

---

**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA**  
**CITIZEN’S POLICE OVERSIGHT COMMISSION**  
**PPD POLICY TRANSLATION FOR PUBLIC REVIEW**



|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Title:</b><br>Immigrant-Police Interactions          | <b>Type of Report:</b><br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Final<br><input type="checkbox"/> Supplemental |
| <b>Type of Report:</b><br>Policy and practice explainer | <b>PAC File Number:</b><br>23-13   |

**Executive Summary**

Philadelphia is home to a diverse population of immigrants, which make up approximately 15% of the city’s population. Regardless of a person’s immigration status, they are entitled to a high quality of life, and the ability to build roots in their community.

As such, the City’s leadership has examined their policies and practices to ensure that immigrant communities in Philadelphia have access to all City services. These efforts allowed the City of Philadelphia to receive an official designation as a Certified Welcoming City by Welcoming America, one of only twenty-one cities in the country.<sup>1</sup>

Ensuring access to City services includes those provided by the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD). Immigrants in Philadelphia may need to call the police or encounter PPD members in various circumstances. Regardless of one’s immigration status, they should feel safe interacting with PPD members without fear of their information being shared with the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Many immigrants may have rightful concerns about calling the police or interacting with a police officer in other settings. Concerns such as being deported or being singled out within their community may keep them from calling 911 when they are in danger or need emergency services. These fears further the divide between the public and law enforcement and cause many crimes to go unreported within immigrant communities.

It is important that immigrants in Philadelphia know what to expect when interacting with the PPD. This document serves to educate the public on the policies PPD members operate under when encountering immigrants as victims, witnesses, complainants, suspects, or arrestees.

**City Policy Regarding Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Philadelphia**

In 2016, Mayor Kenney signed Executive Order 5-16, which governs how City agencies will honor detainer requests from ICE. Agencies are limited in the type of information they can share regarding immigrants taken into custody and held by the City of Philadelphia.

Under Executive Order 5-16, the City will **only** comply with a federal detainer request if:

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.phila.gov/2023-02-09-city-of-philadelphia-earns-certified-welcoming-designation/#:~:text=Immigrants%20make%20up%20about%2015,with%20a%20foreign%2Dborn%20person.>

- It is supported by a judicial warrant **and**,
- Pertains to an individual being released from custody after a conviction for a violent first or second-degree felony.<sup>2</sup>

This order remains in effect and applies to local criminal justice agencies such as the PPD and the Philadelphia Prisons.

### **PPD Interactions with Immigrant Populations**

When meeting immigrants during calls for service, PPD members are instructed to preserve the confidentiality of information collected by immigrants to the maximum extent permitted by law. PPD members are prohibited from excluding immigrants from police services.

Furthermore, the City has no obligation to report the immigration status of any resident to the federal government outside of the circumstances previously discussed. The goal of this policy is to ensure that immigrant communities are not discouraged from calling for police or interacting with a PPD officer in any capacity.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note that PPD officers are not required to obtain any involved person's citizenship status to complete an incident report (75-48).

Additionally, one's immigration status does not interfere with their ability to access victim's services. Each Police District has a Victim's Services Officer to aid in connecting victims to programs and services.

### **PPD Arrests Info Sharing**

Arrests made by PPD members are recorded in the Preliminary Arraignment Reporting System (PARS). This database is used by the District Attorney's Office (DAO), as well as the First Judicial System (FJD). While various law enforcement agencies operating in Philadelphia have access to this system, ICE does not have access to this system.

Prior to August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018, the City agreed to share access to this system with ICE, allowing the agency to see who is currently in the City's custody. During this agreement, it was determined that ICE utilized PARS to enforce immigration statutes against Philadelphians, including those who have not been arrested, accused of, or convicted of any crime.

To align with the City's policies surrounding immigrants in Philadelphia, the agreement was not renewed.<sup>4</sup>

### **Complaints Against Police Filed by Immigrants**

Anyone may file a complaint against a Philadelphia Police Officer, regardless of their immigration status. Because investigations into complaints are not related to enforcement of federal immigration status, a person's status is not asked when a complaint is filed, nor is it asked during the investigation into the complaint.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that it is the officer(s) and their alleged behavior that is under investigation, not the individual filing the complaint.

Immigrants who wish to file a complaint against a PPD member can do so without fear of any information sharing of their immigration status with ICE.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.phila.gov/media/20210602144908/executive-order-2016-05.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Philadelphia Police Department Memorandum 01-06

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.phila.gov/2018-08-03-ending-the-pars-agreement-with-ice/>

To file a complaint against a Philadelphia Police Officer, visit [CPOC's website](#) or call (215) 685-0891.

### **Translation Services Available During Police Encounters**

PPD and its 911 call system have access to language assistance services that are free of charge for anyone who needs them.

Translation services are provided through the following channels:

- **Police Department Authorized Interpreters (PDAI):** These are department members that are certified to translate a specific language. PDAIs can be dispatched to a scene or can speak to callers and officers on scene over the phone. PDAIs are integrated into the department's 911 call center so that an operator can transfer a caller to a PDAI if needed.

The PPD works to ensure that PDAIs are scheduled during all shifts to provide services 24/7.

Because PDAIs are department members with an inherent conflict of interest, they will not be utilized to interpret criminal interrogations.

- **Telephone Translation services:** If a PDAI is not available, the department has access to telephone translation services that can be accessed through Police Radio to translate conversations between police and people with limited English proficiency.
- **In-Person Contracted Interpreters:** If necessary, the department can also utilize a network of interpreters that are contracted to respond in-person during police interactions with those who need them.

There may be times when an officer may use another officer who is fluent in a language but not certified as a PDAI to translate information. Examples include needing to get the description of a fleeing suspect or medical information of an injured person.

In certain situations, an officer may utilize a person's family, friends, a bystander, or a minor at the scene to translate basic information immediately.<sup>5</sup>

For more information on the PPD's translation services, see [PPD Directive 7.7: Limited English Language Proficiency \(LEP\)](#).

For more information regarding the City's immigration policies, see the [Office of Immigrant Affairs](#).

For assistance navigating the legal system as an immigrant, see the [District Attorney's Immigration Counsel](#).

### **Questions?**

The mission of the CPOC is to review the policies, practices, and customs of the PPD, and help improve the relationship between the community and the police. The CPOC is always available to accept complaints and comments through our website, <http://www.phila.gov/CPOC>. Please contact us online or by phone, at (215) 685-0891 if you have any questions or concerns about this topic of immigrant-police interactions requests or any other policing-related topic.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.phillypolice.com/assets/directives/D7.7-LimitedEnglishLanguageProficiency.pdf>