

A Message from Broome County Sheriff Fred Akshar

Just the Facts on ICE and the Sheriff's Office

My entire team was deeply saddened and disappointed by the outcome of Endicott's Public Safety Town Hall Meeting, where the actions of a small number of activists ultimately prevented nearly 100 concerned community members and hundreds watching the livestream from participating in a meaningful community discussion on a variety of public safety issues.

We've held several Public Safety Town Halls throughout Broome County, and I've held dozens more throughout the Southern Tier as State Senator, more than 40 over the past 10 years. Each and every Town Hall meeting has followed the same format: Introduction, an activity update on the work we've been doing on behalf the community, followed by an extended question-and-answer session. Even on contentious topics, our attendees have always been able to engage in a respectful dialogue, no matter whether we agreed on any given issue. That's how we listen, learn and grow together as a community. Unfortunately, for the first time in 10 years, that wasn't allowed to happen and it became clear that some in attendance did not have any interest in a meaningful discussion.

The full video is still available on the Sheriff's Facebook page, for those who are interested in watching.

Nonetheless, we will continue moving forward and being as transparent as possible with the community we are honored to serve. Guest Viewpoints are limited to 500 words, but it's more important to my team to get the truth out to the community than stay under a word count, so we secured additional space.

While some may have gone to great lengths to mischaracterize the Broome Sheriff's working relationship with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), below are the facts. No rumors or assumptions. Just facts.

Q: What is the Warrant Service Officer Program, and what role will correctional staff assume as a result of the Broome County Sheriff's Office participating?

A: Through the Warrant Service Officer Program, ICE provides training, authorization and legal authority for state and local law enforcement officers to execute both administrative and civil immigration warrants on behalf of ICE.

Select members of our Corrections staff will receive 8 hours of training and execute these warrants to lawfully detained adult individuals within the correctional facility.

Previously, if an individual was brought to the Correctional Facility on a separate criminal charge and was found to have an outstanding warrant with ICE, our staff would notify ICE and member of ICE would then have to travel to the Correctional Facility to execute the warrant.

On occasion, our staff would previously execute immigration warrants, but this training simply makes the process more efficient and reduces any liabilities. I want to make sure that the staff is trained appropriately to execute these warrants, lawfully, effectively, and efficiently.

Our participating corrections staff has been selected and will begin their training in the coming week.

Q: Will members of the Broome County Sheriff's Office be executing Warrants on ICE detainees in the community?

A: Our involvement in the WSO program is limited to the Corrections Division and limited to within the confines of the Broome County Correctional Facility.

Any and all immigration warrants executed by members of the Broome County Sheriff's Office will be executed within the Broome County Correctional Facility and will be executed on individuals who are already booked at the Facility for a separate criminal charge. Individuals already in ICE custody do not require warrants to be executed by our staff.

Q: Does the program require Sheriff's deputies to be deputized or embedded with ICE or devote resources to arrest new suspects based on immigration status?

A: The Broome County Sheriff's Office is not required to devote any resources or conduct operations arresting new suspects based on immigration status.

The only instances in which our Sheriff's Deputies would assist ICE in the community would be if there was a specific request involving an immediate threat to public safety. Just as we have done in the past with our federal partners like the U.S. Marshals Service and the FBI, our team would examine each situation on a case-by-case basis to determine our level of assistance.

Make no mistake, if our community's families are danger, we will always answer the call. For example, just 8 months ago, Gianfranco Torres-Navarro, the leader of "Los Killers" who was wanted for 23 killings in his home country of Peru was arrested in Vestal. If the BCSO had been asked to assist, we would have.

Our BCSO team has no interest in devoting resources to knocking on doors, raiding farms or schools or any other immigration-related activities under ICE's jurisdiction.

Q: Why is the Broome County Correctional Facility housing ICE detainees?

A: For decades, the Broome County Correctional Facility has housed detainees on behalf of federal agencies like the U.S. Marshals, the FBI and ICE. Nothing has changed in our policy. What has changed is the increased focus on enforcement by ICE, which is occurring nationwide.

From Day One, our current Sheriff's administration has always taken a measured and pragmatic approach to our working relationships with the US Marshals Service, the FBI and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. All of our legally-detained adult inmates are provided due process under the law. It's that simple.

Q: Are you housing children and families detained by ICE?

A: We do not accept female ICE detainees or anyone under the age of 18 at the Correctional Facility. All ICE detainees are adult male individuals.

Q: Are ICE detainees provided medical care, legal or other services?

A: Just as anyone who is housed in our facility, no matter their crime, when they are in our custody, we are responsible for their health and safety and we go to great lengths to ensure they are treated with respect and dignity while in our care.

All our federal detainees are provided the same medical evaluation and care that all incarcerated individuals are afforded under the law. We have multiple translation apps, support translators via phone and multiple Spanish-speaking staff members on hand to help ensure we can effectively communicate with individuals housed at the Correctional Facility.

Whenever a local or federal detainee first enters the Correctional Facility, as part of the intake process, they receive a medical screening and are housed for five days in a classification unit to determine their needs and safety requirements before they are transferred to the appropriate housing unit and receive the same services afforded to all our incarcerated individuals.

We currently provide video conferencing and other technology services to all our incarcerated individuals to access their attorneys, judicial proceedings or other court appearances as needed. ICE detainees are afforded that same access.

We are finding that most of our ICE detainees do not stay longer than a week as they make their way through the legal process.

Q: Do you have the capacity to house ICE detainees? Is it costing taxpayers more money and overwhelming the staff?

A: The yearly budget for maintaining the Correctional Facility for up to 600 individuals does not change with the addition of ICE detainees.

Federal funding from housing detainees ($110.00 per detainee per day), whether they be U.S. Marshals, FBI or ICE, is all directed to the Broome County General Fund and serves to offset costs, not increase costs to taxpayers. All additional medical expenses are reimbursed by the federal government.

Over the past two years, our agency has successfully addressed the staffing crisis by devoting substantial focus on recruiting quality individuals to serve as corrections officers and working to improve the working environment, administrative support, safety and conditions for everyone living and working within the Correctional Facility.

We currently have the space and the staff to accommodate additional detainees, and will continue to communicate and coordinate with our federal partners at the US Marshals Service and ICE to ensure that our staffing and population levels remain optimal for maintaining the health and safety of both our staff and our incarcerated individuals alike.

Q: How many ICE detainees has the jail held in 2025?

A: Since February, over 200 ICE detainees have been held in total this year. The number of ICE detainees fluctuates, but the daily number of U.S. Marshals detainees averages between 20-30 adult males.

Q: What would happen if the Broome County Sheriff's Office refused to house ICE detainees?

A: There would be no change in ICE activity or operation based on our ability to house any federal detainees on behalf of ICE. The small number of detainees held at the Correctional Facility would be held at another ICE detention facility.

Q: How does this in any way at all make Broome County safer?

A: As we have done for decades with the US Marshals Service, the FBI and ICE, the Broome County Sheriff's Office will continue to be a pragmatic and responsible partner for federal law enforcement organizations, just as we have done with our local law enforcement partners.

Our focus has been and will always remain on serving and protecting the people of Broome County and holding accountable those who put the safety and security of our community at risk.

While I appreciate and respect opposing viewpoints and opinions on this issue, I will never apologize for prioritizing public safety before political expediency. So long as I am your Sheriff, I will do everything in my power to ensure that Broome County residents can live, work and raise their families in a safe and secure community.

The issue of immigration enforcement remains a contentious, divisive issue across the nation. Millions of individuals have been deported by every previous presidential administration for over 30 years, but since Day One, it's been our goal to be as transparent as possible, and we hope the above information helped clarify exactly what the Broome County Sheriff's Office's position and role is on this issue, however small.