



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 reflecting on the end of the calendar year and preparing for the year ahead. I spent much of September and October with my staff, wrapping up one fiscal year and starting the next, preparing for congressional briefings, and responding to informational requests. I asked my leadership team to reflect on ways we can prove our value and demonstrate the immense successes we've achieved.

In fiscal year 2023 (Oct 1, 2022 – Sep 30, 2023), OIDO conducted 4,707 site visits at 105 unique Department of Homeland Security immigration detention facilities throughout the United States. We received 11,444 complaints and closed 11,224 complaints, with an average processing time of 19 days. By the calendar year's end, we will likely hit 20,000 cases.

We also have conducted nearly 50 inspections (13 unannounced) and published 13 reports on our website. As of the end of October, we have made approximately 40 recommendations to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs



and Border Protection (CBP), with 37 full concurrences. This is just one measurement of how OIDO's work has made an important impact in improving detention conditions.

These successes demonstrate the efforts of so many people who come together around this common cause. As always, I thank my dedicated staff for the work they do, day in and day out. However, in this month of Thanksgiving, I also thank you, the reader—so many of you work every day to ensure the rights of individuals in detention are upheld and bring issues to our attention and the attention of our colleagues in the Department so they may be addressed.

With the holiday season upon us, I know many people will be celebrating while a loved one is in immigration detention. One of the things our case managers often assist with is helping people in detention navigate the systems and processes necessary to access communication services like phone and video calls, as well as ensuring communication devices are in proper working order. In fact, one of our first cases involved a case manager picking up every phone and dialing out, to check if they were functional. While we know there is no substitute for spending the holidays with your loved ones, we encourage you to call upon us if we can help you connect.

Wishing you and your loved ones safe, happy holidays.

Recent OIDO Events

Inspection Reports

Folkston ICE Processing Center

In November 2022, OIDO conducted an unannounced inspection of the Folkston ICE Processing Center in Folkston, Georgia. This inspection was conducted to primarily examine and follow-up on issues noted during five previous inspections of the facility. OIDO reviewed the facility's compliance with specific criteria related to the following 11 areas: environmental health and safety; special management units; staff detainee communication; medical care; significant self-harm and suicide prevention; grievance system; access to legal counsel; staffing levels; staff training; the contract quality control program; and drug testing requirements.

OIDO's inspection led to 21 findings categorized as follows: 11 areas of compliance, eight areas of non-compliance, and two areas of concern.

The facility's eight areas of non-compliance were in the following areas: drug screening, documentation of peer reviews, mental health coverage, medical equipment checks, medical emergency training, medical grievance process, coronavirus disease 2019 protocols, and facility staffing levels. While OIDO found

eight areas of noncompliance, it notes that the facility took timely corrective action to address seven issues. In addition, OIDO identified two areas of concern related to medical credentialing policies and mental health staffing levels. OIDO made three recommendations designed to improve operations at the facility and meet ICE detention standards and contract terms.

ICE officials were responsive, concurring with all three recommendations, and identified corrective actions to address the issues identified during the OIDO inspection. OIDO is awaiting documentation from ICE to move the recommendations from open to resolved.

Follow-up: Resolutions on Published Reports

Providing quality follow up is something important to us at OIDO. Some of the reports that you read will have sections designated as “recommendations from OIDO.” You will also notice in reading the reports that some of the recommendations will remain “open” as a status. We are intentional about this so that we don’t close a report or case, based on the agency saying, “yes we will do something about this issue,” and then nothing else occurring. We want proof, and we know you want this as well! So here are some updates and close outs of previous recommendations from reports published by OIDO.

CBP Medical Support Contract for Southwest Border and Tucson

OIDO Recommendation 2: To ensure more oversight over the medical contract, CBP should consider performing an annual internal review of the full contract to determine the contractor’s compliance with contract terms.

OIDO Recommendation 4: To ensure correct billing of overtime and double time hours, the contractor should develop and implement internal controls for the payroll system so that employee hours and wages are processed in accordance with all applicable state laws, rules, and regulations. A contract staffer should be given the responsibility of oversight on overtime and double time regulations in the payroll system. Additionally, for this current medical contract, the contractor should perform a full review of all overtime and double time hours billed for all medical unit locations for the full period of performance to ensure that overtime and double time hours were correctly billed based on the applicable state and federal laws.

OIDO can confirm the recommendations have been implemented. OIDO is moving these recommendations to resolved.

U.S. Border Patrol Tucson Sector Facilities

OIDO Recommendation 3 and Component Response: Regarding the evaluation of whether current practices and policies should be updated for the conduct of medical assessments to promote detainee safety, security, and privacy, CBP concurred. CBP indicated that the Office of the Chief Medical Officer (OCMO) will collaborate with Border Patrol and the Office of Field Operations to evaluate whether current

practices and policies should be updated, and OCMO will update policies, as necessary.

OIDO has received documentation from CBP that OIDO's recommendations were implemented. OIDO is moving the recommendations to resolved.

Denver Contract Detention Facilities

ICE indicated that it would develop a training schedule for health services staff by January 30, 2023, to ensure they complete required training by the end of Fiscal Year 2023.

OIDO has received confirmation ICE has completed this.

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

OIDO Awarded for Innovation

We hate to brag, but we are blessed with some great employees! Last newsletter we were able to feature one of our own for a peer-to-peer special award for their contributions to our office. This newsletter we are again so proud of our team for receiving the Secretary's Award for Innovation. OIDO created an Ombudsman Alert to notify DHS Components of significant matters, so that immediate action could be taken without a full inspection or audit report. This was awarded to us in May, but we only recently were able to receive the award from the Secretary. A few of the OIDO team responsible for creating the Ombudsman Alert are pictured to the right with Secretary Mayorkas.



Stakeholder Outreach

OIDO continues to conduct outreach across the country. Over the last few months OIDO visited Denver, CO; Trenton, NJ; Newark, NJ; New York City; Buffalo, NY; and Norwalk, CT. Some of this outreach effort has been tailored to communicate with congressional staff. The constituents of elected officials, and those in the detention space that work with our elected officials, will benefit from these meetings. The meetings not only educate congressional staff on the operations of OIDO, but serve as a point of contact for issues that arise in the detention environment. Since OIDO has staff regularly visiting detention facilities across the country, we can assess and resolve complaints quickly. This frees congressional entities to work on constituent concerns that are not within OIDO's purview.

We also participated in 24 other meetings with stakeholders across the country. As things occur in your community, we hope that you trust you can reach out for concerns relating to the detention environment. We are eager to assist with these developments and to continue to provide follow-up for your questions.

Ombudsman Conferences



In September, Atlanta, Georgia hosted the 2023 United States Ombudsman Association (USOA) Conference. One of the main functions of the USOA is to assist existing ombudsman organizations in improving the operation of their offices throughout the United States. USOA also promotes the establishment of ombuds offices at different levels of government to include internationally! At this

conference OIDO was able to present on “How to set up an Ombudsman office;” we know a thing or two about this and were honored to be able to present! We took many questions after the presentation and are hopeful that our experience setting up OIDO will help other ombuds organizations across the country.

Also at the conference, different factions of ombuds work were represented, including the federal ombuds chapter. The meeting spurred collaboration, including a joint marketing campaign for Ombuds Day.

In October, Alexandria, Virginia hosted the Coalition of Federal Ombudsman (COFO) annual conference. This conference allowed OIDO to further strengthen its relationships with other federal ombuds organizations. Some of the topics covered included neutral advocacy, effectiveness, conflict resolution, and marketing. All of these are applicable to our work here at OIDO. Conferences such as these allow OIDO continual access to newly developed best practices.

Having these interactions with other ombuds communities across the country helped generate ideas and create relationships that can help us grow in our ombuds duties, not to mention a place to reach out for best practices in ombuds work.

Ombuds Day

Ombuds Day occurs every year on the second Thursday of October. People from around the world take time out of their day to celebrate ombuds and how they have made an impact on our world. The International Ombuds Association (IOA) talks about how one of the primary goals of Ombuds Day is to simply improve awareness of what ombuds do. OIDO put this to practice and started working with the federal ombuds chapter of the United States Ombudsman Association. We joined together use #FedOmbuds on social media, to help show the public how ombuds organizations work and serve the public in the federal atmosphere. This joint hashtag makes it easier to consume and find information relating to federal ombuds offices. It also gave us a chance to show our new material and explain the ombuds role OIDO plays in the immigration detention space.



Customer Satisfaction Survey



Something we have been working on in the background is our ability to capture how impactful we are in what we do. In many instances you can see immediate results when, for instance, someone who is detained needs hygiene material but doesn't know who to ask. Or maybe the visible feeling of relief that comes from someone finally getting access to their attorney. In other areas, finding out what others think or how we could improve can be difficult. OIDO seeks feedback to keep evolving and so we know what does work and what could use improvement. Our first public survey is geared toward our stakeholders and community partners. It's a quick survey that we issue once an interaction with OIDO has been completed. This could occur through email, or at an in person or virtual presentation. It's quick, to the point, and easy to use. If you have worked with us in the past, please consider taking the [survey](#) to help us in our efforts of ensuring we are doing a good job and giving you the information you need.

Presentation on OIDO's Victim-Centered and Trauma-Informed Approaches

Please join OIDO *Thursday, January 25th, at 1pm EST*, for a presentation on victim-centered and trauma-informed approaches! OIDO has received a few questions from stakeholders outside of DHS on how these approaches are used in OIDO's work. The presentation will include the key aspects and benefits of using

these approaches with detained noncitizens, and how these approaches are integrated in the work of DHS and OIDO. To register, select this [link](#).

Case Management (8/1/2023 - 10/31/2023)



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 August 1, 2023, and October 31, 2023, OIDO received a total of 3,301 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

3311

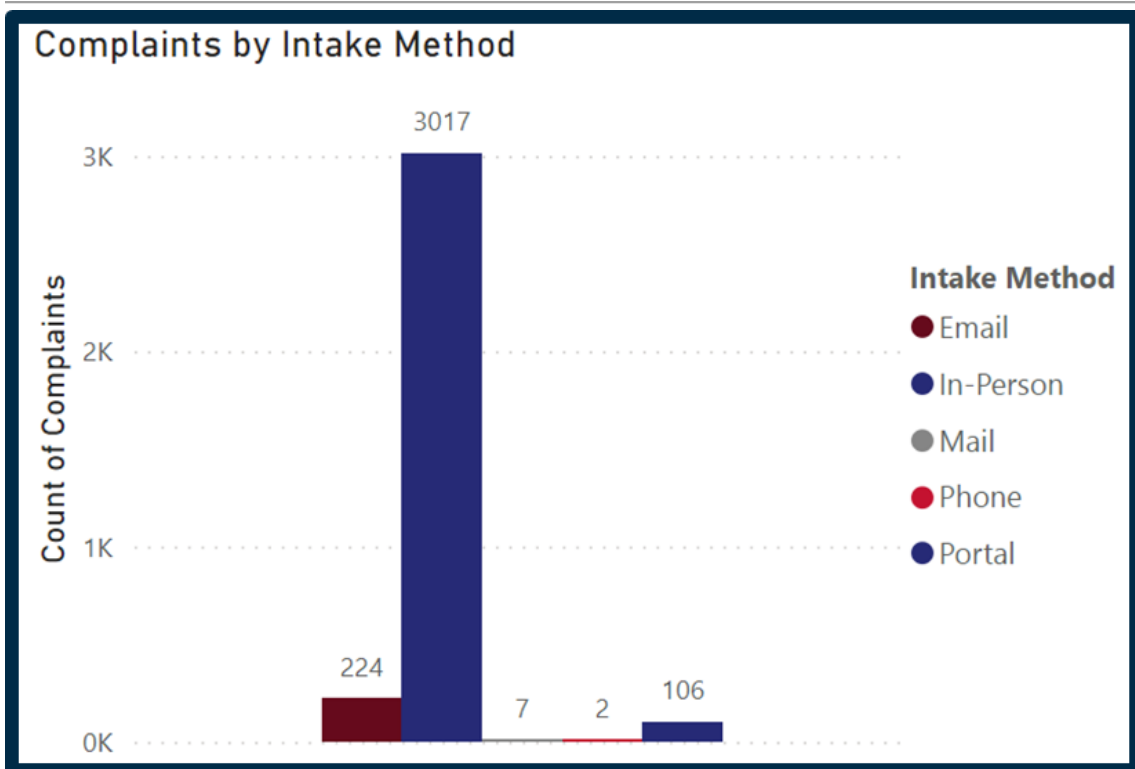
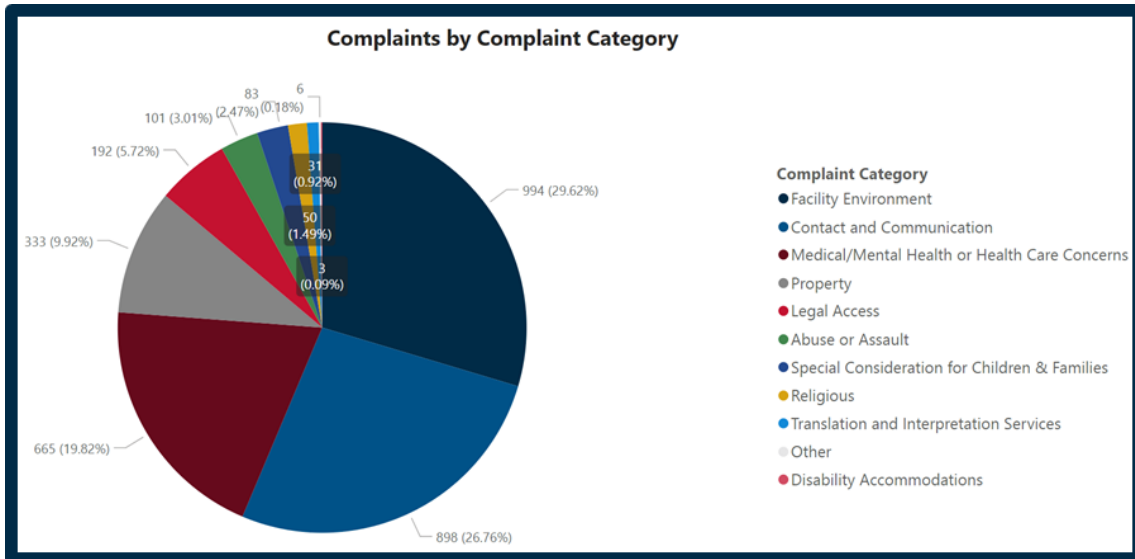
You will see below in the graph that since we have made changes to our categories, specifically adding Contact and Communication as a stand-alone category, the numbers of complaints fitting into the categories are becoming more proportionate. Contact and communication were previously accounted for in the Facility Environment category. We started to see a trend that was pointing towards contact and communication being a more prominent issue, so we made a category to

account for it. This helps us in seeing where issues are but is also a way to help others outside of OIDO see what types of complaints OIDO receives.

Lastly, comparing fiscal year 22 to fiscal year 23 – there was over a 200% increase in the number of complaints we have received. This is related to our work in a few areas over the last year including hiring more case managers, continued outreach across the country, and more ways to file a complaint with OIDO.

Speaking of ways to file a complaint, tell your friends and colleagues about myOIDO! We are happy to see it is being utilized more. Please keep in mind that if you have trouble navigating our online complaint portal you can always reach out to

us; we are here to help! Click [here](#) for a link to our online complaint portal (myOIDO).



Scenes from Case Management



Case Managers in Action



the field.

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

Access to Legal Material

A detained individual reached out to OIDO stating he was concerned about the limited access to the law library, lack of support by facility staff to print additional legal resources, and the significant delays in response to his weekly requests to access these services. An OIDO case manager confirmed previous attempts by him to access the law library, delays in response, limited access to staff, and delays caused by using the law library as a multipurpose room for court hearings. OIDO shared problems with access to the law library and opportunities for improvement

of practice with the Warden, Assistant Warden, and ICE staff at the facility. Laws, court decisions, and other legal information was added to kiosks inside the pods. ICE made clarifications about staff responsibilities regarding law library services and agreed to implement recommendations about using portable units. The OIDO case manager had multiple follow-ups with the individual who brought these concerns to our attention. During the final meeting, the man expressed gratitude to ICE, OIDO, and facility staff for the resolution of his concern.

Connecting Families

One man lost contact with his brother for several months after they were apprehended at the border. OIDO's case manager looked up the sibling in ICE's database and reached out to another OIDO case manager at that facility. Together they set up a video call between the two siblings.

Hunger Strike

During a recent visit to a facility, case managers walked into a situation where 36 of 65 detainees were threatening a hunger strike and, at that point, had each refused 2 meals. Case managers joined ICE in speaking with each of the detainees, calming them down and hearing their concerns. Most were upset, claiming that ICE hadn't been paying attention to their requests to contact their families. OIDO worked with ICE to gather each detainee's sponsor's name and number so ICE could review their cases and contact sponsors. Each detainee was then given a free phone call.

Hygiene Standards Compliance

Another detained individual alleged it had been six weeks since their blankets had been replaced or washed. The standards applicable at this facility say that a minimum of 3 times per week sheets, towels, and pillowcases should be exchanged. The case manager at this facility reached out to the administration which stated that intake had been high recently, so staff was stretched thin, but that a supervisor would make sure their sheets were washed. The case manager later witnessed the facility exchanging bedsheets.

Recreation Time

An OIDO case manager was visiting a facility when a group of detained individuals told him that they hadn't had any recreation time in 8 days. The case manager checked with the Correctional Officers, who said they had. The case manager then asked to review the recreation logbooks and was able to determine that the detained individuals' allegations were correct. The OIDO case manager then informed the Assistant Warden, who had the detained individuals taken out for recreation time.

Follow OIDO on Twitter (X)

Stay in the loop by following OIDO on Twitter [@OIDOGov](https://twitter.com/OIDOGov) - we'll be sharing important updates, OIDO engagements, handy tips to navigate our website and submit case forms, and new OIDO publications (like our newly minted videos). Follow OIDO on 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.

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,

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

or policy related to immigration detention committed by ICE or CBP staff or contractors

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
\(dhs.gov\)](#)

OIDO_Outreach@hq.dhs.gov

[Sign up for the
newsletter here](#)

You are subscribed to updates from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security

[Manage Subscriptions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Help](#)

Connect with DHS:

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Flickr](#) | [YouTube](#)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

www.dhs.gov

This email was sent to oidostaff@hq.dhs.gov on behalf of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security | DHS.gov