

ICE seeks to expand monitoring program for immigrants as alternative to detention

Caitlin Dickson

5/19/2019

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency is planning to add more than 20,000 spaces to its Intensive Supervision Appearance Program, part of the “Alternative to Detention” system for immigrants awaiting hearings. The expansion, from 99,500 places in the current fiscal year to a projected 120,000, was not formally announced by ICE, but a request for proposals was posted on a government website, seeking bids for contractors to provide services such as GPS monitoring and in-person case management for qualifying adults in the process of immigration proceedings.



© Provided by Oath Inc. An asylum seeker from Guatemala displays his ankle monitor and makeshift shoelaces at a shelter for migrants on May 16, 2019 in El Paso, Texas. His shoelaces

were not returned by border authorities upon his release. After being released by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to the shelter, asylum-seekers are then normally transferred from the shelter to their U.S. sponsors as they await their asylum requests. Approximately 1,000 migrants per day are being released by authorities in the El Paso sector of the U.S.-Mexico border. (Photo: Mario Tama/Getty Images)

At the same time, the administration is also seeking more beds in detention facilities around the country.

According to [a formal request posted on Friday afternoon](#), ICE is looking for contractors that can provide “community-based supervision, in-person reporting, telephonic reporting, GPS monitoring or biometric technology monitoring services across the nation.”

An ICE spokesman confirmed that the solicitation was in line with the agency’s projected expansion of Alternatives to Detention, as outlined in the Department of Homeland Security’s budget request for Fiscal Year 2020.

As part of a \$51.7 billion budget request for FY2020, the Department of Homeland Security has asked Congress for an additional \$30 million in funding for the Alternatives to Detention (ATD) to accommodate “a significant increase” in the program’s participants over the coming year. Per [DHS’s FY2020 Budget-In-Brief](#), ICE projects the number of average daily participants to grow from 99,500 in Fiscal Year 2019 to 120,000.

President Trump has repeatedly denounced what he calls “catch and release” programs for immigrants apprehended by border agents, and prioritized detention instead. But the number of immigrants awaiting hearings has outpaced the government’s ability to house them. At the same time, families are now making up most of those arrested for illegal entry at the southwest border. However, under [existing federal protections](#) governing the treatment of migrant children — which President Trump has [repeatedly urged Congress](#) to override through legislation — ICE cannot detain parents and children together for more than 20 days.

The planned expansion of both detention beds and alternative placements is a factor of both increasingly aggressive interior enforcement operations and rising rates of arrests at the border, which have driven the numbers of immigrants detained by ICE to record highs.

Proponents of Alternatives to Detention—which usually include some combination of in-person case management such as home and ICE office visits, and tracking technology, either by GPS ankle bracelets or a mobile-phone reporting system employing voice recognition technology—say it offers a [much more cost-effective](#), and [relatively more humane](#), means of ensuring that asylum seekers and others deemed not to be a public safety threat will appear in court. The DHS is projecting it will cost \$209.9 million to monitor 120,000 average daily ATD participants — but is seeking \$2.7 billion for 54,000 detention beds.

According to ICE data attached to the contract solicitation, in Fiscal Year 2018, 99.4 percent of participants in the Intensive Supervised Appearance Program attended all of their total court hearings, while 94.3 percent attended their final court hearings.