



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 Acting Ombudsman



It's the start of a new year, and I'm once again looking back with appreciation on all the work my team has put in and looking forward to how we will work with our partners on immigration detention.

In November, I presented at the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) Chiefs conference, allowing me the additional opportunity to speak with the Chiefs about OIDO's mission, hear from them about their experiences around the Nation, and discuss how we can continue to work together with other federal

agencies who have a direct effect on the immigration detention environment. While most of our work takes place in detention settings and ensuring that humane and safe conditions exist, a large portion also consists of working collaboratively with other governmental agencies like U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

In Fiscal Year 2023, we'll be expanding our current operations to more USBP Sectors, to include Big Bend, El Centro, Blaine, and Spokane. Our goal is to conduct periodic visits to as many USBP Stations as resources allow. We are still working out

the best way to carry out our individual case management operations within USBP stations where people are held so briefly. Nonetheless, this effort will allow our office to expand upon our oversight mission and gain a better understanding of conditions at these stations.

Recently, I participated in and executed an unannounced inspection of the Broward Transitional Center in Miami, FL, alongside our Detention Oversight team. I want to keep a solid grasp on our fieldwork and work with our staff to ensure our processes are as efficient and effective as possible. Look for this report on our website, coming soon.

In January, I brought my management team together (pictured above, wearing blue for National Human Trafficking Awareness Day) to plan for the coming years. We have laid the initial groundwork for our operations and now it's time for us to learn from the experience and enter a new phase of growth and refinement. We are streamlining communication processes, defining roles and responsibilities for improved information sharing and exchange, and prioritizing issues for greater focus across the organization. We also reviewed OIDO's Mission and Vision statements and goals. This allowed us the opportunity to make sure our organization, its values, and objectives are most reflective of the evolving immigration detention environment. I look forward to more strategic efforts like these in the months to come, and I look forward to hearing from you about what issues OIDO should take on in the future.

Join Us for Virtual Roundtables!

OIDO is hosting roundtable discussions to hear from you on the following issues:

- Thursday, March 9, 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM Eastern: Release and Transfer
- Thursday, March 16, 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM Eastern: Use of Segregation

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.

Separately, OIDO is excited to announce we are getting closer to launching an online version of our complaint form ([DHS Form 405](#))! This will streamline the complaint intake process. Help us by using the online form to file complaints related to the following locations, starting March 10:

- Baker County Facility—Macclenny, FL
- Central Louisiana ICE Processing Center—Jena, LA
- Eloy Federal Contract Facility—Eloy, AZ
- Florence Service Processing Center—Florence, AZ

- Krome North Service Processing—Miami, FL
- Montgomery ICE Processing Center—Conroe, TX
- Otay Mesa Detention Center— San Diego, CA
- South Louisiana ICE Processing Center—Basile, LA
- Stewart Detention Center—Lumpkin, GA
- Webb County Detention Center (CCA)—Laredo, TX

OIDO will have a training session on how to file a complaint using our new online feature on:

- Thursday, March 23, 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM Eastern: Online Complaint Intake Form Training

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

Recent OIDO Inspection Reports

El Valle Detention Facility

In March 2022, OIDO conducted an unannounced inspection of the El Valle Detention Facility (EVDF) in Raymondville, Texas to assess its compliance with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention standards and contract terms. OIDO performed a general inspection, reviewing 12 areas.

OIDO's inspection led to several findings. Related to performance standards and contract terms, OIDO found that EVDF complied with the detention standards overall, but did find violations in monitoring, training, and tracking. Notably, the facility made timely corrective actions to address the deficiencies prior to the publication of the report. OIDO made recommendations designed to improve operations at the facility, and ICE concurred with these recommendations.

Full reports are available on our website [here](#).



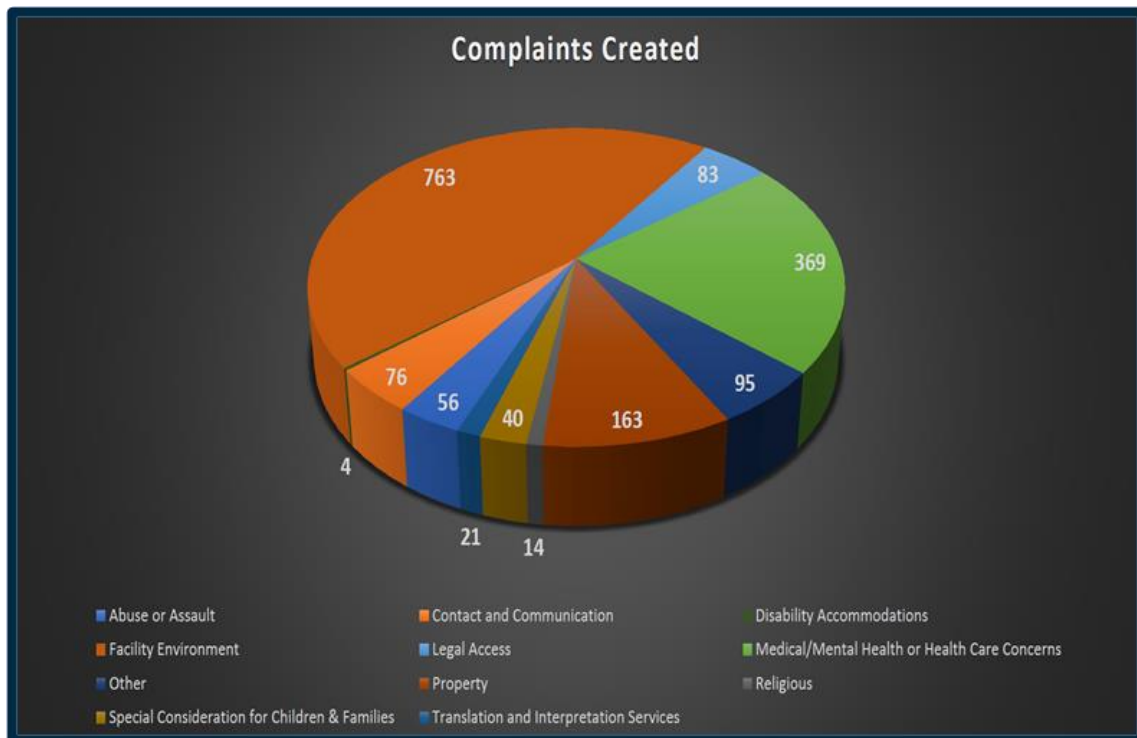
Case Management (11/1/2022 - 1/11/2023)



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). In the timeframe noted above, OIDO received a total of 1,684 complaints, and reviewed 1,619 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, and even how to be more intentional about our outreach efforts.

Case Management Complaint Snapshot



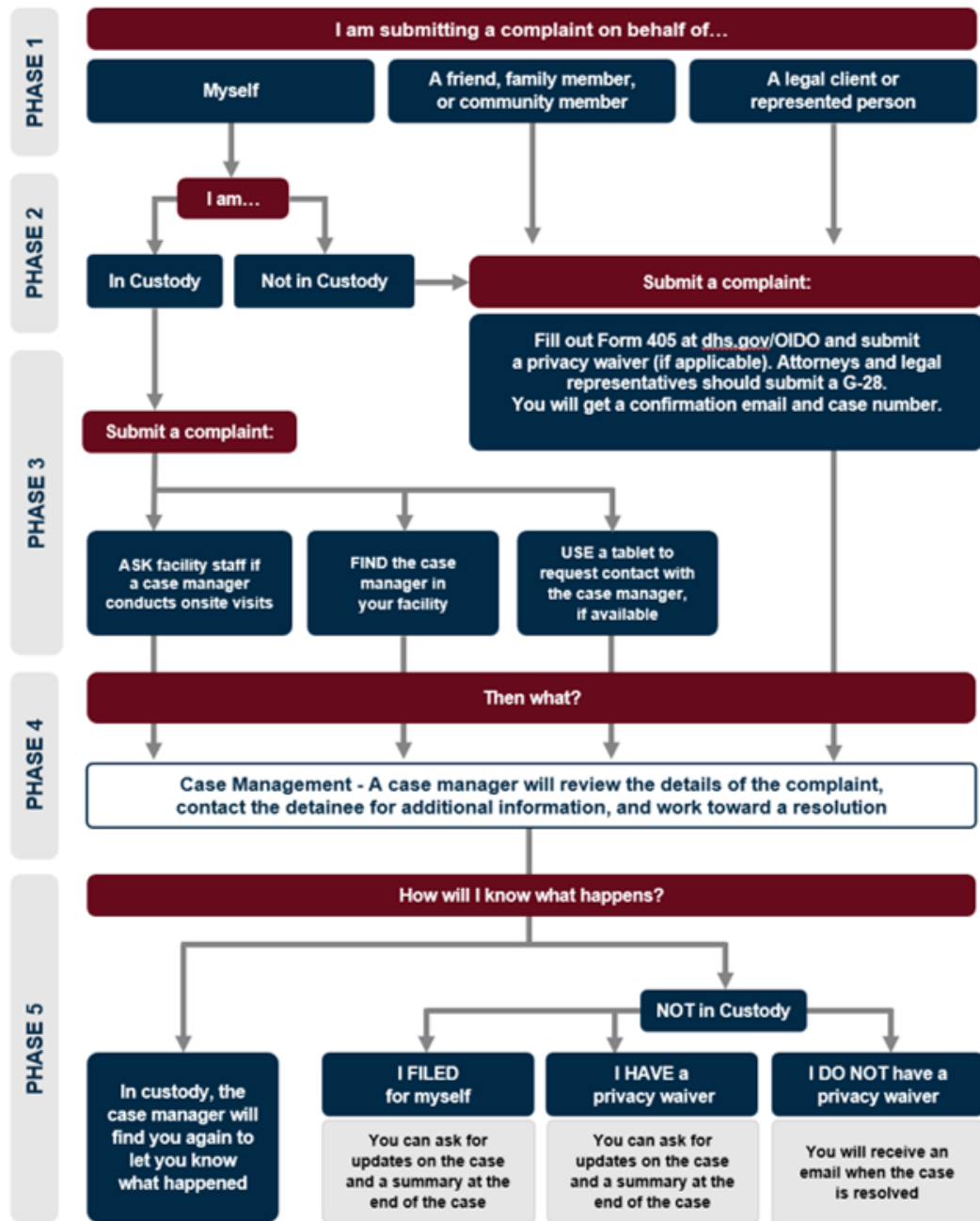
Complaint Category	Complaints Reviewed	Average of Days in Process
Abuse or Assault	36	12.0
Contact and Communication	72	13.1
Disability Accommodations	4	19.0
Facility Environment	728	12.7
Legal Access	64	8.5
Mental Health or Health Care Concerns	375	13.0
Other	92	7.5
Property	169	12.0
Religious	10	11.2
Special Consideration for Children & Families	45	11.1
Translation and Interpretation Services	24	13.4
Grand Total	1619	12.2

After a Complaint is Submitted

One of the most frequent questions we receive is regarding what happens after a complaint is filed with OIDO. If a complaint is submitted on behalf of a detainee, the submitter will receive an automatic response with a case number. The case manager will work with the detainee and facility staff to address the complaint.

The graphic below (and on our [website](#)) represents an example of how a complaint may be handled under OIDO's current processes. In some cases, certain steps may not be practicable or possible. Each complaint is reviewed and a variety of steps may be taken. OIDO is reviewing and revising processes to ensure that we are best serving our mission of promoting and supporting safe and humane conditions in immigration detention.

OIDO Complaint Submission



If you need assistance with this graphic, please contact OIDO_Outreach@hq.dhs.gov

Please note: If OIDO has not received consent from the detainee for us to share information with the submitter about the complaint, we will still investigate the complaint and may communicate with the detainee, but we will not share case management details with the submitter.

If a complaint is submitted by the detainee to a case manager in person, the detainee will be notified and updated as the case manager works through case specifics. Most complaints are submitted by detainees directly to a case manager.

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.

Safety and Security

OIDO received three separate concerns about harassment from within the same housing pod of a facility. When our case manager spoke with the detainees individually, they each stated they were homosexual, and that another detainee was calling them derogatory names. These individuals did not feel safe going to the cafeteria, engaging in recreation, or showering because of the name-calling. OIDO spoke with the facility's counselor about the concerns. The counselor met with each of the three men. The case manager's presence onsite and ability to coordinate with staff helped the facility to respond quickly to these concerns. When OIDO returned to follow up with the detainees, all had been moved to different pods. The three reported that they all felt much safer and were returning to eating, showering, recreation, and their other normal activities.

Facilitating Legal Access

A detainee alleged that he was not able to attend a scheduled court hearing via phone call because the court time set for him was during the facility's headcount, and facility staff turned off his call a half hour into the court session. The detainee

wanted to see if OIDO could work with the facility to arrange his court call for a nontraditional time.

After the case manager spoke with facility staff, the detainee stated that the Warden and Captain both said they would work with him to get his phone call for court. He also stated he was happy with the result.

Facility Environment

An OIDO case manager spoke with a detainee who stated that she had bugs in her pod. The bugs, she alleged, had caused allergic reactions among detainees. The detainee requested that OIDO help ensure something be done to get rid of the bugs, and she showed bite marks on her arm that were allegedly caused by the bugs.

OIDO was able to work with the facility, and an outside pest control company was brought in to address the bug problem. The complaint was resolved within two weeks, solving the issue for both the detainee who complained as well as others in the facility. OIDO continues to monitor reported issues to ensure compliance with detention standards, while also making attempts to provide immediate redress.

Water Quality

Over the last several months, detained individuals complained about the bad taste of water at one facility. OIDO worked with the facility to have the water tested; the test came back indicating a high level of copper -- over the Environmental Protection Agency's recommendation on safe levels for drinking water. Facility leadership is taking action to resolve the copper levels in the water and found other sources of water for detainees in the short term.

ICE Collaboration

Recently, a detainee came to an OIDO case manager, deeply concerned about her detained son -- who has cognitive difficulties -- and his potential removal back to Central America without a trusted person to assist him once he arrives. The case manager notified ICE of the issue and worked with ICE to find information regarding her son. He had been scheduled for removal, but the detainee was allowed to make an international call to ensure family could meet him at the airport. The case manager's actions ensured timely communication, as they serve as a dependable liaison between the detainee and ICE.

Recent Events

Holidays in New Mexico



Staff from OIDO and the Otero Processing Center participated in delivering close to 200 holiday presents to students of the four elementary schools in Chaparral, NM in December. Counselors of each school chose 50 students based not only on need but grades, attendance, and behavior. The kids wrote letters to Santa, and employees from the

Otero Processing Center took care of the rest!

Caption: Members of OIDO with Otero Processing Center staff pictured with presents for the Chaparral, New Mexico elementary students. *(Photo credit: DHS OIDO Case Management Division)*

Outreach Activities

While conducting outreach in the National Capital Region, OIDO met with eight stakeholders including advocacy organizations, legal clinics, universities, think tanks, and the Guatemalan Embassy to introduce OIDO and discuss the stakeholders' observations and concerns regarding immigration detention conditions.



OIDO held seven virtual meetings with advocacy organizations, state offices, and other stakeholders to introduce OIDO and listen to emerging observations and concerns regarding immigration detention conditions. We met with the ICE Health Service Corps (IHSC) to introduce the outreach team and further open lines of communication between OIDO and IHSC. OIDO has also conducted meetings in Wisconsin, California, and New Jersey this quarter. These meetings were intended to increase awareness of OIDO's roles and responsibilities related to immigration detention. Additionally, the meetings provided clarity on the OIDO complaint process.

OIDO held six Lunch and Learn sessions for EOIR Immigration Judges. These sessions gave OIDO a chance to share about our work and how we can be a resource

for judges, court staff, and the people who appear before them; Judges shared what they see and hear from detainees in their courtrooms. The courts have offered to help spread the word about what OIDO can do when issues or concerns with the detention environment are raised and OIDO's involvement may be helpful. This is an ongoing project, and OIDO's goal is meeting with all Immigration Judges.

OIDO held three roundtables during the month of December: Property in Immigration Detention, Language Access in Immigration Detention, and LGBTQ+ concerns. 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. This resulted in OIDO gaining increased knowledge and understanding of the concerns regarding these discussion topics and will help OIDO make informed policy recommendations moving forward.

On the OIDO Website

OIDO's website is available entirely in English and Spanish.

New posters, one-pagers, and other materials for detainees and submitters will soon be available in 19 languages on our website. Currently, new materials are available in English. The materials reflect our new logo—matching our materials to our case managers' uniforms—and contain information that is easier to decipher.

OIDO's Case Intake Form ([Form 405](#)) is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Russian, Turkish, Arabic, and Romanian. People with questions or concerns can contact the OIDO Outreach team (at OIDO_Outreach@hq.dhs.gov) in the language they're most comfortable using; OIDO will handle translation and will respond in their language. OIDO also employs multilingual Case Managers and uses a language line for interpretation in facilities (separate from those used by ICE and CBP).



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.

Please make note that our office has moved. 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.

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