



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



Greetings from OIDO, where our team is embracing the heat and is busier than ever! As we continue to grow, I am delighted to share some exciting updates with you.

I am thrilled to announce that OIDO published its official [Annual Report to Congress](#) in June, which highlights the progress we've made this past year toward ensuring safe and humane conditions in immigration detention. Since our founding, OIDO has resolved 11,000 cases and expanded our presence into 90 detention facilities nationwide – and we're just getting started! I do encourage you to check out the report. It really helps paint a vibrant picture of the work we do at OIDO, how we differ from other organizations in our approach to oversight, and how we are becoming a

benchmark for oversight success.

In June, I had the honor of attending the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) conference in Orlando, where I spoke about OIDO's mission alongside our Case Management Division Director and the Deputy Director of our Medical Support Program. We received some great feedback from the conference attendees, and I am excited to speak with more groups in the future to share OIDO's continued progress!

Our team has been busy across the country these past few months. From the rollout of our [Language Access Plan](#), to stakeholder visits in Austin and the National Association of Counties Conference (NACo), to Chicago to meet with more stakeholders, to the publication of inspection reports about Mesa Verde and Florence, we have been working diligently to ensure safe and humane conditions in immigration detention. Our case managers continue to visit detention facilities across the country.

Earlier this summer, the OIDO team and I visited CBP facilities across the Southwest Border to observe changes after the end of the CDC's temporary Title 42 public health order. I want to emphasize that our office was designed in a way that allows us to be nimble and shift operations quickly as trends change in the immigration environment. There was so much uncertainty about how the end of Title 42 would impact the immigration detention landscape. Our team was able to review real time data, physically monitoring the situation, so we could ensure new processes were being implemented smoothly and that OIDO was in the best position to monitor detention conditions.

As we transition into the fall, I am excited about what the future holds for our organization. OIDO remains committed to its mission of ensuring safe and humane conditions wherever people are held in DHS custody. I encourage you to visit our website and follow us on [Twitter](#) (X) to access our reports, stay updated on our activities, and explore the valuable resources we offer. We appreciate your continued engagement and support!

OIDO Recent Events

Since our last newsletter, OIDO wrapped up our efforts to inform Immigration Judges across the country about our work. This is an ongoing effort to help educate the courts on OIDO's unique mission and how we can help in the detention environment. This was also a chance for OIDO to hear what the courts are seeing. Over the past few months, we met with Immigration Judges in Atlanta, Ulster, Stewart, Hartford, Annandale, Falls Church, Richmond, Krome, Miami, New York, and Orlando. We will continue to work with Immigration Judges and the Executive Office for Immigration Review to ensure open communication that allows us to be a resource for judges and court staff concerned with immigration conditions.

In June, OIDO held a virtual presentation on our Language Access Plan. OIDO recognizes the importance of having information available in easy-to-understand material for those who have limited English proficiency. After the presentation, participants helped OIDO understand concerns with language access and allowed OIDO to explain how the language access plan will benefit those in the detention environment. Two frequently used avenues are available for case managers in facilities. The “I Speak” language identification guide and telephonic interpretation access line help case managers identify languages and reduce communication barriers. The Language Access Plan can be found online on OIDO’s website or by clicking [here](#).

We also participated in 23 other meetings with stakeholders in cities across the country. These meetings continue to help OIDO explain our mission and better understand concerns held by those who work with immigrant communities.

2023 AILA Conference

Orlando, Florida hosted the 2023 American Immigration Lawyers Association Conference. OIDO attended this event to further strengthen community relations and hear from immigration attorneys about their work with detained clients.

The following are a few examples of additional information shared with the audience at the AILA conference and elsewhere:

Reports: As found within this issue of the newsletter, each year OIDO provides an extensive review of our operations to Congress. In addition, we provide monthly updates to the Secretary of DHS. These updates consist of recent OIDO events, completed inspections and other OIDO findings.

Evaluation of Medical Care: The medical arena, much like immigration, is an ever-changing environment. OIDO has established a medical team that is able to consult with our case managers and inspectors on medical concerns. We have put special emphasis on evaluating access to care, specialty care follow-up, and ensuring mental health concerns are accounted for within the detention space.

Branding Campaign: Recently OIDO has leveraged social media to help in our efforts of educating the public about our office. This conference gave us another opportunity to showcase how we continue to accomplish this.

Federal Bar Association Conference

In early May, Arlington, Virginia hosted the 2023 Federal Bar Association Immigration Law Conference. The event allowed OIDO a public forum to display new branding material and get information into the hands of our community partners. We were able to present our office and take questions from the audience. OIDO spoke with other community partners and created open lines of communication. Having this face-to-face interaction with stakeholders allows OIDO to further understand the issues relating to immigration detention and the needs of different communities.



Chicago Outreach

In July, OIDO traveled to Chicago to meet with immigration law clinics, non-profit organizations, legal providers, consulates, and congressional offices that all have an interest in safe and humane detention conditions. Over two busy days of meetings, OIDO introduced itself as a resource to groups who may not already be familiar with our work - but we were thrilled to hear that many groups had heard about OIDO and our case manager for the Chicago area!

During our time in the Windy City, OIDO was able to discuss the challenges, questions, and goals of each group – and how OIDO can help.

National Association of Counties Conference



The National Association of Counties (NACo) conference helps identify needs across the country while sharing best practices and developments in county operations. Austin, Texas hosted this year's NACo conference. Many counties are exploring concerns and opportunities relating to immigration detention and other immigration issues.

OIDO attended this conference and participated in these discussions. OIDO had a display table in the conference center with our new material available to the public. We met with county government officials to both explain how OIDO can help in the detention space, and to listen to concerns that are representative of different areas of the United States. This allowed OIDO to see different trends, themes, and engage with a broad audience.

In addition, OIDO was invited to participate in a panel of Department of Homeland Security officials and present an updated overview of our office. The session related to immigration reform but allowed OIDO to showcase its efforts as a neutral oversight agency. We also took some time to reach out into the Austin, Texas community, meeting with non-governmental organizations, consulates, and congressional staffers. This again allowed us to explain what we have been up to and where we are headed as an organization.

Recent OIDO Inspection Reports

Central Arizona Florence Correctional Center

In August 2022, OIDO conducted an unannounced inspection of the Central Arizona Florence Correctional Center (FCC) in Florence, Arizona. Contributing factors for the selection of this facility were its geographical location and detainee population. This inspection was designed to assess the facility's performance and compliance with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention standards and contract terms.



OIDO's inspection led to several findings, and OIDO found violations in two areas. Specifically, the facility had a damaged roof that created unsafe living conditions. Second, a facility camera used to record a use of force incident did not have the date set correctly and created an incorrect record of the incident's date; the camera has since been replaced and OIDO confirmed that the replacement camera displayed the correct date and time. OIDO made one recommendation to improve operations and conditions at the facility to meet ICE detention standards and contract terms (roof replacement as soon as possible).

Mesa Verde ICE Processing Center

In August and September 2022, OIDO conducted an announced inspection of the Mesa Verde ICE Processing Center (MVIPC) in Bakersfield, California to assess its performance and compliance with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention standards and the Pandemic Response Requirements. Contributing factors for inspecting the facility included unresolved deficiencies noted in previous inspections and referrals by OIDO's Case Management Division. OIDO reviewed the facility's compliance with specific criteria related to the following areas of review: Special Management Units (SMU), staff-detainee communication, food service, medical care, recreation, significant self-harm and suicide prevention and intervention, and Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) protocols.

OIDO's inspection led to several findings. MVIPC complied with standards in all areas reviewed except three aspects of medical care. The areas of compliance included: SMU, staff-detainee communication, food service, recreation, and medical care requirements related to health assessments, mental health referrals, sick call procedures, medical staffing, medical staff credentialing, communication about medical care with detainees with limited English proficiency, and COVID-19 protocols. The facility's deficiencies were in the following areas: providing ongoing medical care to detainees in accordance with providers' orders, protecting detainee confidential medical information, and completing required welfare checks and daily mental health treatments of detainees on suicide watch. While OIDO found non-compliance issues in three areas, the facility took corrective actions following the inspection to address the noted deficiencies.

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

Case Management (5/1/2023 - 7/31/2023)

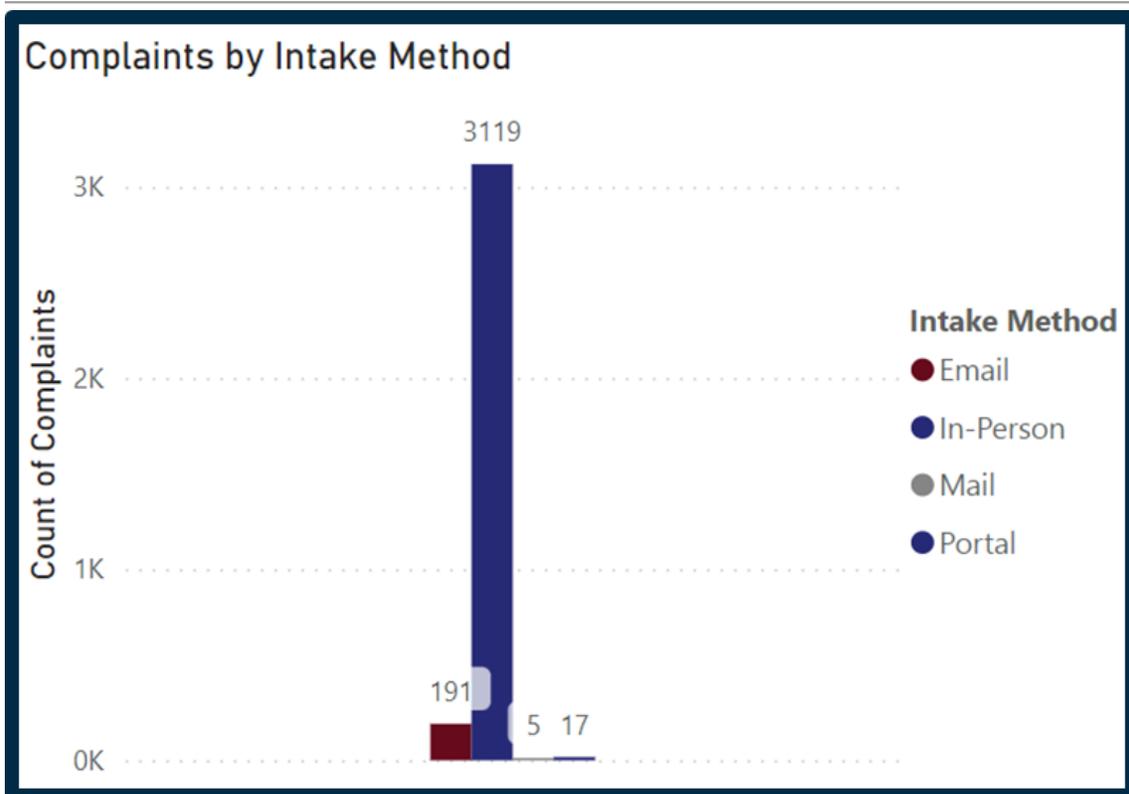
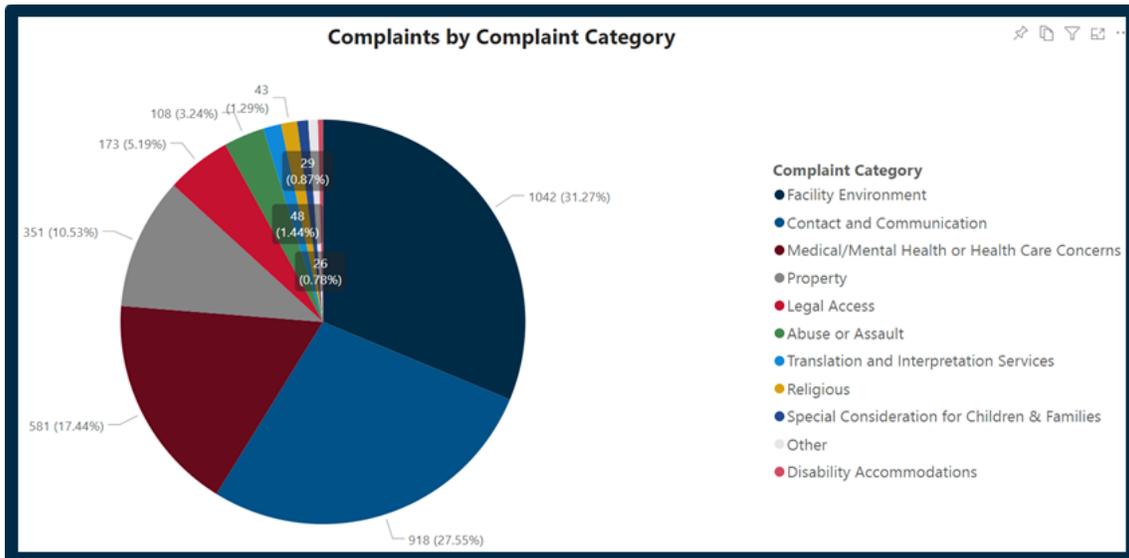


Since OIDO started taking in cases in late 2021, we have received many different complaints from people in detention, as well as their friends, families, and representatives. Complaints come from people who are currently or were previously held in administrative immigration custody on the authority of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Between May 1, 2023 and July 31, 2023, OIDO received a total of 3,332 complaints. Most complaints concerned the facility environment, contact and communication, or medical/mental health care.

Case Management Complaint Snapshot

As mentioned in our last newsletter, OIDO has modified its categories of complaints to include the new category of Contact and Communication. This new category covers both communication between detainees and staff, and between detainees and people outside of facilities, which were previously included in the category of facility environment. We anticipate that since this is a new category, numbers will be more accurately proportioned into it as we move forward.

Lastly, as noted above, we now have an additional option to file complaints using our online complaint intake portal ([myOIDO](#)). Its expansion to cover all facilities will continue to decrease barriers for filing a complaint and give us a clearer picture of the detention landscape.





OIDO is excited to release our annual report! OIDO is mandated by Congress to provide an annual report on its activities. This is a great document to review if you are looking for an overview of our operations and what we intend them to look like in the future. At the end of 2021, OIDO had 12 case managers in the field, completed 13 facility inspections, and held 40 outreach events. By the same time in 2022, the Office had increased its case managers almost four-fold to 47 (Federal employees and contractors) in over 90 detention facilities, handling over 6,000 cases in 22 different states. We completed 22 facility inspections and published five formal inspection reports alongside one observation report and one Ombudsman's Alert.

These published reports found on OIDO's public-facing website include recommendations and Component responses regarding improvements to detention conditions across the country. The Office also completed over 150 external engagement events, meeting with approximately 136 stakeholders, and laid the policy groundwork for integration of language access and victim-centered approaches across all operations. Finally, OIDO released case intake Form 405 on its website in May 2022, significantly improving the public's access to OIDO for submission of complaints

2019

OIDO was established on December 20.



2020

OIDO formed an office and identified challenges to oversight and the provision of redress.



2021

OIDO expanded its presence at facilities throughout the country, built out its operational capabilities, launched pilot activities, conducted observations of key detention events, performed its first unannounced inspections, and introduced the Office to non-governmental organizations.



2022

In OIDO's first full year of operationalization, the Office grew to 60 staff regularly monitoring 90 facilities, handled over 6,000 cases, published six oversight reports, and assessed 26 facilities.



2023

OIDO will strive to assess and improve its existing field operations through continued partnership with DHS partners and frequent engagement with stakeholders, while establishing processes for leveraging its on-site presence through case management and detention oversight to make recommendations for systemic change.



Congress tasked OIDO with a broad ombudsman role that encompasses detention oversight, traditional advocacy ombudsman service, and freedom to independently recommend improvements in immigration detention conditions. In 2022, the Office continuously engaged in testing different models of staff deployment, data gathering, analysis, and internal and external stakeholder engagement. This allowed us to assess how OIDO can best achieve its mission— developing a synergistic detention oversight model with a strong commitment to having a continuous presence in the field and providing practical solutions to problems, challenges, and gaps in the immigration detention system. This effort continues to be a work in progress, and OIDO intends to remain agile and dynamic in its operations based on feedback received from stakeholders on its progress toward this goal.

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 also share this information internally to inform future inspections and/or policy recommendations. These are just a few stories from

the field.

Family Concerns

A detainee informed the OIDO case manager that she had been trying to reach out to ICE to receive assistance in locating her brother who was apprehended at the same time, at the border. The detainee stated that she was worried about her brother and just wanted to make sure that he was doing okay. The case manager informed the detainee that OIDO can follow up with ICE to ensure she receives an answer in a timely manner. The case manager quickly relayed the concern to ICE. ICE was then able to provide a response stating that they were able to locate the brother and that they'd share the information with the detainee. The case manager was able to resolve the case within the same day. The detainee later approached the case manager to say she felt relief that OIDO was able to assist in finding her brother so quickly.

Resources For Detainees

An OIDO case manager noticed that there were missing forms in a housing unit. The forms that usually are in this area allow detainees to file grievances, make requests, or become informed on how to communicate needs to different entities. In addition, at this facility, no tablets are available for use. Therefore, detainees did not have a channel to file grievances or make requests. The OIDO case manager spoke with the facility officer who was unaware of the situation. The officer stated that he would get new forms printed and posted. The case manager followed up the next day and saw that only some forms were replenished but not all of them. The case manager further spoke with another facility contact to ensure that all the forms were replenished as soon as possible. The case manager continued to monitor the situation and ensured that all forms were available within two days.

Disability Accommodations

While conducting a site visit, OIDO case managers found a detainee sitting on his bed with his head down, with tears in his eyes. The individual expressed he was very depressed due to his condition. After speaking with the individual, one of the case

managers learned that he has a below knee amputation and normally wears a prosthetic leg to aid him, but the detainee stated that he had not been able to wear his prosthetic leg due to deterioration of the prosthetic and lack of supporting compression apparel. The detainee stated that because of this, he had not been able to shower and had become dependent on other detainees to perform daily activities and necessities like using the restroom. After the case manager notified the Facility Administrator and Health Service Administrator, immediate medical corrective actions were taken, including notification to ICE. The facility immediately provided crutches to the detainee, and he was assigned to a bottom bunk for his personal safety and housed in an accessible dorm where he has access to a bench shower and other disability accommodations. OIDO will continue monitoring this case over future visits.

Around Town

DHS Headquarters Peer-to-Peer Award



One of OIDO's own, Rebecca Melis, received a DHS Headquarters Peer-to-Peer award as an innovator. Her nomination highlighted her work developing a database for OIDO from scratch, and for using new technology to connect it to an online portal for the public to file complaints about the conditions of immigration detention. Nominated by her peers within OIDO, Becca was recognized out of 89 nominations from 25 offices for her exceptional work as a forward thinker who demonstrates vision and creativity in

her approach to work. Great work, Becca!

Have You Seen Us?



In our efforts to ensure those affected by immigration detention know where to go for assistance, OIDO has posted billboards in Arizona and Texas—on roads to and from facilities.

OIDO also has a short video playing on gas station pumps in border areas, again informing people in English and Spanish that OIDO can assist with concerns in immigration custody.

Find Us Online!

New Video Page

As we continue to leverage technology to help educate the public about OIDO, we have created some exciting projects we want to share! Sometimes words are simply not enough, sometimes you just need more to really understand what is happening or how a process works. We have heard of interactive learning, and we started thinking that learning through written material is good, but could we do better? Well...we did. Introducing our newest concept, OIDO videos! One video is on [how to file a complaint with OIDO](#) and the other is relating to [what happens after you file a complaint with OIDO](#). These videos are designed in a way that uses animation to help *show* the story instead of just verbalizing it. This is really a first of its kind for OIDO and we are excited to incorporate its use. We feel this will only help in our efforts to make understanding the complaint process user friendly and easily digestible.

We will also use this page to share presentations and webinars moving forward. You can see our presentation on our Language Access Plan and on our 2022 Annual Report there now.

To view the videos, select the links above!

Follow OIDO on Twitter (X)

Stay in the loop by following OIDO on Twitter (X) [@OIDOgov](#) - we'll be sharing important updates, OIDO engagements (such as our recent trip to AILA!), handy

tips to navigate our website and submit case forms, and new OIDO publications (like our newly released annual report!). Follow OIDO on Twitter (X) 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.

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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