



OIDO

Office of the Immigration
Detention Ombudsman

The Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman independently examines immigration detention to promote and support safe, humane conditions.

Welcome to the OIDO Newsletter!

A Note from the Acting Ombudsman, David Gersten:



A little over a year ago, the Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman (OIDO) placed its first case manager at Stewart Detention Facility in Georgia. A year later, we now have over 40 case managers visiting more than 60 detention facilities throughout the country. OIDO has grown rapidly this year, and our success stories—where our unique perspective as an ombudsman’s office has allowed us to influence immigration detention for the better—are stacking up.

In August, I traveled to El Paso, Texas, to meet with Congresswoman Veronica Escobar, an early champion for our Office. I was thrilled to be able to report on OIDO’s progress to her, as someone who is so interested in our success. El Paso has been an important city for our Office, as you’ll see later in this newsletter. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have helped us to establish ourselves as a resource to individuals affected by immigration detention in that area, and to their friends, loved ones, and advocates.

In September, I traveled with OIDO’s External Relations division to Southern California. There, I met with non-governmental organizations, shelters, and legal service providers. I believe that outreach with federal, state, and – most importantly – local partners will only become more critical to our success as time goes on. Meeting with these groups not only provides awareness of OIDO and allows us to share our resources but gives us important perspective on immigration detention from beyond the Federal Government.

Join Us for Virtual Roundtables!

OIDO would like to hear your concerns about specific challenges in detention, and we are hosting roundtable discussions on the following issues:

- Thursday, December 8, 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM Eastern: Detainees’ Property
- Thursday, December 15, 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM Eastern: Language Access
- Thursday, December 22, 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM Eastern: LGBTQ+

Please RSVP to OIDO_Outreach@hq.dhs.gov for the sign-on information. Each session will include an introduction to the work OIDO is doing on these topics, but most of the meeting will be an opportunity for you to raise issues affecting individuals you serve.

Be on the lookout for upcoming roundtable discussions. For future discussions, the topics can be wide ranging, and we are open to input from the community. Each

community may have different needs or concerns, so please don't be afraid to tell us how we can better help you!

DHS 9/11 Commemorative Flag Tour

OIDO, in support of the DHS commemorative 9/11 Flag Tour, partnered with Border Patrol, ICE, and CBP's Office of Field Operations to remember the many lives lost in the tragic events of 9/11. This was also a chance to reflect on DHS's history and how the agency has developed and evolved over the years. John Hill, our Chief of Staff, took the lead in presenting the 9/11 commemorative flag on behalf of OIDO.



Caption: John Hill, Chief of Staff, along with other members of OIDO with CBP El Paso Sector Chief Patrol Agent Gloria I. Chavez and her leadership staff observing the American Flag being raised and lowered, accompanied by the playing of bagpipes. (Photo credit: U.S. Border Patrol El Paso Sector Strategic Communications)

Recent OIDO Inspection Reports

Emergency Family Staging Centers

In December 2021, OIDO conducted unannounced inspections of two ICE Emergency Family Staging Centers (EFSCs) in the San Antonio Sector to assess their compliance with ICE detention standards and contract terms. OIDO performed focused inspections, reviewing priority areas as well as areas of concern that had been identified during prior inspections of these and similar facilities. Specifically, OIDO reviewed issues related to health care, COVID-19 protocols, admission and release,



safety and security, environmental health and safety, behavior management, and legal access and communication.

OIDO's inspection resulted in several findings. Related to prior inspections, OIDO found that two previously noted violations were improved—specifically, “Tested Residents for COVID-19 Prior to Release” and “Performed Mental Health Screening Within 12 Hours”—but three deficiencies remained in the areas of overnight safety checks, staff Post Orders, and intake health assessments. Related to additional topics evaluated, OIDO determined that the EFSCs followed the modified detention standards and contract terms except in the areas of resident communication, health care, cleanliness, food storage, and children's recreation.

OIDO made five recommendations designed to improve future operations at hotels or similar facilities that ICE uses to provide shelter and services to noncitizen families. ICE concurred with four recommendations and partially concurred with one recommendation.

Imperial Regional Detention Facility

OIDO conducted an unannounced inspection of the Imperial Regional Detention Facility (IRDF) to assess the facility's compliance with the ICE detention standards and contract terms. OIDO both performed a focused inspection and reviewed areas where the Office of Inspector General (OIG) had previously found violations of the detention standards to evaluate whether ICE had taken corrective action to fix prior violations. Specifically, OIDO reviewed whether the facility had corrected issues related to violations of segregation, facility conditions, medical grievances, and detainee communication.

OIDO's inspection resulted in several findings. Related to the OIG report, OIDO found that four previously noted violations were corrected, but two deficiencies remained in the areas of detainee communication and food service. Further, while the facility's responsiveness to medical grievances had improved, its process raised new concerns about its effectiveness in communicating responses to detainees with limited English proficiency. Related to additional topics evaluated, OIDO determined that IRDF followed the detention standards and contract terms except in the areas of monthly audits, training, medical staffing, and segregation determinations.

OIDO made six recommendations designed to improve operations at the facility and meet ICE detention standards and service contract terms. ICE concurred with all six recommendations.

U.S. Border Patrol Yuma Soft-Sided Facility

OIDO conducted an announced observation of the Yuma Soft-Sided Facility (YSS) in Yuma, Arizona on April 21, 2022. OIDO's review focused on the issue of detainee personal property. Specifically, OIDO reviewed YSS's processes for handling, storing, securing, and searching detainee property for compliance with CBP's National Standards on Transport, Escort, Detention, and Search (TEDS) as well as U.S. Border Patrol's Personal Effects Internal Operating Procedures memorandum. OIDO made two recommendations designed to improve operations at the facility and meet CBP detention standards and policies. CBP concurred with both recommendations.

U.S. Border Patrol Tucson Sector Facilities

OIDO conducted announced inspections on April 12-13, 2022, of four U.S. Border Patrol facilities in the Tucson Sector (TCA) in Arizona. OIDO inspected the Tucson Coordination Center, Tucson Soft-Sided Facility, the Nogales Border Patrol Station, and the Sonoita Border Patrol Station. OIDO reviewed facility compliance with TEDS as well as applicable contract terms. OIDO examined issues related to detention, transport, at-risk populations, personal property, and medical care.

OIDO's inspections led to several findings. Regarding performance standards, OIDO found that TCA was generally compliant and exhibited especially strong performance in key areas given resource challenges. Nonetheless, OIDO found a few areas of non-compliance and several areas of concern in how the facilities processed, documented, and communicated with detainees about personal property.

OIDO made three recommendations designed to improve operations and to meet TEDS standards and contract terms.

Moshannon Valley Processing Center

In February 2022, OIDO conducted an announced inspection of the Moshannon Valley Processing Center (MVPC) in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania to assess its compliance with ICE detention standards and contract terms. OIDO performed a general inspection, reviewing areas of priority interest as well as areas ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations had identified as being uniquely handled at the facility. Specifically, OIDO reviewed issues related to health care, COVID-19 protocols, staff-detainee communication, segregation, food service, and legal access and communication. OIDO also reviewed the facility's integration of new techniques intended to promote detainee health, safety, and well-being.

OIDO's inspection led to several findings. Related to contract terms and performance standards, OIDO found that MVPC had violations in four areas and performed exceptionally well in three areas.

OIDO made six recommendations designed to improve operations at the facility and meet ICE detention standards and contract terms. ICE concurred with five recommendations and partially concurred with one recommendation.

Full reports are available on our website or can be accessed [here](#).

Case Management Data (7/1/2022-9/30/2022)



Since OIDO started taking in cases in late 2021, we have received many different complaints from people in detention, as well as their friends, families, and representatives. Complaints come from people who are currently or were previously held in administrative immigration custody on the authority of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Between July and September 2022, OIDO received a total of 1,937 complaints. Most complaints concerned the

facility environment, medical or mental health care, or property.

Case management data is one of many elements we look at to make recommendations on improving immigration conditions, focus inspections, or even how to be more intentional about our outreach efforts.

Complaints Snapshot

Complaint Category	Number of Cases Closed	Average of Days in Process
Facility Environment	747	10
Medical/Mental Health or Health Care Concerns	456	11
Property	320	16
Abuse or Assault	93	9
Legal Access	81	11
Other	80	5
Special Consideration for Children & Families	37	19
Religious	27	13
Translation and Interpretation Services	21	10
Disability Accommodations	5	24
Detainee Locator	2	8
Grand Total	1869	11

OIDO in Action



Every day, OIDO case managers across the country provide services and assistance in detention facilities, focusing on problem-solving through a lens of neutrality and independence. These are just a few stories from the field.

Asking for Flexibility

An OIDO case manager helped a detainee at Baker County Facility in MacClenny, FL communicate with his teenaged daughter who receives services at a Behavioral Service Center. The time set by the facility for calls is during the time that his daughter is at the Center, so he wasn't ever able to reach

her. The OIDO case manager made arrangements with the facility for the detainee to have use of the phone outside the usual set hours so that he could speak with his daughter.

Making Crucial Connections

OIDO case managers spoke with a detainee at Stewart Detention Center in Georgia. The woman stated that the last time she saw her husband was when they were separated at the border trying to cross the river, and she thought he had drowned. Further, medical staff at the facility had just confirmed that she was pregnant. Case managers realized that her husband was actually in a separate facility in Texas, and he was trying to locate his wife. OIDO informed the woman that her husband was alive and in custody, and she was able to speak with him and share their news.

Problem Solving

During a visit to Stewart Detention Center, OIDO case managers were checking in with detainees to see if they had any concerns. People reported that they had not had access to tablets for a while and without them could not sign up for sick call or file grievances while inside their housing unit. OIDO case managers spoke with the unit manager about whether the tablet access could be restored, or alternative sign-up methods could be provided. They were able to quickly resolve the issue. By the end of the day, tablets were again made available to detainees.

Ensuring Access to Mental Health Services

A detainee was feeling ill when he got to a new facility, and after several tests, he was told he had significant illnesses. The man stated he had received counseling in the past but would like to receive more counseling services because his recent diagnosis had led to him feeling depressed. The case manager spoke to the Supervisory Behavioral Health Provider and made him aware of how the detainee was feeling. The mental health department started providing services for the detainee again and will continue to do so.

OIDO Recent Events

New case managers were able to receive in-person training at the Southwest border, to begin their OIDO journeys with observations of conditions in immigration custody. New staff met with more seasoned employees to gain knowledge of what to expect in their new positions, and they received training on outreach and communications. They were able to visit different U.S. Border Patrol stations and international ports of entry. This provided a holistic approach in training to the many facets of the immigration environment.



Photo Caption: CBP San Ysidro Port of Entry, San Diego, CA – OIDO Case Management and External Relations staff visit San Ysidro Port of Entry. The visit allowed staff to observe conditions at the border while allowing newer case managers to gain experience in the field. (Photo credit: OIDO External Relations)

External Relations held three topical roundtables during the month of August: Electronic Communications in Immigration Detention, Medical Care in Immigration Detention, and Access to Counsel in Immigration Detention. The roundtables were open to the public and were joined by dozens of stakeholders who were given the opportunity to discuss issues faced, make recommendations, and ask questions. OIDO will share notes from these sessions with participants in the coming weeks.

Since August, OIDO has held over 60 virtual and in person meetings, including in New York City, El Paso, TX, Las Cruces, NM, Yuma, AZ, and San Diego and Los Angeles, CA. We have met with advocacy organizations, legal service providers, legal clinics, city offices, consulates, and an embassy to introduce OIDO and discuss stakeholders' observations and concerns regarding immigration detention conditions. If you would like to meet with OIDO, please contact our outreach team at OIDO_Outreach@hq.dhs.gov. A lot of ground is being covered as we introduce our office and show what we can do.



A New Look



Photo Caption: New OIDO polos that will be worn in detention and custody facilities. (Photo Credit: OIDO External Relations)

In our previous issue, OIDO was excited to unveil its official logo! However, we are just as excited to announce that this logo will appear on our uniforms as well! The uniforms will feature the OIDO hummingbird, which will hopefully make our case managers’ identifiable and more approachable than uniforms traditionally found in the detention setting.

We are excited to integrate this visual identity into our work, promoting our unique identity and the value we provide the immigration detention community.

Finding a Case Manager Near You

One of the most frequent questions we receive is about where our case managers are located. This list is always evolving! As seen above in our complaints snapshot—and if you are keeping tabs on the number of complaints—the number of cases we have received in only the last three months is close to the amount we received from the genesis of our office! A lot of this can be attributed to the number of case managers we are hiring. More case managers allow us to visit more facilities, and we are excited to expand our reach! With things changing so quickly, the best way to keep tabs on our presence in the field is by visiting our website and selecting “OIDO Locations” or by clicking [here](#).

To the Community

We want to hear from you! Tell us about a difficult situation that you or someone you know faced in a detention setting and how you were helped. If it has not been

addressed, or you feel more can be done, contact us—we are here to help. If you have compliments—or concerns!—about how a case was handled by OIDO, please contact us at OIDO_Outreach@hq.dhs.gov. With your consent, we would love to highlight our successes in upcoming newsletters.

About our Office

OIDO is an independent, neutral office operating within DHS, but not within either CBP or ICE. The Ombudsman’s Office was established by Congress (Sec.106 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Public Law 116-93). Our vision is for OIDO to be recognized as an objective, credible resource for those impacted by immigration detention, creating a more effective and humane system.

OIDO can help with:

- Violation of an individual detainee’s rights
- Potential misconduct
- Excessive force
- Violation of law, standards of professional conduct, contract terms, or policy related to immigration detention committed by ICE or CBP staff or contractors

OIDO cannot:

- Communicate with anyone but the detainee or representative about a case without written permission
- Review or adjudicate requests to reconsider a detention determination, the reasons for detention, the denial of a request for release or parole, or the standards for considering requests for release
- Review or adjudicate requests to reconsider determinations made by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, such as credible fear determinations

Keep in Touch

[Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman | Homeland Security \(dhs.gov\)](#)

OIDO_Outreach@hq.dhs.gov

[Sign up for the newsletter here](#)