



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY **OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

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September 11, 2026

FINAL REPORT

Unannounced Inspection of ICE's Florida Soft-Sided Facility ("Alligator Alcatraz") in Ochopee, Florida





DHS OIG HIGHLIGHTS

Unannounced Inspection of ICE's Florida Soft-Sided Facility ("Alligator Alcatraz") in Ochopee, Florida

September 11, 2026

Why We Did This Inspection

As mandated by Congress, we conduct unannounced inspections of immigration detention facilities to report on custody operations.

In January 2026, we conducted an unannounced inspection at FSSF in Ochopee, Florida.

What We Recommend

We made 10 recommendations to improve ICE's oversight of detention facility management and operations at FSSF. We administratively closed these recommendations because FSSF ceased operations in June 2026.

OIG Access

During this inspection, ICE provided timely responses to our requests for information and did not delay or deny access to information we requested.

What We Found

At the time of our inspection in January 2026, Florida Soft-Sided Facility (FSSF) staff could not clearly identify which detention standards they used for holding detainees on immigration-related charges. The absence of well-defined standards at detention facilities increases the risk that detainees may not receive appropriate care. Due to the lack of clarity regarding applicable standards, when we identified a concern during our inspection, we reviewed both the *Florida Model Jail Standards* and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) *National Detention Standards 2019* and applied the more restrictive standard to support our findings.

Overall, we found the facility complied with Intake and Use of Force standards but did not comply with standards related to: Environmental Health and Safety; Special Management Units; Medical Care; Food Service; Personal Hygiene; and Recreation.

- FSSF did not provide detainees with sufficient living space, creating cramped conditions for detainees who spent most of their time in their housing units, which may harm detainees' physical and mental health.
- Of note, we found that between July 17, 2025, and January 18, 2026, FSSF confined 79 detainees in small metal enclosures — each offering about 18 square feet of floor space — for periods ranging from several minutes to nearly 2 hours. Use of these small metal enclosures for any reason is unprecedented among detention facilities OIG has inspected and presents significant risks to detainee health and safety.

DHS Response

The Department's management response (Appendix C) did not address our recommendations. DHS stated that Florida detained illegal aliens at FSSF pursuant to authority delegated under Section 287(g) of the *Immigration and Nationality Act*. DHS contended the state—not the Department—maintained authority over the facility's day-to-day operations. FSSF ceased operations in June 2026.



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Abbreviations

FMJS	<i>Florida Model Jail Standards</i>
FSSF	Florida Soft-Sided Facility
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
NDS	<i>National Detention Standards 2019 and 2025</i>
PBNDS 2011	<i>Performance-Based National Detention Standards 2011</i>
SMU	Special Management Units



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Background

As mandated by Congress,¹ the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducts unannounced inspections of immigration detention facilities to report on custody operations. This mandate draws no distinction between facilities operated by DHS U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or other entities. Consistent with this requirement, on January 21, 2026, OIG conducted an unannounced inspection of the Florida Soft-Sided Facility (FSSF), (also known as “Alligator Alcatraz” and “South Florida Detention Facility”), which Figure 1 further describes.

Figure 1. FSSF Overview



Source: DHS OIG

FSSF was established by the State of Florida through the *Florida Emergency Management Act*² and Florida Executive Order 23-03, signed by Governor Ron DeSantis on January 6, 2023.³ The facility began operations on July 3, 2025. At the time of our inspection, a company contracted by the Florida Division of Emergency Management employed the FSSF warden and staff who

¹ *Joint Explanatory Statement Accompanying H.R. 2882, Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, Div. C, Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2024* (Pub. L. 118-47), extended to January 30, 2026, by *Continuing Appropriations Act, 2026* (Pub. L. 119-37).

² Florida Statutes §§ 252.31 to 252.60.

³ The order, which declared a state of emergency due to concerns about illegal immigration, authorized the Florida Division of Emergency Management to repurpose the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport near Ochopee as a detention center. See <https://www.flgov.com/eog/sites/default/files/executive-orders/2024/EO-23-03-1.pdf>.



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operated the facility. DHS did not have any direct contractual arrangements with the State of Florida related to FSSF but had several operative 287(g)⁴ agreements with nine Florida agencies.⁵

At the time of our inspection, ICE reported that no payments had been made to the facility or the State of Florida from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Detention Support Grant Program.⁶ FEMA subsequently reported that, under the Fiscal Year 2025 Detention Support Grant Program (Award No. EMW 2025 DS 05000), it obligated \$608.4 million to the Florida Division of Emergency Management for the temporary detention facility on September 30, 2025, and disbursed \$58.3 million on May 15, 2026, for allowable operational costs (e.g., detainee support services, staffing, and supplies).

Detention Standards

Facilities that house ICE detainees must comply with applicable ICE detention standards, such as the *Performance-Based National Detention Standards 2011* (PBNDS 2011, revised 2016), the *National Detention Standards* (NDS) 2025, or other ICE-approved detention standards. Even if the State of Florida operated FSSF under its 287(g) authority, the facility housed ICE detainees and therefore ICE detention standards would apply.

Scope of Inspection

In this report, we assess ICE's role in using FSSF to house immigration detainees and whether ICE adequately safeguarded the health, safety, and humane treatment of the detainees it placed at this facility. In interviews with facility leadership, they could not clearly identify which standards they followed and reported using a mix of *Florida Model Jail Standards* (FMJS) and NDS 2019, regardless of what the detainee handbook stated. Therefore, we used those standards as benchmarks in this inspection when assessing conditions at FSSF.

Our team of inspectors examined facility areas, including housing, kitchen, and showers. We collected and analyzed documentation related to housing conditions, use of force, food service, and medical care. We also interviewed facility staff and detainees. OIG's contracted medical professional visually inspected all areas where medical staff provided health services, reviewed

⁴ Section 287(g) authorizes the DHS Secretary to enter into written agreements with a State, or any political subdivision of a State, to perform certain functions of an immigration officer in relation to the investigation, apprehension, or detention of aliens. See 8 U.S.C. § 1357(g). The DHS Secretary delegated this authority to ICE, and ICE entered into agreements with various Florida state agencies (although not FSSF) for detention and custody of individuals subject to Federal immigration enforcement.

⁵ The 287(g) agreements were with the Florida Department of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco Bureau of Law Enforcement; Florida Department of Corrections; Florida Department of Law Enforcement; Florida Department of Financial Services Criminal Investigations Division; Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Division of Florida Highway Patrol; Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission; Florida Department of Lottery Division of Security; Florida National Guard; and Florida Department of Environmental Protection Division of Law Enforcement.

⁶ During the inspection, a facility official asked the OIG team if we knew when they would receive funding.



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relevant documents and health records, and interviewed key health services team members. Appendix A describes our methodology in more detail.

This report was delayed due to a lapse in appropriation for DHS OIG from February 14, 2026, through April 30, 2026.

Results of Inspection

At the time of our inspection, FSSF staff could not clearly identify which detention standards they used for holding detainees on immigration-related charges. The absence of well-defined standards at detention facilities increases the risk that detainees may not receive appropriate care. When we asked the warden and staff which standards they used, we received inconsistent answers. Some staff referenced using a combination of NDS 2019, FMJS,⁷ and Florida Department of Corrections standards; if they differed, they would attempt to follow the more stringent standard. Others said FSSF followed NDS 2019 but aimed to meet NDS 2025. Additionally, ICE's own documentation that lists contractually obligated standards for each detention facility showed "N/A" for FSSF, and the Detainee Handbook that detainees received at intake stated the facility followed PBNDS and the American Correctional Association standards. **FSSF did not provide any written policy, procedure, agreement, or contract specifying the standards it followed, which undermines accountability and consistent application of detention standards.**

It was "so gray as to whose place this is...and which standards to follow." - Facility Official

FMJS and Florida Department of Correction standards are primarily designed for inmates being held punitively and for criminal processes and differ from NDS 2019 because they do not specifically address the custodial, legal, and care requirements applicable to civil immigration detainees. We found that the lack of clarity regarding standards used at FSSF created ambiguity about governing requirements for detainee treatment, housing, and daily living conditions. For example, one official stated it was "so gray as to whose place this is...and which standards to follow." He noted that because of this ambiguity, detainees at FSSF did not have access to a commissary, in-person family visitation, or typical recreation resources, like televisions or playing cards in their housing units. This situation also made it difficult for the OIG team to determine whether the facility appropriately complied with standards. As a result, when we identified a concern during our inspection, we reviewed both the FMJS and the NDS 2019 and applied the more restrictive standard to support our findings.

⁷ FMJS are minimum standards that jails in Florida must meet to ensure the constitutional rights of incarcerated individuals are upheld. See <https://flsheriffs.org/how-we-serve/jail-services/florida-model-jail-standards/>.



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We found the facility **complied with** Intake and Use-of-Force standards but **did not comply** with standards related to:

- Environmental Health and Safety
- Special Management Units (SMU)
- Medical Care
- Food Service
- Personal Hygiene
- Recreation

Key Finding 1: FSSF Did not Comply with Environmental Health and Safety Standards

FSSF did not provide detainees with sufficient living space — less than half of what is required — creating cramped conditions for detainees who spent most of their time in their housing units. The lack of living space risks detainees' well-being and may negatively impact their physical and mental health. The applicable standards require at least 75 square feet of floor space per inmate in dormitory⁸ housing units.⁹ At maximum capacity, the FSSF housing units provided 28 square feet per detainee — well below the required minimum. Detainees spent most of their time in the housing units; they could only leave their units for:

- mealtime (three times a day);¹⁰
- recreation (1 hour a day, 3 days a week);
- showers (three times a week); and
- medical reasons.

General Population

FSSF's general population housing consisted of eight windowless soft-sided structures, or housing pods, without views to the outside and a lack of natural light. Each soft-sided structure contained eight housing units surrounded by metal fencing on all sides, measured 39 feet long by 23 feet wide (897 square feet of floor space). The units were topped with metal fencing that was 9 feet high. Each unit contained three toilets, three wash basins, and four telephones. They were designed to hold 32 detainees (See Figures 2-7). Furnishings in the enclosures consisted of bunk beds with no common areas, seating, tables, or storage areas provided.

⁸ A dormitory is defined as a housing area designed to incarcerate more than two inmates, containing both day room and sleeping space. FMJS, Jan. 1, 2026, 1.20.

⁹ FMJS, Jan. 1, 2026, 18.1. The NDS 2019, Standard 1.1, *Environmental Health and Safety*, Section II.I.1., states that detainee living space shall be in accordance with applicable State jail standards.

¹⁰ The facility scheduled meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) for 90 minutes.



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**Figures 2 and 3. Detainee Housing Units Located Inside FSSF;
Observed January 21, 2026**



Source: DHS OIG



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Figure 4. Inside a Detainee Housing Unit; Observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG

Figure 5. Detainee Housing Unit Toilet and Washbasin Facilities; Observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG



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Figure 6. Detainee Housing Unit Sleeping Bunks; Observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG

Figure 7. Bedding and Linens Provided to Detainees; Observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG



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For FSSF to satisfy the minimum square footage requirement of 75 square feet per detainee, each housing unit would need to house no more than 11 detainees — approximately one-third of the current maximum capacity. Table 1 describes the number of detainees in the housing units in one of the eight housing pods (Alpha 3), as well as the associated number of square feet per detainee for each unit, on the day of our inspection. **None of the eight housing units in Alpha 3 had an occupancy that satisfied the standard of 75 square feet per detainee.**

Table 1. Number of Detainees per Housing Unit in Pod Alpha 3

Housing Unit in Alpha 3	Detainees in Unit	Square Footage per Detainee
1	31	28.9
2	31	28.9
3	25	35.9
4	32	28.0
5	30	29.9
6	29	30.9
7	22	40.8
8	30	29.9

Source: Population data received from the facility on January 21, 2026, reflects detainees' locations at the time of the inspection, including recreation, medical, in transit, and housing units. Actual housing unit occupancy may be higher when all detainees are present.

Recommendation 1: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure FSSF limits occupancy in each metal enclosure to no more than 11 detainees or modify housing to ensure at least 75 square feet of floor space per detainee to comply with *Florida Model Jail Standards*.



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Key Finding 2: FSSF Did not Comply with SMU Standards¹¹

Access to Recreation

We found that only detainees in protective custody¹² who did not present a security risk had access to recreation time in the general recreation area for 5 hours per week. Lack of access to recreation may negatively affect physical and mental health. Relevant standards state that detainees in the SMU should have access to at least 1 hour of recreation per day, 5 days per week.¹³ The other detainees in the SMU were confined to their metal enclosures and only left for escorted bathroom use, legal appointments, or other nonroutine events such as medical appointments. We observed that there were no TVs or playing cards available, and reading materials were limited to religious texts, further restricting detainees' ability to meaningfully occupy their time. One detainee in administrative segregation reported being held for 8 days in the SMU without any opportunity for recreation. The NDS states that denial of recreation privileges for more than 7 days is expected to occur rarely, only in extreme circumstances, and requires the concurrence of the facility administrator and a health care professional. When we asked about the lack of recreation time for all detainees in the SMU, facility leadership showed the OIG team a dedicated recreation area that they stated had been set aside for segregated detainees. However, at the time of our inspection, facility staff said the area was not yet ready for use.

Access to Legal Materials and Telephones

During our inspection, SMU detainees did not have access to a law library or legal materials within the unit. The lack of access could have prevented detainees from contacting legal representation or arranging appointments. Detainees in the SMU should be provided access to law libraries, legal materials, and telephone calls unless specific, documented security

Special Management Units

The SMU is separate from the eight housing pods. It is a windowless soft-sided structure containing 16 individual cells surrounded by metal mesh that each house one detainee and measure 8 feet by 7 feet and are 8 feet tall in size (See Figures 8, 9, and 10). The SMU also contains a shared bathroom and shower area.

¹¹ According to NDS 2019, Standard 2.9, SMUs are housing units used to segregate certain detainees from the general population. There are two types of segregation: administrative segregation, when detainees are segregated from the general population for nonpunitive reasons such as medical observation or protective custody, and disciplinary segregation, when detainees are segregated as punishment for violating facility rules and regulations.

¹² At the time of our inspection, eight detainees occupied the SMU: six in administrative segregation and two in disciplinary segregation. Of the six detainees under administrative segregation orders, four were in protective custody. Detainees may be placed in protective custody if they require protection from harm. One detainee in protective custody had been held in the SMU for more than 30 days.

¹³ NDS 2019, Standard 2.9, *Special Management Units*, Section II.V.

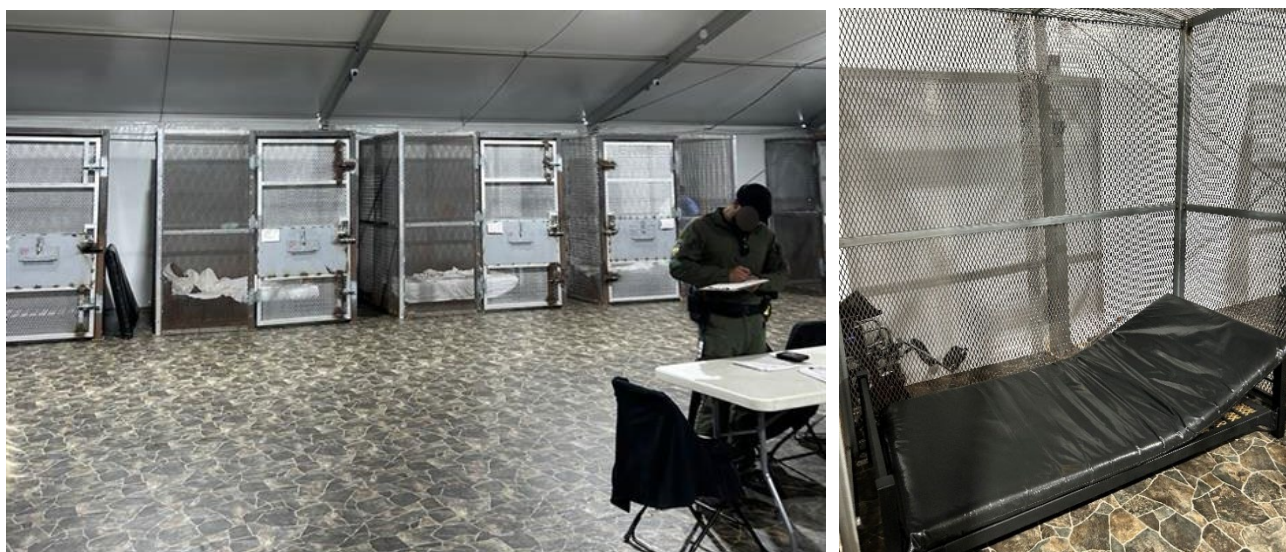


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restrictions apply.¹⁴ FSSF leadership confirmed this limitation to legal materials, stating detainees could request escorts for scheduled legal appointments, but detainees could not access or retain legal materials otherwise. One detainee reported he did not have access to a telephone to speak with his attorney or ICE case officer during his 8 days in the SMU. FSSF had installed SMU telephones shortly before our inspection, but they were inoperable at the time of the inspection. The OIG inspection team confirmed this by locating one of the telephones and determining it did not work.

Figures 8 and 9. Metal Housing Enclosures Inside the SMU (left) and Inside Metal Housing Enclosure (right); observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG

¹⁴ NDS 2019 Standard 2.9, *Special Management Units*, Section II.T.-W.; 2026 FMJS, Jan. 1, 2026, 11.13, 11.14, 15.13.

Figure 10. Metal Housing Enclosures Inside the SMU; observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG

Small Metal Enclosures Used as “Calming Areas”

Between July 17, 2025, and January 18, 2026, FSSF confined 79 detainees in small metal enclosures — each offering about 18 square feet of floor space — for periods ranging from several minutes to nearly 2 hours, a practice unlike any OIG team has observed in ICE facilities. The use of such restrictive spaces is highly unconventional and does not align with standards for humane treatment.¹⁵ The use of these small metal enclosures is inconsistent with standards, which state that facilities maintain detainees in the least restrictive environment necessary for facility safety and security.¹⁶ During our inspection, we observed at least two small metal enclosures in the outdoor recreation areas (see Figures 11 and 12). According to facility staff, the small metal enclosures measure approximately 4 feet 3 inches by 4 feet 3 inches and 7 feet 9 inches tall. Facility staff described the small metal enclosures as “calming areas” for detainees to de-escalate and have time alone. Staff further maintained that detainees asked to spend time in the small metal enclosures. We found at least one instance in which the small metal enclosures may have been used as a disciplinary tool. Documentation provided by FSSF noted that one detainee who spent 26 minutes in a small metal enclosure “Failed to comply with a lawful command.”

¹⁵ One of the fundamental purposes of the ICE detention standards is to ensure detainees are treated humanely.

¹⁶ NDS 2019, Section 2.2, *Custody Classification System*, Section II.D.



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Staff also reported that time spent in the small metal enclosures is closely monitored, and detainees are not locked in, even though we observed locking mechanisms on the enclosures.

Figures 11 and 12. Small Metal Enclosures; Observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG



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The posted policy on the small metal enclosures in Figures 11 and 12 reads:

SOUTH DETENTION FACILITY
"Respect, Care and Dignity"
HOLDING CELL

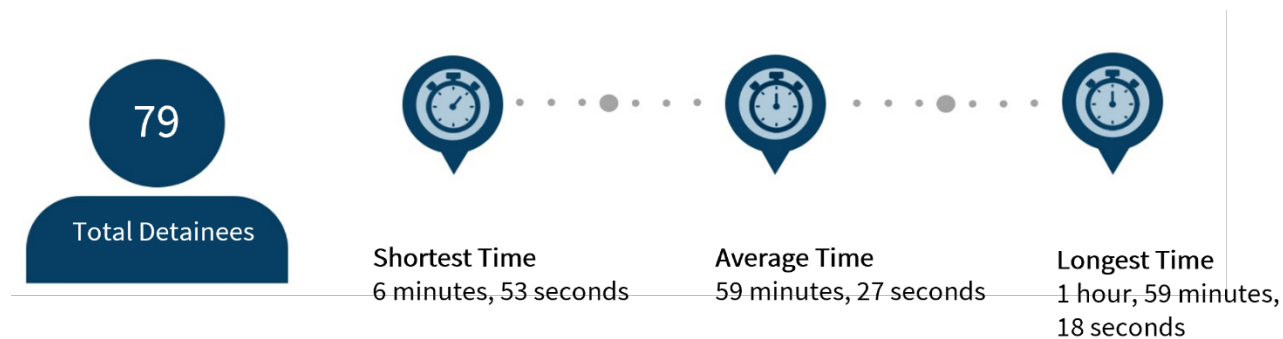
Purpose

The purpose of a Holding Cell Space is to provide a safe and secure place in general population for detainees to reflect on their behavior choices, manage their emotions, reduce stress, and practice self-directed behavior.

- The Supervisor must approve assignment to the Holding Cell.
- The detainee may have a maximum of 2 hours to spend in the Holding Cell and may leave at any time, by detainee request or per staff directive.
- The Holding Cell will be monitored by detention staff.
- A staff member may recommend to the Supervisor to remove the detainee at any time, depending on behavior or other circumstances, and either return the detainee to their housing unit or initiate the process of assignment to the [SMU].
- Detainees will be provided water upon request.

Of the 79 detainees held in small metal enclosures from July 17, 2025, to January 18, 2026, FSSF records show that no detainees were held longer than the 2-hour policy. As shown in Figure 13, the average time a detainee spent in these small metal enclosures was 59 minutes and 27 seconds.

Figure 13. Detainee Time Held in Small Metal Enclosures



Source: DHS OIG data



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In March 2026, two U.S. Senators raised concerns and made an inquiry to the Department regarding the use of these enclosures at FSSF.¹⁷ Their letter cited reports from nongovernmental organizations and the media alleging that detainees were confined in these outdoor structures as punishment, sometimes subjected to direct sunlight, high temperatures, humidity, insects, use of restraints for hours, and denial of food or water. When we asked ICE officials about the enclosures, they reported to us that these enclosures were used for disciplinary issues, crisis intervention, housing changes, and conflicts among detainees. ICE also reported that all detainees were placed in hand restraints when they were escorted to the small metal enclosures, but not while in them.

We were unable to independently confirm or refute ICE officials' assertions regarding their use of the enclosures, as well as other allegations, such as deprivation of food or water while in the enclosures, as none of the detainees we interviewed reported experiencing these conditions during our unannounced inspection. Use of these small metal enclosures for any reason is unprecedented among ICE facilities inspected by OIG. Confining individuals in small metal enclosures for any reason presents significant risks to detainee health and well-being.

Recommendation 2: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations establish and implement a recreation schedule that ensures each detainee housed in the SMU has access to outdoor recreation facilities for the appropriate amount of time.

Recommendation 3: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure detainees housed in the SMU have access to law libraries and legal materials.

Recommendation 4: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure detainees housed in the SMU have access to working telephones.

Recommendation 5: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations immediately discontinue the use of the small metal enclosures to hold detainees for any reason or amount of time.

Key Finding 3: FSSF Did not Comply with Medical Standards Related to Withdrawal Monitoring

While FSSF's medical contractor¹⁸ has policies to monitor detainees at risk of drug or alcohol withdrawal, it did not use standardized forms to document the withdrawal monitoring process.

¹⁷ See https://www.ossoff.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/26.03.25_OSSOFF-DURBIN_Use-of-the-Box-at-Everglades-Detention-Facility.pdf.

¹⁸ FSSF contracts with CDR Health to provide medical services to detainees.



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Without these forms, staff cannot consistently quantify the severity of withdrawal symptoms, limiting the medical teams' ability to develop individualized treatment plans.

Recommendation 6: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations implement standardized withdrawal monitoring tools to improve the assessment and management of detainee detoxification care.

Key Finding 4: FSSF Did not Comply with Food Service Standards

During our inspection, we found one freezer was operating above the recommended temperature according to its temperature gauge. Storing perishable food at temperatures above required ranges may result in food spoilage, increasing the risk of foodborne illness for both staff and detainees. Freezers used to store perishable food should be maintained at 0 degrees Fahrenheit (0 °F) or below.¹⁹ We observed a container labeled “Freezer #1” with a temperature gauge reading 10 degrees Fahrenheit. Approximately 17 minutes later, when checking the temperatures again, the gauge read 14 degrees Fahrenheit. Facility staff rely on the temperature gauges to ensure food is maintained at appropriate temperatures.

Figures 14 and 15. Freezer No. 1 Exceeding Required Temperature; Observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG

¹⁹ The Food and Drug Administration says food that is properly frozen should be kept at 0 degrees Fahrenheit (0 °F). See <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/are-you-storing-food-safely>.



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Detainees told us they did not have access to clean drinking water and could not clean their plastic cups. Drinking potentially contaminated drinking water from unclean cups could negatively impact detainee health. According to standards,²⁰ clean, potable drinking water should be available. At FSSF, detainees receive individual cups for drinking water, and each housing unit has at least one 5-gallon container of drinking water. Detainees use these cups to obtain drinking water from the container. During our detainee interviews, when asked if they had access to clean drinking water, six of the eight responded “No” and noted that the drinking water was dirty. Several detainees also expressed concerns about the inability to clean their cups. During our inspection, we observed cups placed on the floor, bed railings, and ledges on bathroom walls, with no dedicated storage areas for cups in the housing units.

Figure 16. Drinking Water Container; Observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG

²⁰ NDS 2019, Section 4.1. II.C. *Food Service*, Section II.C. and 1.1 *Environmental Health and Safety*, Section II.C.



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Figures 17 and 18. Detainee Cups; Observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG

Recommendation 7: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure staff comply with Food Service standards, including by maintaining coolers and freezers within the required temperature ranges and providing detainees with access to clean drinking water and cups.

Key Finding 5: FSSF Did not Comply with Personal Hygiene Standards

Detainees and facility staff stated that detainees only showered three times a week -- on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The limited number of showers prevented detainees from maintaining good personal hygiene. According to standards, detainees in "... general population will be allowed access to shower daily."²¹ Before showering, facility staff give detainees a personal hygiene kit with soap, shampoo, deodorant, a toothbrush, and toothpaste. However, after showering, detainees may only bring the toothbrush back to their housing units. If detainees need more hygiene items on days when they do not shower, they must request them, and staff supervise their use. If a detainee requests toothpaste, a staff member applies it to his toothbrush.

²¹ FMJS, Jan. 1, 2026, 7.9.



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Showering Facilities

FSSF has four showering facilities, each containing 40 individual showers. Two housing pods share each shower facility. Detainees receive a single-use personal hygiene kit (deodorant, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, and a bar of soap) and a towel when they shower.

Figures 19 and 20. Shower Facilities; Observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG

Figure 21. Personal Hygiene Kit; Observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG



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The OIG inspection team also observed that the facility's showers were infested with small bugs, specifically on the ceilings. According to standards, detention facilities shall be kept free of insects and vermin.²² While on site, we interviewed eight detainees. We asked each detainee, "Is this facility clean?" Seven answered "No," and two specifically cited the showers as a problem area.

Figure 22. Insect Infestation in Shower Facilities; Observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG

Recommendation 8: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure that FSSF establishes and implements a daily shower schedule to comply with hygiene standards.

Recommendation 9: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure the shower facilities are maintained free of pests and vermin, in accordance with hygiene standards.

Key Finding 6: FSSF Did not Comply with Recreation Standards

We found detainees were offered 1 hour of recreation time 3 days per week. With the limited amount of recreation, detainees could not engage in recreational and exercise programs, which could negatively affect physical and mental health. Detainees should have access to outdoor recreation for at least 1 hour per day, 5 days per week, or a minimum of 6 hours per week on at

²² FMJS, Jan. 1, 2026, 14.12 and NDS 2019, *Standard 1.1: Environmental Health and Safety*, Section II (E).



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least 4 days, according to applicable standards.²³ Combined with housing units without common areas and limited space for any form of exercise, the minimal recreation time further hinders detainees from engaging in meaningful mental and physical exercise.

Recreation

For general population detainees, FSSF provides four outdoor recreation areas with turf surfaces, each covered by a tent (see Figures 23 and 24). These areas are equipped with various sports ball, soccer goals, and basketball hoops.

Figures 23 and 24. Outdoor Recreation Areas; Observed January 21, 2026



Source: DHS OIG

Recommendation 10: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure compliance with recreation standards by establishing and implementing a recreation schedule that ensures each detainee can access outdoor recreation facilities for the appropriate amount of time.

²³ NDS 2019, *Standard 5.2 Recreation*, Section II.A.1.



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Management Comments and OIG Analysis

DHS did not address the OIG's 10 recommendations. Because FSSF ceased operations on June 15, 2026, we have administratively closed all 10 recommendations.

In its management response, however, the Department raised broader points about its authority over and oversight of FSSF. DHS stated it did not have a contract with Florida to manage the detention space at FSSF. DHS indicated Florida detained illegal aliens at FSSF pursuant to its delegated authority under Section 287(g) of the *Immigration and Nationality Act*, and therefore, the state maintains authority of day-to-day operations at the facility.

- Section 287(g) authorizes the DHS Secretary to enter into written agreements with a State, or any political subdivision of a State, to perform certain functions of an immigration officer in relation to the investigation, apprehension, or detention of aliens. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1357(g).
- According to the agreements, the DHS Secretary delegated this authority to ICE, and ICE entered into agreements with various Florida state agencies (although not FSSF) for detention and custody of individuals subject to Federal immigration enforcement.

DHS also stated that a Section 287(g) agreement does not give the federal government authority over the physical operations at any facility or over the state employees except to the extent they are performing the function of an immigration officer. At the time of our inspection, all of the detainees at FSSF were ICE immigration detainees. We found evidence demonstrating ICE did have some degree of oversight authority and engagement at FSSF even in the absence of a contract.

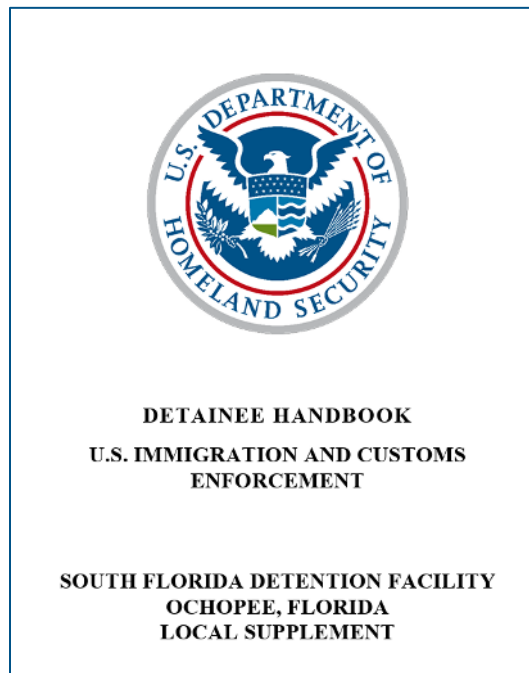
- Detainees at intake were provided with an ICE Detainee Handbook (see Figure 25), which states that FSSF "... at Ochopee, Florida is a detention facility *of the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)* [emphasis added]. As such, our mission is to provide a safe, humane, and secure facility ... The facility follows ICE Performance-Based National Detention Standards (PBNDS) and American Correctional Association (ACA) standards."



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Figure 25: Cover of Detainee Handbook



Source: DHS OIG

- ICE information posters were posted throughout the facility.
- ICE personnel were on-site to assist FSSF staff.
- The Department and the State of Florida made multiple representations in court that FSSF operates with ICE oversight under 287(g).²⁴
- All of the 287(g) agreements that ICE signed with various Florida agencies provide for immigration enforcement activities to be “supervised and directed by ICE.”
- ICE personnel were required to escort OIG personnel to enter the facility on the first day of our unannounced inspection (we were not authorized to enter the facility without ICE permission).

²⁴ The Acting Deputy Executive Associate Director for ICE’s Enforcement and Removal Operations stated that ICE had been touring FSSF to ensure compliance with ICE detention standards, meeting with Florida officials to discuss operational matters, and confirmed that any detentions at FSSF would be pursuant to 287(g). See Omnibus Order at 5, *Friends of the Everglades, Inc. v. Noem*, 1:25-cv-22896 (S.D. Fla. Aug. 21, 2025); Florida stated that ICE provides supervision at FSSF over the delegated immigration officer functions as required under the 287(g) program, there are ICE agents present at the facility, ICE officials provide guidance any time immigration authority is exercised, ICE toured the facility to ensure compliance with detention standards, and maintains routine contact about immigration operational matters. Florida also added that ICE decides whether to offer to the State every single detainee who ends up at Alligator Alcatraz, and ICE can summon them back at any time. State Defendants’ Response to Plaintiff’s Motion for Class Certification and for a Preliminary Injunction at 25-26, *M.A. v. Guthrie*, 2:25-cv-00765 (M.D. Fla. Oct. 20, 2025).



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Irrespective of the extent of ICE's oversight of FSSF, DHS retains authority over FSSF's use of federal funding under FEMA's Detention Support Grant Program.²⁵

Although FSSF ceased operations in June 2026, the issues raised by the Department's management response regarding ICE's level of oversight and responsibility for immigration detention remain consequential. For example, the Baker Correctional Institution (also known as "Deportation Depot")²⁶ is a state-operated detention facility that continues to operate in Sanderson, Florida. Baker, which opened in September 2025, housed 1,028 detainees as of August 27, 2026. ICE's own documentation lists contractually obligated standards for Baker as "N/A" (as we found for FSSF) and Baker has not been internally inspected by ICE's Office of Detention Oversight nor was it scheduled for inspection in FY 2026 or FY 2027.

ICE also provided technical comments on the draft report that we incorporated into the final report as appropriate and confirmed there were no sensitivity comments.

²⁵ Under the Fiscal Year 2025 Detention Support Grant Program (Award No. EMW 2025 DS 05000), FEMA obligated \$608.4 million to the Florida Division of Emergency Management for FSSF on September 30, 2025, and disbursed \$58.3 million on May 15, 2026, for allowable operational costs.

²⁶ See <https://www.flgov.com/eog/news/press/2025/governor-ron-desantis-announces-expansion-floridas-capacity-detain-and-deport>



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Appendix A: Objective, Scope, and Methodology

The *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Pub. L. No. 107–296) by amendment to the *Inspector General Act of 1978* established DHS OIG. This report was delayed due to a lapse in appropriation for DHS OIG from February 14, 2026, through April 30, 2026.

As mandated by Congress,²⁷ we conduct unannounced inspections of immigration detention facilities to report on custody operations. We analyze various factors to determine which facilities to inspect. We review OIG Hotline complaints, prior inspection reports, and past and future inspection schedules of other ICE and DHS inspection organizations. We also consider requests, input, and information from Congress, nongovernmental organizations, and media outlets to determine which facilities may pose the greatest risks to the health and safety of detainees. Finally, to ensure we review facilities with both large and small detainee populations in geographically diverse locations, we consider facility type (e.g., service processing centers, contract detention facilities, and intergovernmental service agreement facilities) and applicable standards.

Our objective was to determine whether FSSF in Ochopee, Florida, complied with select standards. We conducted a limited-scope inspection of FSSF in one day, inspecting compliance with the following standards: Intake, Use of Force, Environmental Health and Safety, SMUs, Food Service, Personal Hygiene, and Recreation.²⁸

Additionally, we contracted with a qualified medical contractor who used the FMJS Chapter 9, *Medical*, and the Non-dedicated Intergovernmental Service Agreement Standards to review medical-related policies and procedures at the facility. One registered nurse accompanied the OIG team, inspecting compliance with medical screening, emergency response, sick call, diagnostic, dental, pharmacy, and mental health services, withdrawal care, and transfers of detainees, among others.²⁹

On January 21, 2026, we conducted a limited-scope unannounced inspection of FSSF. During our inspection, we:

- inspected areas detainees used;
- reviewed the facility's compliance with key health, safety, and welfare requirements;
- interviewed detention facility staff;

²⁷ Joint Explanatory Statement Accompanying H.R. 2882, *Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024*, Div. C, *Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2024* (Pub. L. 118-47), extended to Jan. 30, 2026, by *Continuing Appropriations Act, 2026* (Pub. L. 119-37).

²⁸ During full scope inspections, we inspect compliance with additional standards over multiple days, including staff-detainee communications, access to legal materials, and management of the voluntary work program.

²⁹ During full scope inspections, one nurse and one doctor typically accompany the OIG team. As part of that review, the medical doctor reviews a sample of detainee medical files to assess the adequacy of care.



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- interviewed detainees; and
- reviewed documentary evidence, including medical and mental health files (reviewed by medical contractors).

Preparation of this report was significantly delayed due to the lapse in appropriation for DHS OIG from February through April 2026.

We conducted this inspection under the authority of the *Inspector General Act of 1978*, 5 U.S.C. §§ 401–424, and according to the *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*, issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

DHS OIG’s Access to DHS Information

During this inspection, ICE provided timely responses to our requests for information and did not delay or deny access to information we requested.



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Appendix B: Recommendations

Recommendation 1: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure FSSF limits occupancy in each metal enclosure to no more than 11 detainees or modify housing to ensure at least 75 square feet of floor space per detainee to comply with *Florida Model Jail Standards*.

Recommendation 2: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations establish and implement a recreation schedule that ensures each detainee housed in the SMU has access to outdoor recreation facilities for the appropriate amount of time.

Recommendation 3: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure detainees housed in the SMU have access to law libraries and legal materials.

Recommendation 4: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure detainees housed in the SMU have access to working telephones.

Recommendation 5: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations immediately discontinue the use of the small metal enclosures to hold detainees for any reason or amount of time.

Recommendation 6: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations implement standardized withdrawal monitoring tools to improve the assessment and management of detainee detoxification care.

Recommendation 7: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure staff comply with Food Service standards, including by maintaining coolers and freezers within the required temperature ranges and providing detainees with access to clean drinking water and cups.

Recommendation 8: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure that FSSF establishes and implements a daily shower schedule to comply with hygiene standards.

Recommendation 9: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure the shower facilities are maintained free of pests and vermin, in accordance with hygiene standards.

Recommendation 10: We recommend the Executive Associate Director of Enforcement and Removal Operations ensure compliance with recreation standards by establishing and implementing a recreation schedule that ensures each detainee can access outdoor recreation facilities for the appropriate amount of time.



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Appendix C: DHS Comments on the Draft Report

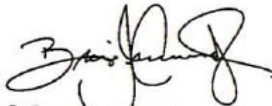
DHS' formal management response begins on the next page.

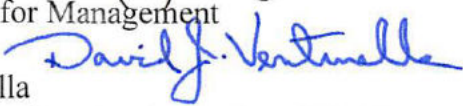


**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

September 3, 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR: Joseph V. Cuffari, Ph.D.
Inspector General

FROM: Brian J. Cavanaugh 
Under Secretary for Management

David J. Venturella 
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Director, ICE

SUBJECT: DHS Response to Draft Report: "Unannounced
Inspection of ICE's Florida Soft-Sided Facility ("Alligator
Alcatraz") in Ochopee, Florida"
(Project No. 26-005-OIE-ICE(b))

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report. The Department is committed to maintaining a positive working relationship with the Office of Inspector General.

While FEMA provided funding for the Florida Soft-Sided Facility (FSSF) under the Shelter and Services Program, DHS did not have a contract with Florida to manage the detention space within the facility. The State of Florida authorized the repurposing of the center from the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport into a state detention center on January 6, 2023. Florida detained illegal aliens at this facility pursuant to its authority delegated under Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. A 287(g) agreement does not give the federal government authority over the physical operations at any facility or over the state employees except to the extent they are performing the functions of an immigration officer. Even as to a facility where a state detains aliens under 287(g) authority, the state maintains authority over the day-to-day operations of that facility. ICE will continue to utilize its *National Detention Standard* and will review this document in line with the OIG recommendations for consideration.

Additionally, since the performance of this inspection in January 2026, the FSSF has been permanently closed. As such, OIG indicated that it has administratively closed all 10 recommendations.



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Appendix D: Report Distribution

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