

[Skip Navigation](#)



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

News Releases

August 6, 2009

ICE announces major reforms to immigration detention system

WASHINGTON - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Assistant Secretary John Morton announced today that ICE is undertaking a major overhaul of the agency's immigration detention system.

"This change marks an important step in our ongoing efforts to enforce immigration laws smartly and effectively," said Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano. "We are improving detention center management to prioritize health, safety and uniformity among our facilities while ensuring security, efficiency and fiscal responsibility."

"In the past five years, ICE has experienced considerable growth in immigration detention. This growth has presented significant challenges to a system that was not fundamentally designed to address ICE's specific detention needs," said Morton. "Implementing these reforms will improve medical care, custodial conditions, fiscal prudence and ICE's critical oversight of the immigration detention system. ICE remains committed to enforcing our nation's immigration and customs laws. We also reaffirm our commitment to ensuring the security, safety and well-being of individuals in our custody."

As the first of many concrete steps ICE is taking to implement comprehensive detention reform, the agency is creating an Office of Detention Policy and Planning (ODPP). The role of this office is to design and plan a civil detention system tailored to addresses ICE's needs. Dr. Schriro, who will report directly to the assistant secretary, will lead the ODPP with support from detention and health care experts.

The ODPP will evaluate the entire detention system in a methodical way, with seven areas of focus, each with benchmarks for progress:

- **Population Management:** To ensure the best location, design, and operation of facilities reflecting the unique nature of civil detention;
- **Detention Management:** To ensure appropriate custodial conditions and address day-to-day detention functions, including classification, discipline and grievances;
- **Programs Management:** To ensure the provision of religious services, family visitation, recreation and law libraries;
- **Health Care Management:** To ensure the timely provision of medical, dental and mental health

assessment and services;

- Alternatives to Detention Management: To develop a national strategy for the effective use of alternatives to detention including community supervision;
- Special Populations Management: To provide attention to women, families, the elderly and vulnerable populations; and
- Accountability: To ensure ICE employees perform the core functions of detention oversight, detainee classification and discipline, and grievance review.

While ICE continues to undertake the ODPP review, other immediate actions announced include:

- Discontinued use of family detention at the T. Don Hutto Family Residential Facility in Texas. In place of housing families, we will propose that the Texas facility will be used solely as a female detention center. Presently, Hutto is used to detain families and low custody female detainees. Detained families will now be housed at Berks Family Residential Center in Pennsylvania.
- Formation of two advisory groups of local and national organizations interested in ICE's detention system. These groups will provide feedback and input to the Assistant Secretary. One will focus on general policies and practices, while the other will focus on detainee health care.
- Appointment of 23 detention managers to work in 23 significant facilities - facilities which collectively house more than 40 percent of our detainees. These 23 federal employees will directly monitor the facilities and ensure appropriate conditions.
- Establishment of an Office of Detention Oversight (ODO) whose agents will inspect facilities and investigate detainee grievances in a neutral manner. The ODO will be part of ICE's Office of Professional Responsibility, an independent office which reports directly to the Assistant Secretary.

Shortly after taking office, Secretary Napolitano issued an action directive initiating a comprehensive review of ICE's detention system. Although the review is ongoing and additional reforms lie ahead, the steps Assistant Secretary Morton is taking today will address the vast majority of complaints about ICE's immigration detention system while allowing ICE to maintain a significant, robust detention capacity to carry out serious immigration enforcement.

For more information go to http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/2009_immigration_detention_reforms.htm.

-- ICE --

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.

Last Modified: Thursday, August 6, 2009