

# END DETENTION IN YOUR DISTRICT

**STATE:** New Jersey      **CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:** 10

**FACILITIES:** Essex County Correctional Facility

**CAPACITY:** 700 (approx.)

## Essex County Correctional Facility

### Facility and Contract Overview

Essex County Correctional is owned and operated by Essex County. The facility detains both civilly and criminally detained individuals. The facility dedicated bed space to ICE pursuant to an Intergovernmental Service Agreement or [IGSA](#) beginning August 2011. As of a 2016 [ODO Inspection](#), the facility housed 563 men in ICE detention. The [per diem](#) rate is \$108 per individual in detention. The Gothamist [reports](#) that the agreement with ICE brings in as much as \$3 million per month to the county.

Essex County Correctional Facility has been the subject of numerous complaints, government reports, and lawsuits reporting violations of facility standards. The violations include unhygienic conditions and instances of verbal abuse and harassment from facility and medical staff.

In June 2019, a DHS OIG [report](#) found multiple violations and substandard conditions at the facility. The inspection found issues with food quality and handling that posed immediate health risks to detained persons. These issues included mishandling and contamination of meats, improperly stored raw meat, and moldy or expired food. The report stated that the food handling in general was so substandard that ICE and facility leadership had the kitchen manager replaced during the inspection. The violations found in the OIG inspection warranted a separate [report](#) of issues requiring action to be submitted to ICE for correction.

The June 2019 OIG [report](#) also noted inappropriate segregation practices, including placing detained individuals in disciplinary segregation prior to the disciplinary hearing panel passing final judgement, and miscategorizing detained individuals under administrative segregation instead of disciplinary. There were also reports of strip searches on detained persons in administrative and disciplinary segregation without valid justification or reasonable suspicion, as well as the use of restraints on individuals in segregation when outside of their rooms. Both acts violate the ICE Performance-Based National Detention Standards (PBNDS), which Essex abides by.



Credit: US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

### Key Areas of Concern

- Substandard and unhygienic food quality
- Environmental health hazards
- Lack of sufficient recreation time
- Improper segregation practices and procedures
- Inappropriate use of strip searches
- Insufficient mental health care
- Medical neglect and mistreatment
- Verbal abuse

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The report also noted that individuals in disciplinary segregation were only allowed one hour per day outside of their cells for recreation, showering, or phone time with their attorneys. The inspection found a lack of outdoor recreational spaces; instead, housing units each had a small, glass enclosure with a mesh cage at the top to allow in outside air. Facility staff indicated that ICE was going to build a soccer field for outdoor recreation when the contract first began, but this project was not completed. Other substandard conditions noted in the report included excessive mold and mildew growth in facility bathrooms, which pose health risks to detained individuals with allergies, asthma or other respiratory conditions. Detained individuals also reported being fitted with improperly sized clothing and undergarments, and not being able to replenish their toiletries after intake, including shampoo, deodorant, and toothpaste.

A Human Rights First [report](#) published in February 2018 found additional violations of National Detention Standards. The report found numerous instances of verbal abuse and other substandard facility operations.

## Medical Neglect

[CFG Health Systems](#) provides medical care at Essex County Correctional for \$13 million per year. Both CFG Health Systems and Essex County Correctional Facility are currently involved in a lawsuit filed by a formerly detained man named Marcus Moreno. The [lawsuit](#), filed in December 2019, alleges that facility staff allowed three men in detention to physically assault Moreno in his cell after he told corrections officers they were selling drugs. The lawsuit also alleges that CFG provided poor medical treatment and follow-up following the assault. Medical staff have denied allegations of substandard medical care and verbal abuse against detained individuals; however, these reports are corroborated by visitation and community groups. The groups noted that access to comprehensive healthcare is restricted and recorded an [increase](#) in medical complaints in late 2019.

In light of community protests calling for contract termination and the OIG report, the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders agreed to put together a [task force](#) to provide facility oversight and to oversee improvements. According to a county [resolution](#), the task force members will have the ability to inspect the prison, to interview officers and detained persons, and to review issues raised. Some of the profits made from the contract will also be diverted to a [fund](#) that will provide lawyers to people detained under ICE.

## Resources

- [First Friends of New Jersey](#)
- [New York Lawyers for the Public Interest](#)

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