

Courtesy U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Salt Lake County sheriff creates 'ICE dashboard' to show local immigration enforcement stats

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SALT LAKE CITY — A new tool from the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office includes data from 2016 to 2020 about bookings, offenses, detainers and releases for inmates that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has asked the county jail to hold.

Between 2016 and 2020, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement issued 3,269 detainers on jailed individuals in Salt Lake County. Of all individuals charged with a first-degree felony, 7.7% had a detainer placed on them. And the number of detainers has fallen drastically over the past few years, from 909 in 2017 to 308 in 2020.

These are just a few of the statistics made available Tuesday on the Salt Lake County Jail ICE Dashboard.

When inmates are booked into the county jail, they're asked to provide their citizenship status and country of origin. That information is then entered into a database that is accessible by other law enforcement agencies, including ICE. ICE may then review those records and request that jails hold undocumented individuals for up to 48 hours after they otherwise would have been released, so ICE can take custody.

Salt Lake County Sheriff Rosie Rivera said her department made the dashboard because "there is a high degree of interest in how jail operations intersect with ICE."

"To address this interest, we developed a tool that details our process and provides data that the public can access directly," Rivera said in a news release.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement frequently draws criticism from immigration activists, and many have called for ICE to be abolished entirely.

The Salt Lake sheriff's office has also launched an app for iOS and Google Play that will "help the public access the dashboard and other information related to the Sheriff's Office from a smartphone."

"Both the ICE Dashboard and new Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office App are part of our continued efforts to increase transparency and accessibility for the public," Rivera said. "We hope that the public will utilize these tools."

Brandy Farmer, president of Centro Civico Mexicano and member of the Office of the Sheriff Citizens Advisory Board, said this is the first time, to her knowledge, that a county jail has publicly shared ICE detainer data.

"This level of transparency is monumental," Farmer said, "and I know the community will look forward to looking at the data and continuing our conversations with the Salt Lake County Jail about ICE."

Valentina De Fex, immigration attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah, said she also appreciates Rivera's release of the detainer data. "We appreciate Sheriff Rivera and her staff's transparency on this issue," De Fex told KSL.com, "and their willingness to engage with us, and other community stakeholders, in conversations concerning their policies regarding their relationships with ICE and other federal agencies."

But she said the ACLU and other community partners will continue to advocate for a complete end of the detainer practice which, she argued, forces local governments and taxpayers to foot the bill of federal immigration enforcement by holding detainees past their scheduled release date. "I think for us, it's important to realize that this practice is not unique to Salt Lake County," De Fex added, "and is widespread throughout the state of Utah."

De Fex said her organization "would welcome" it if other counties made their ICE collaboration statistics public, as well. "We continue urging local governments to end these practices," she said.

The Salt Lake County ICE Dashboard is accessible at www.slsheriff.org/page_jail_ICE_dashboard.php - It is a follow-up project to the general Jail Dashboard, and was developed in partnership with the Salt Lake County Office of Criminal Justice Initiatives over a six-month period, officials said.