

# UCI Report: Orange County Leads California in Child Deportation

By NICK GERDA | Posted: Thursday, December 5, 2013 9:47 am

Armed with a report showing that Orange County overwhelmingly leads the state in the deportations of children, local activists marched on the streets of downtown Santa Ana on Wednesday and demanded that county probation officials stop referring minors to federal immigration authorities.

“It is absolutely unacceptable — as an American citizen, as a human being — that our children are being asked to defend themselves and their immigration status,” said Jose Moreno, president of Los Amigos of Orange County. “That violates not only the law but the sense of human dignity that we all demand of ourselves.”

Activists handed probation officials a new report by UC Irvine law students, stating that Orange County’s referral policies violate confidentiality laws, stifle rehabilitation and undermine public safety.

***(Click here to read the report.)***

[Click above for a video of the march.](#)

The report also revealed that Orange County accounts for 43 percent of the state's total referrals of juveniles to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The county referred nearly 550 youths to ICE between January 2009 and June 2012, according to the report.

In many cases, parents are not notified that authorities are seeking to deport their children, who can linger in immigration holds for months, according to the report.

“These referrals have a devastating impact” on families in our local communities, said James Buatti, a co-author of the report by the UC Irvine School of Law’s Immigrant Rights Clinic.

He said the referrals are “undermining the crucial trust” between Latinos and law enforcement.

Activists marched from Plaza Santa Ana on 4th Street to outside the probation office on Main Street, where they personally delivered the report to probation spokesman Ed Harrison, who was accompanied by two armed sheriff's deputies.

“Our organization, we live and die on how we analyze data and making the right decisions, and so if you're offering data that we can use to make the right decision, that can only be productive,” Harrison told activists.

“I think we can agree we all want a safer Orange County.”

Ahead of the march, leaders of several local Latino community groups voiced their support for the report's suggestions, which include prohibiting probation officers “from referring juveniles to ICE, investigating juveniles' immigration status, or detaining juveniles on the basis of ICE detainers.”

“We want to put an end to Orange County's school-to-deportation pipeline,” said Rafa Solorzano of Santa Ana Boys and Men of Color, referring to truancy as a major factor in youth being referred to ICE.

“It creates terror, it creates fear, it creates suffering. A lot of these youth are sent to ICE detention centers indefinitely far away from their families,” said Abraham Medina of Keep Our Families Together.

The law school report also claims that Orange County officials are violating minors' constitutional rights.

“Our Constitution requires that all individuals be detained only pursuant to lawful authority. By erroneously treating every ICE detainer as cause to delay release of juveniles back to their families and communities, OCPD's policy violates juveniles' constitutional rights,” the report asserts.

In addition to stopping Orange County's referrals, the report also calls for a statewide ban on local and state officials referring minors to ICE.

Going forward, probation officials have agreed to meet with activists to discuss the report.

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