



U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Office of Professional Responsibility
Inspections and Detention Oversight Division
Washington, DC 20536-5501

Office of Detention Oversight
Compliance Inspection

Enforcement and Removal Operations
ERO Houston Field Office

Houston Contract Detention Facility
Houston, Texas

February 22-25, 2021

COMPLIANCE INSPECTION
of the
Houston Contract Detention Facility
Houston, Texas

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FACILITY OVERVIEW	4
COMPLIANCE INSPECTION PROCESS	5
FINDINGS BY PERFORMANCE-BASED NATIONAL DETENTION STANDARDS 2011 (REVISED 2016) MAJOR CATEGORIES.....	6
DETAINEE RELATIONS	7
COMPLIANCE INSPECTION FINDINGS	8
SECURITY	8
Admission and Release (A&R).....	8
Facility Security and Control (FSC)	8
Staff-Detainee Communication (SDC).....	8
CONCLUSION	8

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FACILITY OVERVIEW

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) Office of Detention Oversight (ODO) conducted a compliance inspection of the Houston Contract Detention Facility (HCDF) in Houston, Texas, from February 22-25, 2021.¹ The facility opened in 1984 and is owned and operated by CoreCivic. The ICE Office of Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) began housing detainees at HCDF in 1984 under the oversight of ERO’s Field Office Director in Houston (ERO Houston). The facility operates under the Performance-Based National Detention Standards (PBNDS) 2011 (Revised 2016).

ERO has assigned deportation officers and a detention services manager to the facility. An HCDF warden handles daily facility operations and is supported by ██████ personnel. Trinity Service Group provides food services, Immigration Health Service Corp provides medical care, and CoreCivic provides commissary services at the facility. The facility was accredited by the American Correctional Association on August 3, 2019, and the National Commission on Correctional Health Care on April 24, 2018. In August 2020, HCDF was audited for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) and was DHS PREA Certified.

Capacity and Population Statistics	Quantity
ICE Detainee Bed Capacity ²	1000
Average ICE Detainee Population ³	████
Male Detainee Population (as of 2/22/2021)	████
Female Detainee Population (as of 2/22/2021)	████

During its last inspection in Fiscal Year 2020, ODO found 13 deficiencies in the following areas: Admission and Release (2), Funds and Personal Property (2), Staff-Detainee Communication (1), Use of Force and Restraints (1), Food Service (2), Recreation (3), Telephone Access (1), and Visitation (1).

¹ This facility holds male and female detainees with low, medium and high security classification levels for periods longer than 72 hours.

² Data Source: ERO Facility List Report as of February 22, 2021.

³ *Ibid.*

COMPLIANCE INSPECTION PROCESS

ODO conducts oversight inspections of ICE detention facilities with an average daily population greater than ten, and where detainees are housed for longer than 72 hours, to assess compliance with ICE national detention standards. These inspections focus solely on facility compliance with detention standards that directly affect detainee life, health, safety, and/or well-being.⁴

ODO identifies violations of ICE detention standards, ICE policies, or operational procedures as “deficiencies.” ODO also highlights instances in which the facility resolves deficiencies prior to completion of the ODO inspection. Where applicable, these corrective actions are annotated with “C” under the *Compliance Inspection Findings* section of this report.

Upon completion of each inspection, ODO conducts a closeout briefing with facility and local ERO officials to discuss preliminary findings. A summary of these findings is shared with ERO management officials. Thereafter, ODO provides ICE leadership with a final compliance inspection report to: (i) assist ERO in developing and initiating corrective action plans; and (ii) provide senior executives with an independent assessment of facility operations. ODO’s findings inform ICE executive management in their decision-making to better allocate resources across the agency’s entire detention inventory.

ODO was unable to conduct an on-site inspection of this facility, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and instead, conducted a remote inspection of the facility. During this remote inspection, ODO interviewed facility staff, ERO field office staff, and detainees, reviewed files and detention records, and was able to assess compliance for at least 90 percent or more of the ICE national detention standards reviewed during the inspection.

⁴ ODO reviews the facility’s compliance with selected standards in their entirety.

FINDINGS BY PERFORMANCE-BASED NATIONAL DETENTION STANDARDS 2011 (REVISED 2016) MAJOR CATEGORIES

PBNDs 2011 (Revised 2016) Standards Inspected ⁵	Deficiencies
Part 1 – Safety	
Emergency Plans	0
Environmental Health and Safety	0
Sub-Total	0
Part 2 – Security	
Admission and Release	2
Custody Classification System	0
Facility Security and Control	1
Funds and Personal Property	0
Population Counts	0
Sexual Abuse and Assault Prevention and Intervention	0
Special Management Units	0
Staff-Detainee Communication	1
Use of Force and Restraints	0
Sub-Total	4
Part 4 – Care	
Food Service	0
Hunger Strikes	0
Medical Care	0
Medical Care (Women)	0
Significant Self-harm and Suicide Prevention and Intervention	0
Disability Identification, Assessment, and Accommodation	0
Sub-Total	0
Part 5 – Activities	
Religious Practices	0
Telephone Access	0
Sub-Total	0
Part 6 – Justice	
Grievance System	0
Law Libraries and Legal Material	0
Sub-Total	0
Total Deficiencies	4

⁵ For greater detail on ODO's findings, see the *Compliance Inspection Findings* section of this report.

DETAINEE RELATIONS

ODO interviewed 12 detainees, who each voluntarily agreed to participate. None of the detainees made allegations of discrimination, mistreatment, or abuse. Most detainees reported satisfaction with facility services except for the concerns listed below. ODO also attempted to conduct detainee interviews via video teleconference; however, the ERO field office and facility were not able to accommodate this request due to technology issues. As such, ODO conducted the resident interviews via telephone.

Medical Care: One detainee stated he suffered from arthritis and walked with a cane due his degenerating condition. He further stated the medical staff prescribed him pain medicine, which he took for his arthritis, requested medical staff prescribe stronger medication, but was denied approval for additional treatment.

- Action Taken: ODO interviewed the facility's physician and reviewed the detainee's medical record, which showed a history of a "herniated disc" and chronic back pain. The detainee's medical record also showed the facility's medical care staff examined the detainee 13 times, and prescribed him a cane to assist and alleviate the pain, and prescribed him nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory, general pain, and muscle spasm medications. On February 24, 2021, the physician examined the detainee related to his degenerating condition. The physician told ODO she explained to the detainee in detail his medical condition and showed him photos of the lumbar spine. The physician also prescribed new pain medication to replace the previous prescriptions. Before the inspection concluded, the physician told ODO the medical staff would re-evaluate the detainee in six weeks.

Staff-Detainee Communication: One detainee stated she filed an ICE request on the facility's tablet, on February 3, 2021, about her identity documents (passport) for her asylum hearing and to discuss the possibility for parole. The detainee stated she did not receive a response from ERO Houston.

- Action Taken: ODO reviewed the facility's detainee electronic request log, interviewed ERO Houston, and confirmed the detainee did not receive a response. ERO Houston told ODO the detainee's request contained questions requiring responses from the facility staff and ERO Houston docket officers, causing a delay in responding to her request. On February 23, 2021, ERO Houston spoke with the detainee and answered her questions. An ERO Houston supervisor told ODO their officers were advised to address ICE detainee requests in a timely manner. This issue was further discussed in the *Compliance Inspection Findings* section of the report.

COMPLIANCE INSPECTION FINDINGS

SECURITY

ADMISSION AND RELEASE (A&R)

ODO reviewed 15 detainee files and found one out of 15 files did not contain an Order to Detain Form (Form I-203), bearing the signature of the authorizing official (**Deficiency AR-54**⁶).

ODO reviewed four released detainee files and found one out of four files did not contain an Order to Release Form (Form I-203), signed by an authorizing official (**Deficiency AR-80**⁷).

FACILITY SECURITY AND CONTROL (FSC)

ODO reviewed the facility's general visitor's logbook and found the facility's post officer did not require visitors to print and sign their name in the visitor's logbook (**Deficiency FSC-26**⁸).

STAFF-DETAINEE COMMUNICATION (SDC)

ODO reviewed the facility's staff detainee communication log, seven detainee detention files, and found in six out of seven requests, the ERO Houston staff members receiving the detainee's request did not respond in person in writing within three business days of receipt (**Deficiency SDC-16**⁹).

CONCLUSION

ODO reviewed the facility's compliance with 21 standards under PBNDS 2011 (Revised 2016). ODO found the facility compliant with 18 standards and identified four deficiencies in the remaining three standards. ODO commends facility staff for their responsiveness during this inspection. ODO recommends ERO work with the facility to resolve any deficiencies that remained outstanding in accordance with contractual obligations.

⁶ "An Order to Detain or an Order to Release the detainee (Form I-203 or I-203a), bearing the appropriate ICE/ERO Authorizing Official signature, must accompany each newly arriving detainee." *See* ICE PBNDS 2011 (Revised 2016), Standard, Admission and Release, Section (V)(E).

⁷ "A detainee's out-processing begins when release processing staff receive the Form I-203, "Order to Detain or Release," signed by an authorizing official." *See* ICE PBNDS 2011 (Revised 2016), Standard, Admission and Release, Section (V)(H)(1).

⁸ "The entry for a person visiting a detainee shall also include the name and A-number of the detainee being visited, and the address and relationship to the detainee. The post officer shall require the visitor to print and sign his/her name in the visitor logbook." *See* ICE PBNDS 2011 (Revised 2016), Standard, Facility Security and Control, Section (V)(C)(1)(b)(3).

⁹ "In Facilities with ICE/ERO Onsite Presence

a. The ICE/ERO staff member receiving the request shall normally respond in person or in writing as soon as possible and practicable, but no later than within three (3) business days of receipt." *See* ICE PBNDS 2011 (Revised 2016), Standard, Staff-Detainee Communication, Section (V)(B)(1)(a).

Compliance Inspection Results Compared	FY 2020 (PBNS 2011) (Revised 2016)	FY 2021 (PBNS 2011) (Revised 2016)
Standards Reviewed	18	21
Deficient Standards	8	3
Overall Number of Deficiencies	13	4
Repeat Deficiencies	0	0
Areas of Concern	0	0
Corrective Actions	1	0