anyone in the household has been ordered removed but is still here, they could be arrested during the wellness check.

Everyone in the United States, regardless of their immigration status, has Constitutional rights. For more information on your rights, visit <https://ilrc.me/protect>

Please note the advice below is based on the information we have as of July 2025. As this situation evolves, please check back for updates.

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ENTERED THE U.S. AS UCs

You have a Constitutional right to privacy and to remain silent, regardless of your immigration status.

- You have the right not to open the door and not to allow officers inside your home, unless the officers have a judicial warrant (generally, they do not have a judicial warrant). However, note that if you do not answer the officers’ questions, the officers may return. It is not clear how many times or when they will return. Reports have varied.
- **If you have an attorney**, call them and let them know about the visit. An attorney may be able to facilitate the wellness check at their office and/or answer the officers’ questions without you needing to be involved. You and your sponsor do not need to answer any questions unless your attorney is notified or present. Attorneys should expect contact from officers either by email, phone, or an in-person visit to their office.
- **If you do not have an attorney**, visit <https://ilrc.me/gethelp> to find a trusted immigration legal services provider near you, and ask for a legal

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consultation.

- You do not need to communicate with any officer unless a trusted adult is present.
- If you decide to open the door, you still have a right to remain silent and not let them inside your home.
 - ▶ **However, if you open the door, it will be harder to refuse to answer questions, and officers could enter unlawfully.** Any information you give to the officers could be used against you in an immigration or criminal proceeding. If the officers enter your home, they may also then search your home for evidence of any immigration or criminal law violation, including searching for other noncitizen household members.
- **If you choose to speak to the officers** with your sponsor or trusted adult present, you can only answer questions about your well-being and not any other information like the names or immigration status of other household members.

FOR SPONSORS

You have a Constitutional right to privacy and to remain silent, regardless of your immigration status.

- You have the right not to open the door and not to allow officers inside your home, unless the officers have a judicial warrant. However, note that if you do not answer the officers' questions, the officers may return.
 - ▶ **If you or the child has an attorney,** direct the officers to that attorney. An attorney may be able to facilitate the wellness check at another location and/or answer the officer's questions.
 - ▶ **If you do not have an attorney,** visit <https://ilrc.me/gethelp> to find a

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trusted immigration legal services provider near you, and ask for a legal consultation.

- If you decide to open the door to answer the officer's questions about the child's well-being, you still do not have to let them inside your home, and you do not have to provide information about your own immigration status. You can assert your right to remain silent.

- **However, if you open the door, it will be harder to refuse to answer questions, and officers could enter unlawfully.** Any information you give to the officers could be used against you in an immigration or criminal proceeding. If the officers enter your home, they may also then search your home for evidence of any immigration or criminal law violation, including searching for other noncitizen household members.

FOR NON-SPONSOR HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

You have a Constitutional right to privacy and to remain silent, regardless of your immigration status.

- You have the right not to open the door and not to allow officers inside your home, unless the officers have a judicial warrant.
- If you decide to open the door and speak with the officers, you have the right to not let them inside and may direct any questions about the child's well-being to the sponsor (if the sponsor is home). If you have an attorney, contact your attorney before answering any questions. You do not need to provide any information about the child's well-being or any other information—including your own immigration status, the immigration status of any other household member, or any other details about yourself or others in the home.

- **However, if you open the door, it will be harder to refuse to answer questions, and officers could enter unlawfully.** Any information you give



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to the officers could be used against you in an immigration or criminal proceeding. You can assert your right to remain silent. If the officers enter your home, they may then search your home for evidence of any immigration or criminal law violation, including searching for other noncitizen household members.

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