

Rapid Response Teams:  
From An interview with Pedro Sosa, director of AFSC's Project Voice Immigrant  
Rights Program in Oregon and Washington state  
May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017

<https://www.afsc.org/blogs/news-and-commentary/responding-to-immigration-enforcement-under-trump>

Each team is made up of five smaller teams:

- The legal team works with lawyers and does intake with people who are victims of raids. They are trained as legal observers, and they document any violations of the Fourth and Fifth Amendments.
- The service team includes schools, social service agencies, faith groups, and others who help victims after raids. They provide food, accompany families to courts, help find care for the children if their parent or guardian is taken.
- The media team alerts the news media when a raid happens, organizes press conferences, and distributes information about the rapid response team in the community.
- The government team includes people who have connections with city officials or the governor or representatives. They lift up the stories of people affected to advocate for policies to prevent raids.
- The political action team mobilizes people if we need to plan a march or rally to pressure elected officials.

24-hour Hotline with 15 volunteers taking turns answering the phone calls – two at a time. The calls are forwarded to their cell phones. If the first person can't get to the call, the call goes to the backup person.

The idea is to record ICE activity in the community, and then we can mobilize the rapid response team if needed. Sometimes we get a call, and somebody needs help; other times, it's just a rumor of ICE activity being reported.

We can get up to 15 calls a day. We spend a lot of time verifying rumors about ICE activities—we don't want to put out bad information.

**Q: Can you give us an example of how the rapid response team has successfully handled a raid?**

A: In February, I got a call from Woodburn. The caller reported that they saw *la migra* (ICE) on the highway, and I called someone to verify that was true. I drove out to the scene and saw two vans had been stopped by ICE—workers who were [headed to pick ornamental shrubs in a nearby forest]. Nineteen workers were detained, and eight were arrested and sent to Tacoma detention facility.

We mobilized our rapid response team in Salem, which we had just developed a couple of months earlier. Within hours, we had a group of lawyers—including the ACLU and professors from Lewis and Clark University—come to talk with workers after they were released to document what happened and provide support. Most of the workers were released, although two were held, and lawyers began to help them and their families with their cases. We also alerted the media, [and the story was covered on local TV and in newspapers](#).

We originally developed the rapid response team model in 2006. Today, we have more technology. We use the SMS Seal app for messaging. We're also in conversation with the ACLU, which has a phone app that lets you record and upload videos that get automatically sent to their system, just in case your phone is taken away from you.