



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE TRIAL COURT  
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Paula Carey  
Chief Justice of the Trial Court

Jonathan S. Williams  
Court Administrator

*Executive Office Transmittal 17-13*

To: Judges, Clerks, Registers, Chief Probation Officers and all staff

From: Chief Justice Paula M. Carey  
Court Administrator Jonathan S. Williams

*JMC*

cc: Departmental Chief Justices, Probation Commissioner, Jury Commissioner,  
Deputy Court Administrators, OCM Directors

Date: November 10, 2017

**Re: Policy and Procedures Regarding Interactions with the Department of Homeland Security**

In Transmittal 17-10 we provided notice of the Supreme Judicial Court's decision in *Lunn vs. Commonwealth & Another*, addressing the authority of Massachusetts court officers to arrest pursuant to a civil immigration retainer. As noted at the time, the Court specifically concluded that court officers did not have the authority to arrest and hold an individual solely on the basis of a Federal immigration detainer beyond the time that individual would otherwise be entitled to release from State custody.

At this time we are pleased to provide the document entitled *Policy and Procedure Regarding Courthouse Interactions with the Department of Homeland Security*, to provide clear guidance to judges, clerks, probation, security and all court staff on responding to DHS requests and the presence in DHS officers in our courthouses.

Please be advised that we have provided the DHS Field Agent in Charge with a copy of this document. We will also be sharing it with CPCS and local bar associations.

Please contact your departmental administrative office with any questions or concerns.

## **Policy and Procedures Regarding Courthouse Interactions With the Department of Homeland Security**

### **I. PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES**

The following policy governs the manner in which trial court employees, and in particular, court officers, shall respond to requests from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to provide information about, and take custody of, individuals subject to civil immigration detainers. It also governs how Trial Court staff shall respond when officials from the D H S enter a Massachusetts courthouse with the intent of taking custody of an individual subject to a civil immigration detainer.

Trial Court employees should be mindful that courthouses are public spaces that are open to all persons and that all persons entering a courthouse should be treated with respect and dignity, including individuals subject to civil immigration detainers and DHS employees. Trial Court employees play essential roles in ensuring the orderly administration of justice and providing a safe and secure environment inside the courthouse.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to restrict compliance with 8 U. S. C. § 1373 (current edition) or to limit or abrogate: a court officer's authority to detain an individual pursuant to G.L. c. 221, § 70A; an order of a judge; a warrant issued by a judge or clerk authorizing the arrest of an individual for a criminal offense; or a criminal detainer.

### **II. RESPONSE TO DHS REQUESTS**

Individuals subject to a civil immigration detainer often arrive in custody at a courthouse accompanied by a DHS "Notice of Action" immigration detainer form (currently DHS Form I-247A) that requests court employees to voluntarily: 1) detain the individual subject to the detainer for up to 48 hours in order for DHS officials to arrive and take custody of the individual even though the individual would otherwise be released from the trial court's custody; 2) transmit information to DHS regarding the individual subject to the detainer; 3) serve the individual with a copy of the detainer form; 4) relay the detainer to any other law enforcement agency to which the court employee transfers custody of the individual; and 5) notify DHS in the event of the individual's death, hospitalization or transfer to another institution. The DHS detainer form frequently is accompanied by a civil immigration warrant (ICE Form I-205 and/or Form I-200) that is signed not by a judge or clerk, but by a DHS official. In addition, there may be instances in which DHS officials directly ask court personnel for information regarding an individual or an individual's case.

Trial Court employees shall not hold any individual who would otherwise be entitled to release based solely on a civil immigration detainer or civil immigration warrant. Trial Court employees do not have authority to detain an individual based solely on a civil immigration detainer. Nor do Trial Court employees have the authority to comply with a civil warrant issued by a DHS official for the arrest of an individual based solely on a civil immigration violation. Trial Court employees shall not serve civil immigration detainers or civil immigration warrants. Individuals subject to civil immigration detainers or warrants shall be processed and handled in the same manner as all other individuals coming before the court. No person shall be held in custody for any shorter or longer period than the person would otherwise be held based solely on a civil immigration detainer or civil immigration warrant.

Requests by DHS officials for information regarding an individual or an individual's case, whether made in a civil immigration detainer or made directly to court personnel, shall be treated by court employees in the same manner as would a request for information from any other member of the public.

If a DHS official requests information from a court officer regarding the status of an individual's case, the court officer may direct the DHS official to the appropriate clerk's office.

If a DHS official requests information from the clerk's office regarding an individual's case, or any case file, the scope of the responding employee's response shall be guided by the same statutes, rules, and policies that govern public access to court records.

If a DHS official requests information from Probation, the Probation employee shall direct the request to the attention of the Probation Legal Unit to be processed in the normal course.

### **III. DHS OFFICIALS TAKING CUSTODY OF INDIVIDUALS AT A COURTHOUSE**

Although DHS officials are permitted to act in the performance of their official duties in Massachusetts courthouses, it is essential to the fair administration of justice that members of the community are provided a safe and secure environment when they enter the courthouse. To that end, DHS officials may enter a courthouse and perform their official duties provided that their conduct in no way disrupts or delays court operations, or compromises court safety or decorum.

In accordance with existing policy, armed law enforcement officers may enter a courthouse while in the performance of official duties. As applicable to all law enforcement officers, when an armed DHS official enters a courthouse, courthouse security personnel shall ask the DHS official to state his or her official law enforcement purpose for entering the courthouse and the proposed enforcement action to be taken, if any. The DHS official's information shall immediately be transmitted to a security supervisor or designated court officer.

The security supervisor or designated officer shall inform the first justice, or regional administrative justice of the department with jurisdiction over the person if DHS officials are present in the courthouse with the intent of arresting or taking anyone into custody, i.e. a party or other participant in a case before a judge or magistrate, or a person attending to business in the courthouse.

#### **A. Individuals over whom the Trial Court has custody**

Consistent with Chapter 2, sections XIV and XV of the Court Officer Manual (current edition), when an individual who was brought into court in custody is subject to release after his or her court proceeding, court security personnel shall process that individual out of lock up in the normal course regardless of whether the individual is subject to a civil immigration detainer or warrant.

If, during the processing of an individual subject to release out of the courthouse, a DHS official is present in the courthouse and seeks admission into the courthouse's holding cell area in order to take custody of the individual pursuant to an immigration detainer or warrant, court officers shall permit the DHS official(s) to enter the holding cell area in order to take custody of the individual once Trial Court security personnel have finished processing that individual out of the court security personnel's custody,

if a security department supervisor determines that the DHS official would otherwise take custody of the individual inside or immediately outside of the courthouse.

Before being granted entry into the holding cell area, DHS officials must present credentials and a copy of the detainer or civil immigration arrest warrant to court security personnel, sign in to the holding cell area, and surrender their weapons.

To the extent possible, court security personnel should require that DHS officials transport any individuals taken into custody through the prisoner transport entrance and avoid taking the individual through the public areas of the courthouse.

**B. Individuals coming to court who are not in the custody of the trial court**

In those instances where DHS officials seek to take custody in a courthouse of an individual who is not in custody of the courthouse security personnel, Trial Court employees shall neither impede DHS officials from doing so nor assist in the physical act of taking that individual into custody. In the event that court security personnel are present as DHS officials place an individual in custody in a courthouse, the role of such court personnel is to take those actions necessary to maintain the safety and decorum in the courthouse.

Nonpublic spaces in a courthouse, such as within clerks' offices or Probation offices, may not be used by DHS officials. No DHS official shall be permitted to take an individual into custody pursuant to a civil immigration detainer or warrant in a courtroom, unless permission has been given in advance by the regional administrative judge or first justice sitting in the courthouse.

**IV. RECORDING INTERACTIONS WITH DHS**

Court security personnel shall keep a log of every individual over whom the court accepts custody and who is subject to a civil immigration detainer or warrant, if known. Court security staff shall likewise keep a log of every instance in which DHS was notified that a person subject to a detainer was released from court custody, as well as every time DHS takes an individual into custody in a courthouse.

In addition, court security personnel shall draft an incident report for every instance in which DHS takes an individual into custody in a courthouse.