

END DETENTION IN YOUR DISTRICT

STATE: Ohio

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 12

FACILITIES: Morrow County Correctional Facility

CAPACITY: 64 (approx.)

Morrow County Correctional Facility

Facility and Contract Overview

This facility is owned and operated by the Morrow County Sheriff's Office. The facility started detaining immigrants in August 2009 pursuant to an Intergovernmental Service Agreement ([IGSA](#)) between the county and Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE). The termination date as of the IGSA was set for 60 months, August 2014, from signing unless parties choose to extend the agreement. An updated contract is not publicly available. In May 2020, The Progressive reported that the total [capacity](#) of the facility is 126, with about 75 beds reserved for individuals detained on pending immigration matters. The facility detains both men and women. According to the previously referenced press report, the county receives \$68.83 per detained person per day. According to a 2018 ICE's Office of Detention Oversight (ODO) [inspection](#), Morrow is subject to ICE's 2000 National Detention Standards. However, these standards were [superseded](#) in December 2019 by the 2019 National Detention Standards for Non-Dedicated Facilities.

Conditions and Documented Abuses

A 2015 [inspection](#) by ODO recorded 55 deficiencies within all 15 reviewed standards at the Morrow County Correctional Facility. The deficiencies included the absence of a facility handbook, lack of information about the law library or grievance process, and monitoring of legal calls by jail staff.

In February 2020, Freedom for Immigrants submitted a [complaint](#) to the Department of Homeland Security Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) detailing violations of ICE's 2019 NDS. The violations reported included overcrowding, inadequate medical and dental services, unsanitary conditions, and restricted access to clean bedding and clothes.

Additionally, in February 2020 a detained Honduran man named Óscar López Acosta told advocates with Ohio Immigrant Visitation that he was punched in the chest by another person in custody when he tried to use the bathroom at night. López Acosta reported that some people stashed contraband in a bathroom light fixture. Medical staff at the jail confirmed López Acosta had a cracked rib, but argued the injury might have occurred prior to his detention, a diagnosis which López Acosta refutes. The previously referenced May 2020 press report supported López Acosta's claim that drugs are frequently smuggled into the jail with the knowledge of the corrections officers. Per the same report, emergency services were called to the Morrow County Correctional Facility three times in two days to administer Narcan for drug overdoses.



Credit: US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Key Areas of Concern

- Medical neglect
- Unsanitary conditions
- Barriers to communication

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COVID-19 Related Abuses and Neglect

On May 5, 2020, the ACLU of Ohio filed a [lawsuit](#) on behalf of 23 detained men from Morrow. According to court documents, the first positive COVID-19 case in the Morrow County Correctional Facility was recorded on April 22 2020. Prior to this date, Morrow County Sheriff John Hinton did not distribute available personal protective equipment to staff or to people in custody. According to the lawsuit, at least 50 immigrants detained at Morrow County tested positive for COVID-19 just eight days after the first case was confirmed. By May 2020, ICE [reported](#) that 48 of the 51 men in ICE detention tested positive for COVID-19.

In response to the ACLU of Ohio lawsuit, U.S. District Judge Sarah Morrison [ordered](#) 13 men with underlying medical vulnerabilities detained at Morrow County to be released following a 14 day quarantine. Judge Morrison's order also documented significant evidence that the Morrow County Correctional Facility staff did not provide immigrants in detention with adequate supplies to perform basic hygiene. The order states that the unhygienic conditions constitute "punishment" under the Fifth Amendment's Due Process Clause. According to an April 2020 [report](#) by The American Prospect, the Morrow County Correctional Facility did not adequately provide soap and other hygiene products even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Family members of people detained at the facility also [reported](#) that soap was only available by purchase at least until late April 2020.

In May 2020, Mother Jones [reported](#) that, just one day after the first positive case of COVID-19, ICE released Óscar López Acosta without testing him for the virus. López Acosta had previously alleged physical abuse and drug smuggling at Morrow. The 42-year-old of Honduran origin was in ICE detention for 18 months, including more than two months at Morrow. López Acosta had underlying medical vulnerabilities to complications from COVID-19, including diabetes. On May 3, 2020 López Acosta tested positive for COVID-19 after an ambulance took him from his home to a hospital. He died one week later from complications due to COVID-19. Immigrant rights activists, López Acosta's attorneys and his family members [believe](#) that he contracted COVID-19 while in detention.

In June 2020, the Ohio Immigrant Alliance published a [report](#) detailing how the jail failed to follow its own infectious disease control program. The report includes a lack of translation services, use of expired thermometers to screen for COVID-19, medical neglect, and failure to use an interpreter while performing medical evaluations. According to the report, failure to ensure the presence of an interpreter during medical evaluations led a miscommunication in which a detained man was transferred to the sick pod, despite not showing any symptoms of COVID-19, where he ultimately contracted the virus. Also according to the report, corrections officers taking temperatures of people in detention were using thermometers that had expired in 2016. The report also details an incident in which a lawyer called 911 for someone experiencing chest pain and shortness of breath inside the jail. When emergency services contacted the facility to confirm, they were turned away.

Local advocacy groups are calling for the jail to be shut down and the people held inside released. On May 29, 2020 Advocates for Basic Legal Equality (ABLE) filed a lawsuit for the release of five men in detention at Morrow, but the release was denied. In April 2020, immigrant advocacy groups, including ACLU of Ohio Catholic Charities, CAIR-Ohio, Ohio Immigrant Alliance, Ohio Hispanic Coalition and International Institute of Akron sent a [letter](#) to the Morrow County Commissioners and Sheriff urging them to suspend partnerships with ICE. Sheriff Hinton [suggested](#) that Morrow is planning to accept more immigrants into custody on June 16, 2020.

Resources

- [Ohio Immigrant Visitation](#)
- [Ohio Immigrant Alliance](#)
- [International Institute of Akron](#)