



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.

A Message from the Ombudsman

Hello! My name is Michelle Brané, and I have been appointed as the new Ombudsman for OIDO. I assumed this position on April 7, 2024, transitioning from my role as Executive Director of the Department of Homeland Security's Family Reunification Task Force. I look forward to bringing my decades of experience in immigration and human rights issues to OIDO.

With my appointment, the former Acting Ombudsman—David Gersten—returns to his permanent position as Deputy Ombudsman.

I began my tenure with a series of visits to the field to meet our employees and stakeholders and see their important work firsthand. Recently, David and I traveled to El Paso, Texas. While there, we had the opportunity to observe the Paseo del Norte port of entry, meet with the local Chief of Border Patrol, and review operations at the Otero County Processing Center. We also traveled to Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona to visit the Florence Correctional Center, Eloy Detention Center, Tucson Soft-Sided Facility, and San Miguel Gate. In addition, I attended a staff training in Chicago, and separately observed our inspectors in action at a detention oversight visit. Throughout my travels, I was able to



see firsthand how diligently OIDO staff work to promote safe and humane conditions alongside their DHS colleagues and members of the community.

So much has been achieved since the advent of this office, and I am pleased to be joining this critical work. A key priority for my time as ombudsman will be to ensure that case managers have the tools and resources they need to continue their work in responding to complaints and while also leveraging the expertise and knowledge we have throughout OIDO to maximize our impact and develop and work towards systemic solutions to detention challenges. I plan to focus on attorney access, segregation practices, and enhancing contract compliance. Working toward these goals will help OIDO continue to evolve and further our influence ensuring safe and humane detention conditions.

I am excited to announce that OIDO's [Annual Report to Congress for 2023](#) is now available on our website. The report highlights numerous ways in which we have matured as an organization and continue to innovate in a changing landscape. Throughout this newsletter, we feature some of the key topics from our annual report. We'd love for you to join us at a virtual presentation on our 2023 accomplishments, the details of which can be found below.

I would like to conclude by thanking my colleagues and all our community partners. We are making a positive impact on lives across the country. I'm confident that our holistic approach, which integrates community input with the efforts of our fantastic employees, will help us overcome any obstacles we face. We look forward to tackling these challenges together.

OIDO's 2023 Annual Report Webinar

There is a lot of information in this year's report as the office continued its growth. We will be hosting a webinar to expound upon some of our work, to include taking your questions!

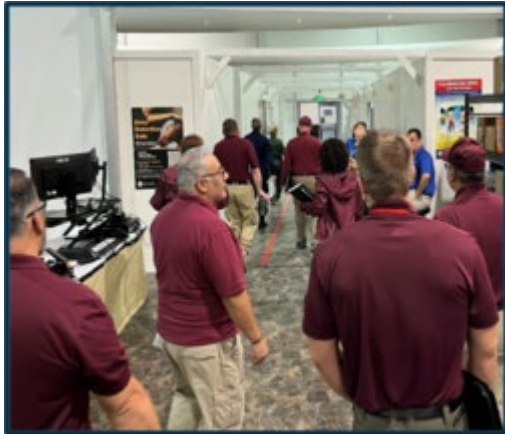
Please join us Thursday, May 30 at 2pm ET. To register, please click [here](#). We look forward to seeing you there!

June LGBTQ+ Pride Month

June is LGBTQ+ Pride Month, a time to celebrate the diversity and resilience of the LGBTQ+ community. OIDO is committed to supporting LGBTQ+ individuals within the immigration detention system. We strive to ensure that LGBTQ+ people who are detained are treated with dignity and respect. This includes ensuring detainee access to the necessary resources and support services. Our office actively works to address any issues of discrimination or mistreatment, ensuring that the rights and well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals are upheld throughout their time in DHS custody.



Features from OIDO's 2023 Annual Report



Quick Reactions

One of the features that most sets OIDO apart from other oversight entities is the ability to pivot quickly to respond to emerging issues. In 2023, OIDO demonstrated its ability to deploy resources, make meaningful observations, collect information, and work collaboratively to help partners make adjustments in support of upholding detention and custody standards.

For example, in July and August of 2023, Arizona-based case managers were able to assist detained individuals at CBP's Ajo Station and ICE's Desert

View Annex, where CBP was experiencing an influx of migrants for processing. At Desert View, an unexpected increase in detained Mauritians presented communication challenges. OIDO's language access tools allowed case managers to speak to the Mauritians in their native languages, including Wolof and Soninke.

In November, members of OIDO's leadership team went to high traffic areas in Arizona, performing informal observations at Ajo Station, the Nogales Processing Center, Douglas Station, and Tucson's hard- and soft-sided facilities. These observations allowed OIDO to make informed decisions about placement of staff and provided an unbiased view for departmental leadership as they make decisions about resources.

Contracting and Fiscal Responsibility

OIDO is working on developing a standardized process to examine and make recommendations to address violations of contract terms in immigration detention facilities. ICE and CBP procure contract support for services such as security, medical care, food, and child-care along with full facility management. OIDO's statutory oversight role includes examining whether terms of contracts are met, including whether contractors operating on behalf of ICE or CBP are meeting standards.

In 2023, OIDO finalized its review of the CBP medical support contract for the Southwest border and found that medical staffing shortages remained a major concern. In several other locations, OIDO's inspections led to similar findings that both ICE and CBP facilities alike were experiencing shortages in personnel and contractual requirements were not being

met. For example, at the Folkston ICE Processing Center, OIDO found that the facility did not comply with contractual requirements for overall staffing.

In response, the contractor filled vacancies and continues to recruit and interview to meet contractual obligations. Meanwhile, ICE indicated that it would closely monitor staffing levels at the facility. OIDO will follow up on these efforts to ensure that corrective actions are completed and that the issue does not re-emerge.



OIDO is concerned not only with the noncompliance issue itself, but also the underlying cause and impact of the deficiency. For example, when OIDO examines staffing, it looks not only at the raw staffing numbers compared to the contractual requirement but also at the types of position vacancies and how the facilities address these deficiencies. In 2023, OIDO reviewed contracts in four areas, including: electronic tablets, medical staffing, credentialing, and training in ICE facilities. The results of these reviews are forthcoming.

These are just a few highlights. The full annual report is available on our website. You can find it [here!](#)

Inspection Reports



Over the last quarter OIDO released an inspection report for the **Broward Transitional Center (BTC)** in Pompano Beach, Florida (unannounced inspection, conducted December 2022).

This inspection was conducted primarily to examine and follow-up on issues noted during three previous inspections of the facility. OIDO reviewed the facility's compliance with specific criteria related to the following areas: facility security, post orders, staff-detainee communication, food service, medical staffing, peer review, and credentialing, telephone access, grievance system, staff training, and COVID-19 protocols.

OIDO's inspection led to 10 findings categorized as follows: eight areas of compliance, one area of non-compliance, and one area of concern. Specifically, the facility had one violation—an instance of non-compliance with standards—in that health services personnel did not complete mandatory orientation and annual training. Additionally, OIDO found one area of concern in that the facility's credentialing policy and procedures lacked clear guidance for requirements to conduct a National Practitioner Data Bank Query for the Allied Health Professionals during the biannual recertification process.

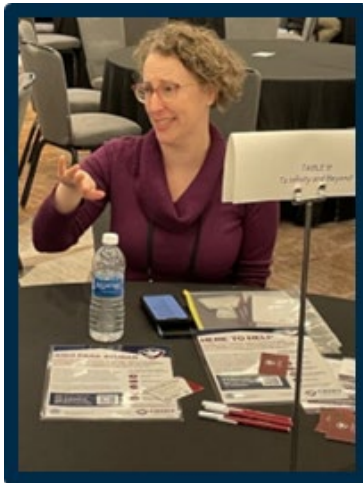
Full reports, which describe in detail the areas OIDO examined and other DHS component responses are available on our website [here](#).

OIDO Recent Events

Over the past few months leading into spring, we have completed a significant amount of outreach in various formats. Between February 1st and April 30th, we hosted over 25 different meetings!

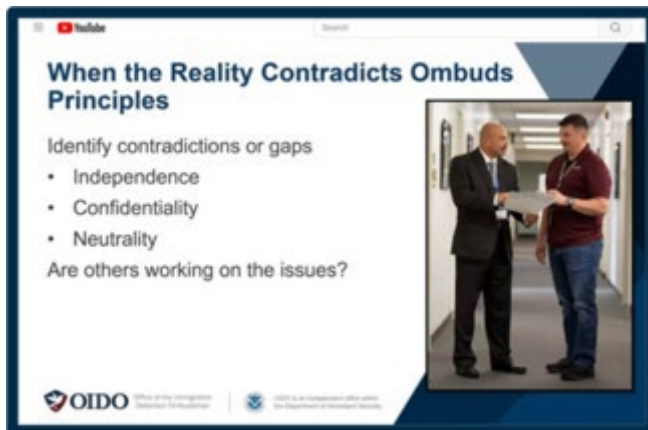
In April, OIDO held a webinar and a roundtable discussion. This type of outreach helps us understand community concerns and allows us to explain some of our work. Our webinar focused on gathering feedback for [myOIDO](#), our user-friendly online complaint intake form. It is designed to collect as many details as possible and can be accessed on our website. Please feel free to send us suggestions or ideas to make myOIDO more efficient!

We also held a roundtable discussion on legal access, inviting ICE to help explain some of their processes. ICE presented an overview of their [attorney information resources](#), virtual attorney visitation, ICE.gov Facility Pages, and [ERO eFile](#)—the method ICE uses to accept electronic filings of G-28 forms. More information can be found on ICE's [website](#).



Additionally, OIDO discussed detention segregation. We have been actively monitoring whether individuals in this setting are afforded legal access. Specifically, OIDO sent case managers across the country to various facilities to review how being classified under administrative/disciplinary segregation affects access to legal services. It is now common practice for our case managers to visit these areas to ensure access to OIDO and promote compliance with standards. Legal representatives also reported having difficulties gaining entry to some facilities. In such cases, filing a detailed complaint with us as soon as possible will assist us in identifying and addressing these issues.

OIDO traveled to Indianapolis, Indiana, to attend the annual International Ombuds Association Conference. We presented multiple breakout sessions to further discussions on ombuds topics and trends, which allowed us to hear diverse perspectives on ombuds work.



We were also able to work with the Department of State to coordinate a presentation by OIDO to the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM). This conference provides a space for respectful, frank, and honest discussions among member countries. Our participation allowed OIDO to showcase our work and serve as a point of contact for concerns about detention conditions in the United States. To view our presentation, click [here!](#)

Additionally, OIDO has begun introductory presentations for USCIS community engagement representatives. Since USCIS might receive questions or complaints from individuals who have been held in detention environments or who know someone who has,

our goal is to ensure a seamless handoff from USCIS to OIDO when there are complaints or concerns related to the conditions of immigration detention. Streamlining this referral process will continue to help us identify and address issues. We also routinely receive inquiries about immigration processes and USCIS matters that are outside our jurisdiction. This two-way dialogue helps us connect stakeholders with the appropriate contacts they need.

Case Management Data (2/1/2024 – 4/30/2024)



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 February 1, 2024, and April 30, 2024, OIDO received a total of 2,846 complaints. Most complaints concerned the facility environment, contact and communication, or medical/mental health care.

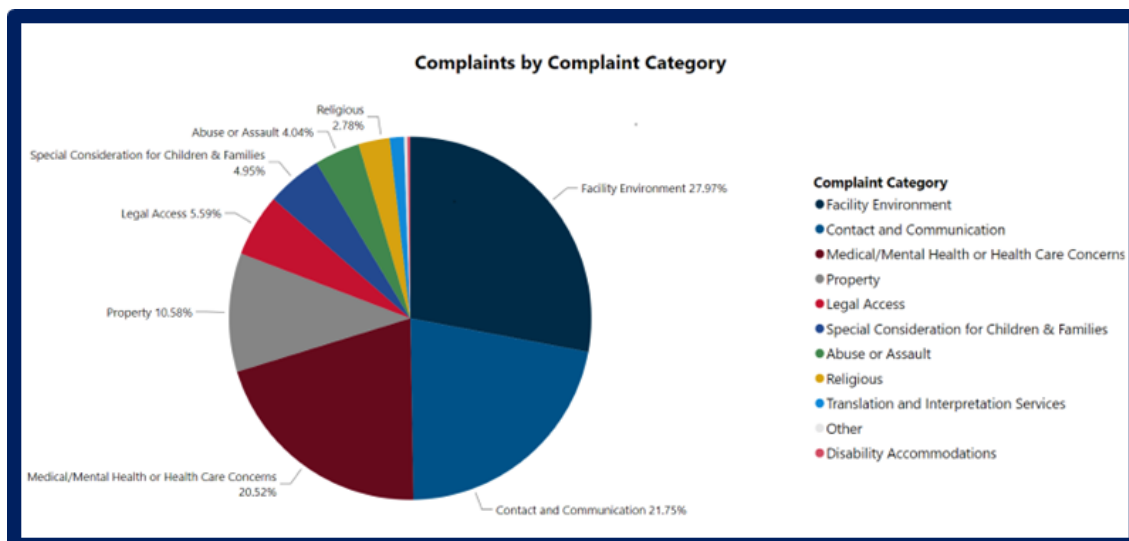
Case management data is one of many elements we look at to make recommendations on improving immigration conditions, to focus inspections, and our outreach efforts.

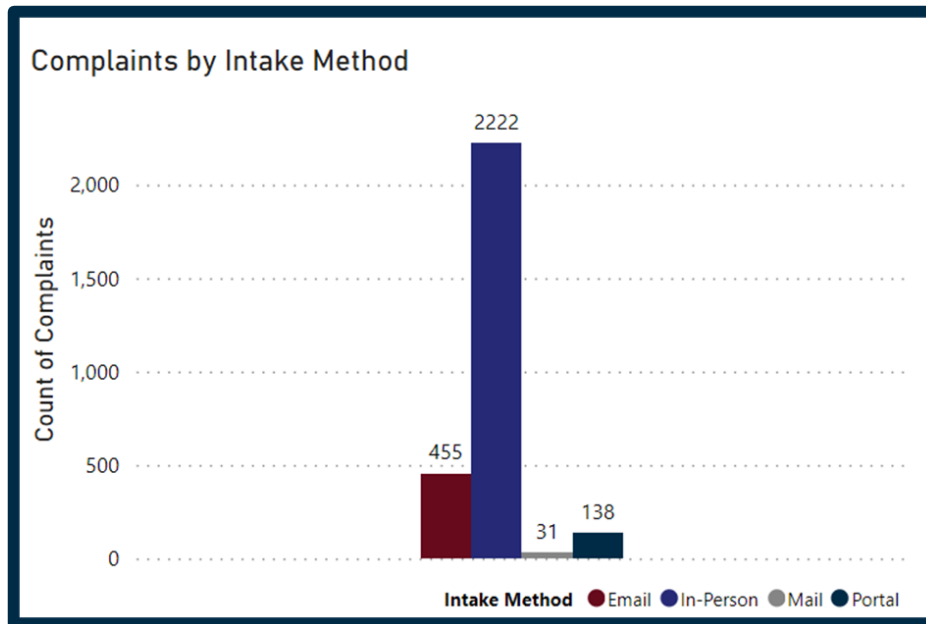
Case Management Complaint Snapshot

Number of Closed Complaints

3104

These snapshots help us identify the categories of issues raised to OIDO and present them to our colleagues and stakeholders. We continue to refine the process in how we receive complaints. Most complaints we receive come from within a detention facility, directly from an individual to one of our case managers. Email, our [PDF form](#), and [myOIDO](#) are other ways that we accept complaints.





OIDO Case Managers 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. Case managers focus on responding to individual complaints they receive from people in detention; they may share some larger issues that arise with local ICE, CBP, or facility personnel. They also share this information internally to inform future inspections and/or policy recommendations. These are just a few stories from the field.

Religious Accommodations

An OIDO case manager received a complaint from a detained individual observing Ramadan. The individual alleged that the guards were delivering their dinner meal trays at the same time as those of other detainees (4:30 PM). As a result, they had to set their food aside for nearly two hours since they do not break their fast until 6:00 PM, leading to their meals becoming cold. Furthermore, the individual reported that some guards were not allowing them to save the trays for later and were forcing them to discard their meals.

The OIDO case manager met individually with the facility chaplain and the food service manager. The chaplain confirmed that individuals participating in Ramadan should receive their meal trays later, at 6:00 PM, to accommodate their fasting schedule. He informed the food service manager that the meal schedule for Ramadan observers needed to be adjusted so that they receive their meals just before they break their fast each day.

The OIDO case manager found no evidence that staff were discarding detainees' food and observed that food trays were being collected and returned in a timely manner.

A few days later, the OIDO case manager revisited the facility to follow up with the detained individual. The individual reported that they were now receiving their dinner meal trays at 6:00 PM each day, just before ending their fast. The individual thanked OIDO and the facility staff for accommodating their religious needs.

Resolved Facility Environment Complaint

An OIDO case manager met with a detained person who stated their sink was not working. The individual stated that the sink in his dorm room had been broken for a month, and there was no water coming out. They went on to report that they had spoken to facility staff many times over the course of a month and nothing had been fixed yet. The OIDO case manager spoke with facility staff regarding the broken sink and provided the individual's dorm room number. The facility staff stated they would send maintenance to check on the sink as soon as possible.

The following week, OIDO met with the detained person, who stated facility staff had fixed the sink.

Follow OIDO on X/Twitter!

Stay in the loop by following OIDO on X/Twitter [@OIDOgov](#) – we'll be sharing important updates, OIDO engagements, handy tips to navigate our website and submit case forms, and new OIDO publications. Follow OIDO on X/Twitter and be part of the conversation as our office continues to grow!



To the Community

We want to hear from you! If you feel that your complaint has not been fully addressed, contact us—we are here to help. If you have concerns—or compliments!—about how a case was handled by OIDO, please contact us at OIDO_Outreach@hq.dhs.gov.

Our mailing address is:

Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman (OIDO)

Mail Stop 0134

Department of Homeland Security

Washington DC 20528-0134

ATTN: OIDO Case Intake Form (DHS Form 405)

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

For information on our structure and mission, please visit our website at dhs.gov/OIDO.

Keep in Touch

[Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman | Homeland Security \(dhs.gov\)](https://dhs.gov/OIDO)

OIDO_Outreach@hq.dhs.gov

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