



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Department of Homeland Security

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DHS OIG Inspection Cites Concerns with Detainee Treatment and Care at ICE Detention Facilities

A new report from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) cites concerns about the treatment and care of detainees by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE). The report is based on recent unannounced OIG inspections of five ICE detention facilities. Concerns requiring immediate attention at the Theo Lacy facility in Orange, California, were previously reported by the OIG in March 2017.

In their report, "Concerns about ICE Detainee Treatment and Care at Detention Facilities," OIG inspectors documented a number of concerns. While not every problem was present at each facility, the inspections revealed issues at four facilities, beginning with the intake process. Detainees should be housed with others of similar background and criminal history; however, facility staff misclassified some detainees with high-risk criminal convictions and housed them with low-risk detainees. One facility did not adequately staff personnel to ensure thorough intake pat downs of detainees. At another facility, personnel conducted strip searches of all incoming detainees, but failed to document them, leaving no way to ascertain whether the searches were justified based on reasonable suspicion. Despite having translation services available by phone, staff and detainees experienced language barriers which created confusion and risked elevating resolvable concerns into disciplinary issues.

Additionally, detainees reported that staff obstructed or delayed their grievances or intimidated them, through fear of retaliation, into not complaining. Detainees should have access to telephones and be allowed to make free calls to the DHS OIG. Furthermore, inspectors observed non-working phones in one facility, and in another access the OIG Hotline number was restricted. The inspectors also reported concerns about a lack of professionalism and inappropriate treatment of detainees, and of facility staff misusing segregation. One detainee reported being locked down for multiple days for sharing coffee with another detainee.

Detainees further reported long waits for provision of medical care, poor conditions in bathrooms and insufficient hygiene supplies. OIG inspectors also observed expired, moldy, and spoiled foods in the kitchen in four facilities.

The ICE detention facilities were selected for inspections based on OIG hotline complaints, reports from non-governmental organizations, and media reporting.

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“ICE has a challenging and highly visible role in enforcing our nation’s immigration laws,” said Acting Inspector General John Kelly. “Just as important is ICE’s role in detaining and housing the undocumented persons it apprehends. Treatment of detainees in ICE facilities should be humane, adhere to all regulations and be above reproach.”