

# The Star-Ledger

**N.J. cops helped ICE only 4 times last year. Prisons were a different story.**

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Cooperation between New Jersey cops and federal immigration officers was almost non-existent last year, according to data released Wednesday that provides the first comprehensive look at how rules limiting when local officers can work with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement are being followed statewide.

At the same time, county jails and state prisons detained hundreds of people on behalf of ICE at different points from March 15, 2019, when the rules took effect, through Dec. 31 of that year.

The state attorney general's office restricts cops from sharing information with ICE, and corrections officers can generally hold onto someone wanted by ICE only if the prisoner committed a violent crime.

Even then, the inmate can only be held until close to midnight on their scheduled release date.

"The Immigrant Trust Directive not only protects our immigrant communities, but also enhances public safety by ensuring that immigrants come forward when they are crime victims or witnesses," state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal said in a statement. He said the data showed that cops are "largely following both the letter and the spirit" of the rules.

In July, a federal judge ruled the limits are legal after President Donald Trump and some South Jersey counties sued. The case has been appealed, according to court records.

ICE has long criticized the rules as dangerous, arguing that a lack of cooperation forces federal officers to needlessly search for people around the state.

"This effort requires a significant amount of additional time and resources and places undue risk to both the officers and the community," John Tsoukaris, director of ICE in Newark, said in a statement sent by a spokesman.

ICE has previously declined to say how many times New Jersey police refused to hold onto someone because of the rules.

Wednesday's data from the attorney general's office shows only four instances of police helping ICE.

Plainfield cops in Union County reported two types of cooperation last year, the most of any department. Officers once told federal officials about a “detained individual’s upcoming release,” and they also held onto someone past their scheduled release time.

It was not immediately clear if both instances referred to the same person.

In addition, Lakewood cops in Ocean County once handed over some “non-public personally identifying information,” and Lawrence police in Mercer County participated in a single “civil immigration enforcement operation.”

When asked for more information about the operation, Lawrence’s police chief directed NJ Advance Media to file a records request. Calls and emails to Lakewood and Plainfield were not immediately returned.

Departments in New Jersey’s other 18 counties reported no cooperation. The State Police, NJ Transit cops, Rutgers officers and other state agencies also did not report working with ICE in any way.

Jails and prisons were a different story.

Corrections officials let ICE conduct 551 interviews last year. They also told ICE about upcoming releases 779 times, and officers held onto inmates in 403 cases.

The vast majority occurred in Essex County, which houses one of ICE’s detention centers, and in state prisons.

The numbers do not include the more than 80 people grabbed by ICE earlier this month after their prison sentences were reduced.