

Summary of Conference Call

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Advisory Committee on Family Residential Centers
Subcommittee on Access to Counsel and Language Services
July 5, 2016

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Advisory Committee on Family Residential Centers (ACFRC), Subcommittee on Access to Counsel and Language Services convened on Tuesday, July 5, 2016 via teleconference at 12:00 P.M. EST. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the recent visit to Berks County Family Residential Center and the status of the Committee's information requests.

Attendance:

Subcommittee Members Present for Teleconference:

- Jennifer Nagda
- Dora Schriro
- Kurt Schwarz
- Karen Musalo
- Margo Schlanger

Others Present:

- Elizabeth Cedillo-Pereira, Senior Advisor, ICE: Alternate Designated Federal Officer (ADFO), ACFRC
- Maryam Ali, Special Assistant, ICE

Opening Remarks:

Special Assistant Maryam Ali took roll call. All members were present with the exception of Sonia Parras-Konrad.

Chair Jennifer Nagda proposed the following agenda:

- A status update from Alternate Designated Federal Officer (ADFO) Elizabeth Cedillo-Pereira.
- A readout from Subcommittee Vice Chair Dora Schriro and ACFRC Chair Kurt Schwarz from their visit to Berks County Family Residential Center (Berks).
- A discussion of how to communicate frustrations to leadership.

General Meeting:

ADFO Cedillo-Pereira began by saying Designated Federal Officer (DFO) John Amaya has been working on the information requests all morning and would be joining the call to provide further details.

Chair Nagda said the subcommittee chairs call focused on understanding the time frame as well as where the specific hold up is in producing the requested information. She added that these

details would be important to know in terms of formulating an effective message to leadership. Karen Musalo added that decisions need to be made about the timeline for the recommendations.

Before continuing that conversation, Chair Nagda asked Vice Chair Schriro and ACFRC Chair Schwarz to provide a readout of last week's trip to Berks.

Vice Chair Schriro said the group did not get specific responses to many of their questions, including questions regarding facility licensing, recent allegations of sexual misconduct, and specifics about Danya's oversight reports. There was a strong presence by the ICE Health Services Corps; however, the social workers seemed to rely on their clinical training in the absence of an objective instrument for mental health. Members were also disappointed that the school administrator was not present to provide details about education curriculum.

Vice Chair Schriro continued that the tour provided an overview of the daily schedule and showed that this facility operates differently than the others. The members took time in the lunchroom to speak with mothers and children. Many reported long lengths of stay, (defined by admission to a particular facility not necessarily the overall time), concerns about exercising parental choices, complaints about the fifteen minute bed checks, and concerns about nutrition. Vice Chair Schriro added that ICE will check on the status of the absence of fathers.

In terms of access to counsel and language access, she said the members met with pro bono providers from the Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center (PIRC). A language line is used, but mothers sometimes depend on the children to translate. Phone cards are also available for purchase. Indigent mothers (defined as having less than \$15 at any time on the commissary balance) are provided phone cards, postage, and laundry soap at no cost. Vice Chair Schriro said perhaps the example of telephone access is an appreciable deviation from the minimum standards.

ACFRC Chair Schwarz focused more on discussing legal services and concluded that more information and conversation with the pro bono providers would be needed. He added that Berks has more residents from different nationalities than the Karnes County Family Residential Center or the South Texas Family Residential Center. He also noted that the location and size gave the facility less of a penal feel. Chair Schwarz said there seems to be an institutional reluctance to change policy unless it is approved by the county or state governments.

Subcommittee Chair Nagda asked the members to send any follow questions for Vice Chair Schriro and ACFRC Chair Schwarz via email to continue this discussion.

In regards to drafting a letter to ICE and DHS leadership explaining the concern about receiving adequate information, Subcommittee Chair Nagda said there was some consensus among the other subcommittee chairs. The goal is to express the group's inability to complete the task in the absence of information that was requested long ago, the inability to share information piece meal, and a lack of understanding as to what is causing the delay. Chair Nagda said she informed the other subcommittee chairs that this group cannot make much progress without information. Chair Nagda would draft the letter and share it with the full Committee.

DFO Amaya joined the call at this time to provide an update. He said the documents had previously come up to the Director's office but were incomplete and had to be returned to the program offices. He said he would work to clear the documents over the next 48 hours. Deadline extensions would be discussed and addressed appropriately.

Chair Nagda said she would still draft the letter and upon reviewing the information received the group could decide whether it would still be necessary to send. She noted that if the deadline is moved there is some concern that this could undermine the objective of producing recommendations in time for ICE to use them before the end of this Administration.

Adjournment:

The subcommittee adjourned at approximately 1:00 P.M. EST.