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## ICE facility expands to house women

ADELANTO — A 640-bed expansion at the Adelanto Detention Facility will be operational this week and include housing capacity for 259 women, a first for the center, a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokeswoman said.

ICE officials said the Adelanto expansion will substantially increase the agency's capacity to house female immigrant detainees in the regional seven-county Los Angeles area, where there are just about 100 beds for women and currently under 30 available.

"This is obviously a significant change," said ICE spokeswoman Virginia Kice. "The reality is we're getting more and more Level 1 women detainees" — meaning women convicted of serious crimes.

Yet having 259 beds in the newly-created women's wing doesn't mean the beds will be filled immediately, she said, even as some case transfers were possible. The same was true for the remaining nearly 400 spaces for men.

Kice also said it was still to be determined whether the expansion indicated the facility would accommodate gay, lesbian or transgender detainees — a status unchanged from late March when she acknowledged a protective custody unit had been explored, but said there were "no immediate plans" to bring one to fruition here.

There is currently such a unit at the agency's Santa Ana facility.

Pablo E. Paez, vice president of corporate relations for the Adelanto facility's private operator GEO Group, Inc., said the company could not comment on facility activation details including intake dates and operational matters for security reasons.

But Christina M. Fialho, co-founder and executive director for the immigrant advocacy group Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC), said members have heard from ICE's Los Angeles field office that the expansion included 52 beds for transgender women.

CIVIC provides a link between detainees and family, friends, attorneys and other community members, and the organization has been critical of Adelanto Detention Facility for, among other things, allegations of negligent health care.

"I'm really surprised and outraged that ICE is planning to detain transgender women out in Adelanto," Fialho said. "I think the language of 'no immediate plans' was very calculated."

If true, the move would come on the heels of new memorandum issued by ICE this week on the care of transgender individuals in custody.

Officials said guidelines include comprehensive officer training and provided tools to "ensure an individual's gender identity can be identified early in the custodial life cycle to ensure care in accordance with the new guidance."

Guidelines also call for a voluntary committee to make decisions related to searches, clothing options, housing assignments, medical care and housing reassignments for transgender detainees.

Kice said the guidelines "prompted reexamination of our strategy moving forward."

"We need to make decisions in terms of their custody that are appropriate for those individuals. Basically, this is a very, very progressive approach," she said. "We want to move forward deliberately and thoughtfully with how we put it into play ... (but) we have to be mindful of our general population."

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