

DETENTION IN YOUR DISTRICT

STATE: Arizona

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 1

FACILITIES: Eloy Federal Contract Facility
La Palma Correctional Center

CAPACITY: 6,160 (approx.)

Eloy Federal Contract Facility Facility & Contract Overview

The Eloy Federal Contract Facility (EFCF) operates via an Intergovernmental Service Agreement ([IGSA](#)) between the city of Eloy, Arizona and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The facility is [owned and operated](#) by CoreCivic, formerly Corrections Corporations of America (CCA). According to contract information received through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, the [per diem rate](#) for the facility is \$64.47. An April 2017 [inspection](#) by ICE's Office of Detention Inspection (ODO) indicates a total capacity of 1,550, with an average population of 1,411. The facility houses both men and women.

In 2014, the city of Eloy and ICE [modified](#) the IGSA awarded to operate EFCF to allow CoreCivic to open and operate a second facility, a 2,400 bed family detention in Dilley, Texas. Under the modified IGSA, the city of Eloy received \$438,000 annually. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) stated in a 2018 [report](#) that "Eloy's sole function under the modification is to act as the middleman between ICE and [CoreCivic]." The OIG also reported that ICE's overall negotiation, implementation and execution of IGSA's are inappropriate and may result in overpaying for detention facilities, to the detriment of the taxpayer. In September 2018, the Eloy City Council voted to [exit](#) the modified agreement, per ICE's request, after the city was listed as a defendant in a wrongful death lawsuit of a 17-month-old infant at the Dilley facility.

Deaths in Custody

Between [2004 and 2016](#), 14 people detained at EFCF died. According to [press reports](#), five deaths of detained persons at EFCF over the past ten years have been suicides. Advocates and health professionals [point](#) to lack of medical care and staffing shortages on suicide watch as among the reasons for the high number of deaths at the facility. In April 2013, Elsa Guadalupe Gonzalez and Jorge Garcia Maldonado - both of Guatemalan nationality - [died](#) by suicide within a two day period. A death review by ODO in 2013 for Miss Guadalupe-Gonzalez [shows](#) that the facility was not compliant with medical care and suicide prevention standards. The ODO review states that EFCF staff appeared to believe that they were not allowed to call 911 in the event of an emergency. Similarly, the ODO review of the death of Mr. Garcia Maldonado shows that the facility was not compliant with medical care standards including practices that of leaving people unsupervised that could potentially lead to suicide and sexual assault.

In 2015, Jose Deniz-Sahagun, an individual of Mexican nationality seeking to [reunite](#) with his children, died while detained at EFCF. The 2015 ODO [review](#) of Mr. Deniz- Shagun's death ruled that he died by asphyxia and ruled the manner of death to be suicide. The report found irregularities in the facility's suicide prevention policies, including the lack of a suicide prevention plan. According to a 2015 [press report](#), the facility did not have any doctors on staff at the time of Mr. Deniz-Sagun's death. Mr. Deniz-Shagun's family subsequently filed a wrongful death [lawsuit](#) against ICE and CoreCivic.



Credit: US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Key Areas of Concern

- Deaths in custody
- Medical neglect
- Sexual assault
- Ineffective government oversight
- Unsanitary conditions
- Limited access to food

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In addition, some advocates question Mr. Deniz-Sagun's reported cause of death. According to an [October 2019 report](#) by the Puente Movement and the Advancement Project, individuals detained with Mr. Deniz-Shagun report that he had suffered physical abuse at the hands of facility staff and was subjected to prolonged periods of solitary confinement. According to an autopsy report, Mr. Deniz-Shagun had sustained blunt force trauma injuries to his head.

Other forms of medical neglect have led to deaths at EFCF. [In 2012](#), Manuel Cota- Domingo, of Guatemalan nationality, died of cardiovascular disease and untreated diabetes after facility staff neglected to provide care for him for eight hours after asking for help. A 2012 ODO review of Mr. Cota-Domingo's death found that the facility was not compliant with the ICE medical standards, including providing people with medication prescribed to them prior to being detained. [In 2016](#), Raquel Calderón de Hidalgo, originally from Guatemala, died at the Banner Casa Grande Hospital after being transferred from EFCF due a series of seizures caused by a blood clot in her lungs. According to Human Rights Watch, EFCF staff [failed](#) to refer Ms. Calderon de Hidalgo as a high priority patient, which led to delay on her care even after she requested a doctor visit three days before her death. In 2018, Huy Chi Tran, a long time U.S. resident originally from Vietnam, was found unresponsive and transferred to the Banner Casa Grande Hospital, where he subsequently [died](#). According to ICE, Mr. Tran [died](#) due to multiple blocked arteries.

Documented Abuses

In addition to gross medical and suicide prevention neglect, Eloy has also been a site of systemic sexual abuse. In 2017, Freedom for Immigrants filed a [complaint](#) with the DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) regarding 27 incidences of sexual harassment and abuse in ICE detention. The complaint cited EFCF as a facility where FFI has received numerous allegations of sexual abuse. According to a [2011 inspection](#) by ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO), there were 10 allegations of sexual assault within a year that were determined "unfounded" by facility staff, with no resulting corrective actions taken. Also in 2011, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a [lawsuit](#) on behalf of Tanya Guzman-Martinez, a transgender woman seeking asylum from Mexico, who had filed a police report after being sexually assaulted at EFCF in 2009 and 2011. The two assaults occurred while Ms. Guzman-Martinez was detained in an [all-male](#) area at EFCF. In [June 2010](#), Justin Manford, a CoreCivic officer, was convicted of attempted unlawful sexual contact with Ms. Guzman-Martinez on December 7, 2009.

In 2010, the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) sent a delegation to [report](#) on detention facilities across Arizona. The delegation found numerous violations of ICE detention standards at EFCF, including lack of access to religious services and recreation, inadequate medical care, and lack of a grievance procedure. The report also found that women involved in child custody cases were unable to participate in parental rights hearings. The WRC documented instances of medical neglect, including a woman with multiple sclerosis who had been waiting for treatment for months, even after her medical files had been transferred to the facility.

The previously referenced [October 2019](#) report by the Puente Movement and the Advancement Project documented numerous abuses at Eloy, including unsanitary detention conditions, inadequate or spoiled food, widespread use of solitary confinement, and inadequate and delayed medical care.

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Inadequate inspections

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) released a report in [June 2018](#) citing EFCF as an example on how ICE inspections do not lead to compliance or systemic improvements. This report came after a [2017](#) ODO compliance inspection that revealed medical neglect, including a complaint from a man that had been at the facility for more than a year and had not received a physical examination. The same inspection recorded religious violations in regards to access to preferred religious services and religious dietary restrictions.

La Palma Correctional

In July 2018, CoreCivic [announced](#) that they modified the IGSA between ICE and the city of Eloy, under which EFCF operates, to be able to detain immigrants at the La Palma Correctional Center, which is also located in Eloy, Arizona. Prior to this modification, CoreCivic had contracted with the state of California to hold California residents serving criminal charges at the facility. In 2011, the California Inspector General [recommended](#) that the state cease to use the La Palma Correctional Center to jail California residents due to concerns regarding abuses and systemic issues in enforcing policies and procedures. The California Inspector General stated that CoreCivic “did not adequately screen employees before hiring them” and that “that significant incidents were not always investigated.” In a July 2019 press statement, ICE officials [said](#) the agency had contracted space to house 3,240 people in the facility. According to a July 2018 [press report](#), the contract is for an indefinite period.

CoreCivic staff at La Palma are [reportedly](#) not required to get vaccinated for mumps or chickenpox. According to news sources, over 2,200 detained by ICE in Arizona were quarantined due to mumps virus exposure and at least 345 people at La Palma were exposed to mumps and 59 to chicken pox in March 2019. People detained at La Palma Correctional Center [organized](#) to protest conditions at the facility on September 2019.

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Credit: US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Resources

- [Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project](#)
- [Restoration Project at Casa Mariposa](#)
- [Transcend Arizona](#)
- [Mariposas Sin Fronteras](#)
- [Guadalupe Presbyterian Detention Ministry](#)