

Number of Undocumented Persons

There are approximately 11,000,000 undocumented persons in the United States.
There are approximately 85,000 undocumented persons in New Mexico.
There are approximately 45,000 undocumented persons in Albuquerque.

New Mexico is among the top ten states in the United States with the highest share of undocumented persons in its workforce. 5.6 percent of New Mexico positions are held by undocumented persons. Many of the positions involve leisure and hospitality, construction, and agriculture.

ICE

ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is led by a director who is appointed at the sub-Cabinet level by the President, confirmed by the Senate, and reports directly to the Secretary of Homeland Security.

ICE is the second largest criminal investigation agency in the United States government after the FBI.

The ICE office in Albuquerque is located at 1720 Randolph Rd. SW 87106. There are between 40-45 officers here. They report to Bill Jepsen, Assistant Field Office Director (soon to retire) in Albuquerque but the key office is in El Paso with Diane Witte as the head of ICE there.

In meetings with the New Mexico Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice, ICE claims that they are going after the "worst and most dangerous," but that the priority laid out by the president's first executive order on immigration is the main guide, which outlines that anyone who is undocumented is a priority. They have done many "collateral" detentions in Albuquerque and nationally, some at workplaces, many when people go in for periodic ICE check-ins, several detentions at the courts—only people they specifically sought (many of whom had no conviction or have not finished their legal proceedings). So according to Justin Remer-Thamert, of the New Mexico Faith Coalition, the ICE agents here are detaining and deporting anyone they can find.

What Happens if an Undocumented Person is Apprehended by ICE?

If ICE apprehends someone, that person is taken to a detention center awaiting removal proceedings. A 2010 estimate shows that over 30,000 immigrants are held in detention of any given day. We imagine the number is larger now.

Here in Albuquerque, they are usually taken to the ICE office on Randolph Rd. Most days in the afternoon, a van departs taking people to El Paso or another facility. Once at the detention center, if the person cannot obtain bail, they wait in detention until they can go before an Immigration Judge who will decide if they will be deported.

Entire removal process can take months or even years depending on the kind of relief the detainee has available, whether the court docket is crowded, and other factors.

Detention centers are akin to prisons. Conditions can be bad. Detainees are supposed to receive necessary medical treatment, but that sometimes does not happen.

If the person being deported is from Mexico, they are often driven over the border and left there. Sometimes they are flown through ICE AIR. If they are from elsewhere, there are usually flown there through ICE AIR.

ICE AIR is the aviation division of ICE that charters aircraft or books commercial flights to send deportees back to their home countries. Deportees have legs and arms secured while boarding, handcuffs are removed during flight, and all shackles are removed upon disembarking. The Mexican government tries to have someone at the airport to help these people when they arrive.