



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! With the multiple heat waves across much of the United States, we hope you are staying safe out there and have enjoyed your summer! OIDO has continued on through the heat, in our oversight and ombudsing role.

During these past summer months, I've traveled through New Mexico, Arizona, Indiana, Kentucky, and Illinois, visiting detention facilities and meeting with local stakeholders, as well as with our partners in ICE and CBP. I also met with detention Ombuds working in other settings, and I have appreciated getting their perspectives.

I accompanied our team on our inspection of the Tarrant County Detention Facility in New Mexico (more details on that below). I also toured the Boone County, Kentucky, and the Clay County, Indiana, jail detention centers. From there, I traveled to Chicago and spoke to a packed audience at the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) Conference. I was beyond pleased to see and hear from many of you in attendance. More details on the conference can be found below.

Internally, we are ensuring that case managers have the tools and resources they need to continue their work in responding to complaints. Part of this is ensuring case managers have language identification guides and consistent, approachable uniforms, with our logos (look for gray or burgundy shirts with our hummingbird!)

We are leveraging expertise and knowledge throughout OIDO to maximize our impact and develop systemic solutions to detention challenges.

In the coming year, I plan to focus on attorney access, segregation practices, and enhancing contract compliance. Regarding attorney access, our case managers are more proactively asking those in detention if they have had problems reaching out to their attorney or accessing organizations that provide legal representation.

In terms of segregation, we continue to monitor conditions through frequent visits to these areas of detention, aiming to ensure that those who have been placed in segregation are afforded access to resources as provided by the applicable detention standards. OIDO also continues to monitor

whether the process for placement in segregation – administrative or disciplinary – is compliant with applicable standards. In addition, we are examining the use of segregation more closely so that we may consider future recommendations for policies and practices that offer alternatives and reduce the need for segregation overall.

As for contract compliance, we review whether facilities are meeting both detention standards and also contract requirements, thus ensuring that the government is getting what it pays for and that facilities are safe. Contractors should be held accountable to both the standards and contract requirements. For example, if a contract says a facility needs to be staffed at a certain level, we review actual staffing levels and what consequences should apply when contract requirements are not met. OIDO is employing not only investigators but also auditors to ensure contract compliance.

Please remember that if you have comments or suggestions, you can reach out to us. We enjoy hearing from you!

Inspection Reports



OIDO has released an inspection report for **Critical Issues Concerning Electronic Tablet Administration, Oversight, and Use in ICE Detention Facilities** (Between September 2022 and January 2023, OIDO conducted 11 announced inspections).

Guidelines for electronic tablet use and access are essential for the effective administration of tablet programs in immigration detention facilities to maintain a safe and secure detention environment. OIDO assessed the administration, oversight, and distribution of electronic tablets to detainees as well as detainee tablet use.

Based on these facility inspections and other related investigative activity, OIDO determined that there are several ongoing and systemic issues related to the lack of staff oversight, training, access, and monitoring of electronic tablets at immigration detention facilities. OIDO found that most of the inspected facilities did not have comprehensive policies and procedures in place to facilitate accountability and oversight of the electronic tablets and to ensure detainee tablet access is fair and equitable. Furthermore, detainees have not been provided with adequate local guidance on how to use electronic tablets or what their privileges and responsibilities are for using the tablets.

To address OIDO's concerns, an ICE policy or guidance is needed to require the creation and implementation of consistent local policy, procedures, and/or guidance on tablets that reflects ICE's administrative processes and maintains a safe and secure detention environment for staff and detainees. Specifically, OIDO has made four recommendations to improve oversight and management of tablets and related conditions in ICE detention facilities. OIDO has also shared a draft standard for tablet use for ICE's consideration.

Over the last quarter, OIDO also released an inspection report of **Torrance County Detention Facility** (TCDF) in Estancia, New Mexico (unannounced inspection, conducted September 2022).

This inspection was conducted to review the facility's performance and compliance with applicable detention standards; in this case, the 2011 Performance-Based National Detention Standards as revised in 2016, and contract terms. While OIDO found several areas of both

compliance and non-compliance, OIDO found areas of initial non-compliance that were resolved either during or shortly after the inspection.

OIDO found the facility was non-compliant in the following areas: detainee classification reassessments, advance notification to the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) of monthly facility inspections, interactions of key ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) staff with detainees, use-of-force equipment, health care staff levels, on-duty physician five days a week, health care staff credentialing records, initial and refresher training for health care staff, N-95 fit testing for health care personnel, COVID-19 protocols, supervision of detainees on suicide precautions, and detainee sick call procedures.

OIDO also found ICE ERO non-compliant in maintaining a process that facilitates secure communication between detainees and ICE ERO officers. OIDO notes that the facility corrected one area of initial non-compliance during or shortly after the inspection, in regard to performing reassessments of detainee classifications. OIDO also notes that ICE ERO corrected one area of initial non-compliance during or shortly after the inspection in regard to creating a process to allow detainees direct, secure communications with ICE ERO.

OIDO made eight recommendations designed to improve operations at the facility and meet ICE detention standards and contract terms.

OIDO returned to Torrance in May 2024 to conduct a follow-up inspection. That report is forthcoming.

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

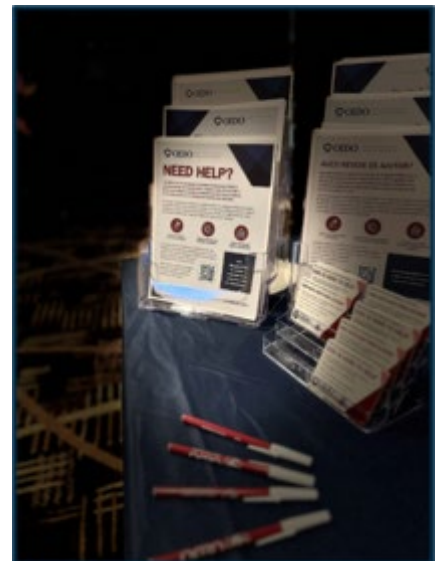
OIDO's New Border Operations Branch

OIDO's experiences in CBP facilities revealed a need to develop different techniques to successfully implement our persistent presence. While case managers have always been present at CBP facilities, CBP's policy of avoiding holding individuals in custody longer than 72 hours necessitates that OIDO adjust its operations to account for the differences between serving the detained population in CBP holding facilities as opposed to ICE detention facilities (where, because detainees' stays are longer, OIDO can collaborate more extensively with all stakeholders). To address this, in the month of July, OIDO established a new branch dedicated to CBP operations, with a focus on the Southwest border and U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) facilities and processing.

With this new Border Operations Branch in place, case managers will focus on engaging detainees specifically with concerns about family separation, medical needs, and safety. In this way, OIDO will be able to anticipate potential issues and help resolve them at the very beginning of migrants' processing journeys.

Case managers in the new branch will also focus on Border Patrol and Office of Field Operations (OFO) facilities where families and children are detained and processed, in order to bring OIDO's constant and consistent presence to ensure safe and humane conditions for families in the custody and detention process.

In addition to coordinating case managers' visits and activities at CBP facilities, this new branch will be responsible for maintaining situational awareness of current conditions and CBP



operations throughout the United States. By liaising with CBP operations, including USBP and OFO, OIDO will work to resolve complaints at the lowest operational level possible and inform leadership in USBP and OFO of systemic issues within the CBP realm.

With the focus on the Southwest border, OIDO will have dedicated Case Managers located in San Diego, CA, Tucson, AZ, and El Paso, Laredo and Rio Grande Valley, TX. Staff in this branch will also support Northern and other borders in the United States, by traveling to those regions, as needed.

OIDO Recent Events

A robust outreach schedule continued into the summer, as OIDO met with stakeholders from coast to coast to provide information and updates about the Office and hear feedback from those impacted by immigration detention. OIDO participated in more than 26 outreach events, meeting many organizations for the first time, including some in the Rio Grande Valley, Oregon, and Nevada. OIDO heard some consistent issues across stakeholder groups, including concerns about transportation standards, access to health care in detention, and the return of identification documents after release from custody.



In May, OIDO attended the Federal Bar Association's Immigration Law Conference in Salt Lake City, UT. OIDO hosted an exhibit table as well as headlining a luncheon Q&A session.

The biggest event for OIDO this quarter was the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) National Conference in Chicago, IL. OIDO's exhibit booth provided information to the 3,000 conference attendees. Ombuds Michelle Brané led a panel of OIDO subject matter experts that

provided the opportunity to share updates on the Office's work as well as for the Ombudsman to share her vision and priorities for OIDO over the next year.

In July, Ms. Brané also participated in a hearing convened by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). The IACHR is a human rights body, part of the Organization of American States. The IACHR is composed of several elected independent experts who fulfill the Commission's mandate to, among other things, receive and investigate individual petitions alleging human rights violations; conduct in-person country visits; and conduct hearings on human rights issues in Member States. The session focused on conditions at the Northwest ICE Processing Center in Tacoma, Washington. The Ombudsman spoke about OIDO's twice-weekly visits to the facility since April 2022 and shared that a report of an inspection OIDO conducted at the facility last year is forthcoming. The Office is hoping to visit Tacoma again before the end of the year.

OIDO continued to build relationships with government partners, as well. OIDO met with 14 congressional offices in three states and joined DHS component agencies in a recurring meeting with stakeholders on language access in detention.

Case Management Data (5/1/2024 – 7/31/2024)



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 May 1, 2024, and July 31, 2024, OIDO received a total of 2,412 complaints. Most complaints concerned the facility environment, contact and communication, or medical/mental health care.

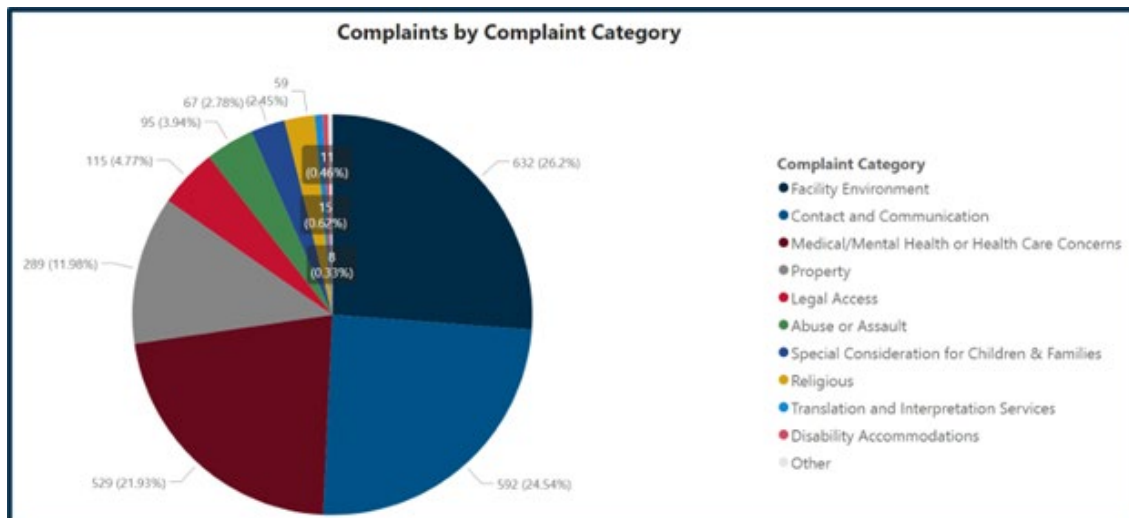
Case management data is one of many elements we look at to make recommendations on improving immigration conditions, to focus inspections, and our outreach efforts.

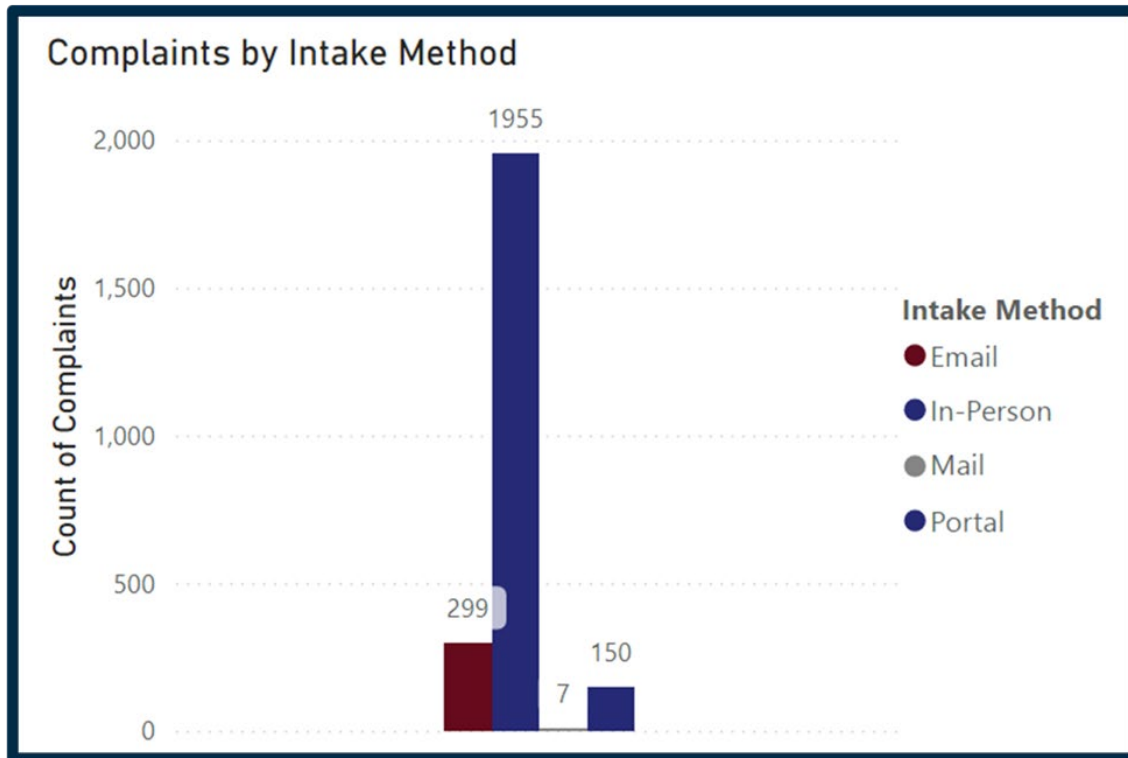
Case Management Complaint Snapshot

Number of Closed
Complaints

2438

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. Others are received online via [myOIDO](#) or via a [paper form](#) emailed to the Office.





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 also share some larger issues that arise with local ICE, CBP, or facility personnel. They share this information internally to inform future inspections and/or policy recommendations. These are a few stories from the field.

Medical Concerns

A detained individual was interviewed by an OIDO case manager. The detained person requested assistance with dental care; specifically, the individual suffered from ongoing pain from a prior tooth infection and stated he was having trouble getting the issue addressed.

On the same day, OIDO presented the individual's concerns to the facility's Dental Clinic staff and also notified the Health Administrator for the facility. OIDO was informed that the facility was in the middle of onboarding a new dentist, which accounted for some delays in delivering dental care. The facility staff expedited a sick call request and performed a wellness check on the detainee where he received an immediate evaluation and pain management treatment. The facility scheduled an immediate medical appointment for the detainee with the new dentist to determine a treatment plan. The individual then received follow-up dental treatment.

The immediate action taken by the OIDO case manager allowed the detainee to receive proper medical attention in a timely manner.

Communication

An OIDO case manager recently interviewed a detained person, who stated he had not been able to contact any friends or family since arriving at the facility because he did not write their phone numbers down from his cell phone at intake. The facility’s intake area had signage stating: “The intake area is the last time for cell phone access,” but the signs were only posted in English and Spanish, and the detainee’s primary language is Turkmen.

That same day, the OIDO case manager met with facility staff to explain the situation. Facility staff agreed to give the detainee access to his phone, and the OIDO case manager persisted in assisting the individual until he was able to access his family’s numbers on his phone. The detained individual expressed gratitude to OIDO for the assistance in resolving this issue.

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

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OIDO_Outreach@hq.dhs.gov

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