

By [Shea Johnson](#)[Print Page](#)

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Immigration facility won't accept transgender detainees

ADELANTO — Immigration officials have scrapped exploration of housing transgender women detainees at the detention facility here, an official said Wednesday.

"It's been decided it's not going to happen," Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokeswoman Virginia Kice told the Daily Press.

Currently, the agency houses the majority of its protected detainee population, including transgender, gay and lesbian detainees, at its facility in Santa Ana. But when the Adelanto Detention Facility expanded to house women in June, there was belief that ICE could add a protective custody unit there as well.

Kice has always said the issue was being explored yet there were never any immediate plans. A unit at the expanded facility in Adelanto had been set aside in the new women's wing just in case.

"In our efforts to guarantee the safety and welfare of all those in our custody, including transgender individuals, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is continuously communicating with its facility partners to determine which sites are best equipped to care for the agency's various populations," Kice said in a statement to the Daily Press. "After further analysis, ICE decided that another facility (Adelanto) in our Los Angeles area of responsibility was not necessary to house the transgender population at this time."

She said the decision was made in late summer.

The idea that the Adelanto facility might house transgender women has been criticized by representatives with Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement, a group that provides a link between detainees and family, friends, attorneys and other community members.

The organization has long been staunch detractors of the facility, accusing ICE and private prison operator GEO Group, Inc. of negligent health care and other human rights violations.

"We are happy that the plans to transfer transgender women to the infamously abusive for-profit Adelanto Detention Facility have been dropped," CIVIC co-Executive Director Christina Fialho said in a statement to the Daily Press, "but ICE continues to subject trans women to horrific physical, psychological, and sexual violence down the hill at the Santa Ana City Jail."

ICE and GEO officials have consistently denied any wrongdoing.

A memorandum issued in June by ICE officials described how to care for transgender individuals in custody — new guidelines that included 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."

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A guard checks a cell inside the segregation-cell area of the Geo Group's Adelanto Detention Facility during a tour in August. (James Quigg, Daily Press)

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