

# Community-Based Alternatives to Immigration Detention: Explained



What do we mean when we say "community-based alternative to detention"?

Freedom for Immigrants champions a case-management model loosely based on the federal refugee resettlement program, in which migrants reside with community-based sponsors and are matched with social and legal support services as their immigration case is processed. In addition, we believe that alternatives should truly function as such; as resources for alternatives to detention increase, there should be a corresponding decrease in resources for ICE detention.

What we *don't* mean when we talk about ATDs.

Freedom for Immigrants views surveillance-based systems, including electronic ankle monitoring, as an alternative form of detention. Surveillance based programs violate the rights and dignity of individuals, often serve as a pipeline to detention centers, and are subject to undue private sector influence via the participation of the same companies which operate private detention facilities. We also do not support alternatives to detention that are operated by subsidiaries of these private prison companies.

Community-based alternatives are **cost-effective**.

According to FY2018 data, the average daily cost of detention is \$208 per individual. Community-based alternatives to detention are significantly cheaper. The National Immigration Forum states that, "Alternatives to detention can cost as little as 70 cents to \$17 per person per day with an average ATD contract costing between \$5 and \$6 per person per day."

Community-based alternatives have **high compliance rates**.

Studies of alternatives-to-detention programs from around the world suggest that community-based programming maintains average **compliance rates of 90% or higher**. In 1996, the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service contracted with Vera Institute to run a three-year alternative to detention program in New York. The program included an "intensive participation model" which involved home visits, frequent check-ins, and access to social support. At the end of the program period, 91% of program participants in this program had appeared at all of their required hearings.

**Support true alternatives today**

Despite the proven cost-effectiveness and high rates of legal compliance demonstrated by alternative to detention programs, and the fact that there is no empirical evidence to suggest that the threat of being detained deters irregular migration or individuals from seeking asylum, the Trump administration continues to push for an expansion of a profit-driven, inhumane detention system. **You can change that.**

To support community-based ATDs, including signing up as a community sponsor, see [freedomforimmigrants.org/sponsor-freedom](https://freedomforimmigrants.org/sponsor-freedom).

For more information, please contact Program Manager of Alternatives to Detention Liz Wilson at [Lwilson@Freedomforimmigrants.org](mailto:Lwilson@Freedomforimmigrants.org).

