



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Department of Homeland Security

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Improvements Continue at Detention Centers

The latest in a series of spot inspections by the Office of Inspector General (OIG), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), found overall improvement, several recurring problems and declining populations at detention facilities for unaccompanied alien children (UAC) operated by Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

OIG investigators paid five unannounced visits to three facilities in Texas and New Mexico between August 21 and September 26.

“Since we initiated our site visits in July 2014, CBP has improved its capacity to provide care to UAC if apprehension levels again increase,” Inspector General John Roth wrote in a memo to DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson. “Specifically, CBP improved its capacity to provide medical screening, facility cleaning, food service, and case processing for large groups of UAC.”

Roth added that more work was still needed to be done by CBP in training personnel, processing UACs and screening the detainees for communicable diseases.

The recent sharp drop in the number of apprehended UACs has resulted in fewer detainees and facilities. For that reason, Roth said the OIG is curtailing routine inspections, but will conduct additional unannounced visits as conditions warrant.

During this reporting period, we found that not all CBP personnel were trained to manage routine UAC processing. For example:

- During one routine spot inspection, we observed that CBP personnel did not properly segregate a UAC with a communicable disease. They also did not ensure that food and water were readily available. CBP rotated personnel during a period when there had been no UAC in the facility for a month. As a result of this rotation, the personnel responsible for the UAC were not familiar with procedures.

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- The results of this inspection prompted a second inspection of the facility a week later. During the subsequent inspection, CBP officials said they would assign personnel familiar with UAC processing any time there were UAC in the facility. They had compiled a list of personnel who were familiar with UAC procedures and were on call. At this inspection, food and water were readily available and the station had addressed all issues from the previous spot inspection.

Allegations of Inappropriate Conduct

- ICE, CBP, and CRCL investigations of allegations of misconduct are ongoing.
- We did not observe misconduct or inappropriate conduct by DHS employees during our unannounced site visits.
- We did not receive new complaints during our random interviews of adult females and children.

Additional Observations

- FLETC in Artesia does not house UAC, but houses family units which include children. Conditions in Artesia were improving. However:
 - Family units continued to require treatment for communicable diseases.
 - Many detainees do not follow up with recommended medical care for themselves or their children. If detainees do not attend sick call or stand in line to receive daily medications, they remain sick and their illnesses tend to get worse.
 - Family unit illnesses and unfamiliarity with bathroom facilities continued to result in unsanitary conditions. DHS employees told us the contracted cleaning service is inadequate.
 - A DHS dietician was scheduled to assess food choices to balance requests for a more familiar diet with nutritional guidelines. DHS is providing adequate nutritional meals. Snacks, milk, and fresh fruit are readily available.

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