County policy prohibits the County from using its own resources (*i.e.,* County staff time, facilities, or records) to assist immigration enforcement authorities. However, with increased U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity in our community, we have understandably received several questions about what the County will do to help children whose parents are unexpectedly detained by ICE. Rest assured, if and when needed, the County is here to keep children safe through the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS), which is responsible for providing child welfare services in Santa Clara County. However, please note that a parent being detained does not necessarily mean that a child needs or would benefit from child welfare services. To help explain when and how child welfare services may be necessary after a parent is detained by ICE, we prepared the following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to answer some of the questions we have received.

Immigrations and Child Welfare Services FAQs

- **What does the County's DFCS do when there is ICE immigration activity?**

  DFCS's core mission is to keep children safe and families strong by partnering with community. Often child welfare is thought of as responding to children who are victims of abuse, but it also involves providing a wide variety of services to support and protect children and families. DFCS's expertise is in assessing the needs of a child and family and providing services to meet those needs. Because of this expertise, should children whose parents are detained by ICE need support, DFCS is ready to care for them. Services DFCS provides to families include temporary shelter, support accessing behavioral health treatment, school transportation, and/or setting up appropriate placement with family members in the case of parental absence.

- **If I am detained, will DFCS become responsible for my children and remove them from the friend or family member I asked to care for my children?**

  Not necessarily. DFCS only becomes aware of children when a report about a child is made to them, normally for concerns of abuse or neglect, and this can sometimes happen (appropriately) when a child does not have a caregiver that can make medical or educational decisions for them. Should a child be reported to DFCS because they do not have a caregiver or because their caregiver cannot, for example, consent to the healthcare they need at the hospital, DFCS's next step is to learn more about what the child needs and what is the best way to support the child. If the child is with a caregiver that is able to meet the child's needs but needs support getting the legal authority to make healthcare decisions, DFCS will support the caregiver in getting the paperwork they need to be able to legally and appropriately care for the child. DFCS's highly skilled social workers bring to their important work a trauma-informed approach and are uniquely equipped to assess how to meet the individual needs of each child.

Should there be a circumstance where the current caregiver is not safe for the child (*e.g.*, the caregiver is a minor babysitter or an adult who is listed on California Child Abuse Central Index for having committed child abuse or severe neglect), DFCS will take thoughtful and intentional steps to locate another placement that is safe for the child, which ***always*** starts with "family finding."

- **What is family finding?**

  Family finding is the process by which a social worker will search for and identify family members of the child to provide the child with support and, if needed, placement. DFCS social workers have access to tools specifically designed to support speedy and effective family finding. DFCS's goal for children unexpectedly separated from their parents is to support and effectuate the children being reunified with their family.

- **How will DFCS use my Family Preparedness Plan?**

  A Family Preparedness Plan can guard against your children needing child welfare services provided by DFCS by allowing you to designate an intended appropriate caretaker for your children should you unexpectedly be unable to care for them. When your child has an appropriate caregiver or a Family Preparedness Plan designates an appropriate caregiver, the caregiver should be able to care for your child and services from DFCS may not be necessary to ensure the safety of your child.

  Families can designate a relative as a caregiver or they can designate a non-relative caregiver. However, there may be limitations on future decision-making in certain situations for non-relatives, such as medical and educational decisions. Accordingly, if possible, consider designating a relative as your child's caregiver.

  Even if your selected caregiver does not have the authority to make medical or educational decisions on behalf of your child, DFCS has the ability to vet your selected caregiver for the safety of your child and support them in getting the necessary legal paperwork in place to appropriately care for your child. Family Preparedness Plans are also incredibly valuable tools for DFCS if they need to conduct family finding efforts for your child. For more information about the Family Preparedness Plan, please visit the Office of Immigrant Relations' website.

- **What does DFCS do when it is called to care for children in response to ICE activity?**

  While there have only been a couple of instances when this has occurred, DFCS is ready to care for children due to their parents being detained by ICE. DFCS is equipped to provide individually tailored support and services to any children that come into our care. For example, previously DFCS was contacted when a parent was temporarily detained by ICE. In that situation, DFCS coordinated with the family's immigration attorney and the Rapid

Response Network to gather information as quickly as possible to determine what the children needed and then continued to provide services to the children until their parent was released.