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For Immediate Release:  
July 30, 2015

## **Deplorable Medical Treatment at Family Detention Centers**

### ***Mothers Lodge Complaint with DHS Offices for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and Inspector General***

**Washington, DC**— Today, ten mothers came forward to [lodge formal complaints](#) about the substandard medical care they and their children received while detained by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The complaints describe the severe suffering families have endured due to poor access to and quality of care, and questionable medical ethics. These [ten complaints](#) are representative of the regular failures of DHS to provide adequate medical care for mothers and children in family detention facilities, and they add to the already ample evidence demonstrating why family detention must end.

The deplorable medical treatment described in the complaints include:

- Wait times of up to 14 hours, in the direct sun, in order to be seen by medical staff;
- A mother with two broken fingers denied medical care and advised to “drink more water”;
- A mother with breast cancer repeatedly denied care despite suffering severe symptoms and weight loss;
- More than 250 children given adult doses of the Hepatitis A vaccine;
- Children left in the care of guards, sometimes for days at a time, when women are transferred off-site for emergency or specialized medical care;
- Administration of intravenous fluids through a bent needle;
- A five-year old repeatedly transferred off-site for medical care only to have on-site medical professionals later refuse to issue prescribed medication;
- A family denied food and placed under enough stress to prompt a suicide attempt;
- A child who was vomiting blood told only to drink water and not referred to external medical care until three days later.

The majority of the mothers with medical complaints have attempted to seek medical care on more than one occasion, only to find themselves waiting endlessly, sometimes in dangerously hot conditions in the extreme heat and sun common to southern Texas. In at least one instance, a woman who had to leave the medical line after waiting for hours was forced to sign a letter

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stating she refused medical care. Some mothers reported that their children had adverse reactions to their vaccinations, including temporary paralysis, vomiting, and high fevers.

One woman described her medical experience in Dilley saying, “Simply, they don't care. What is more important for them is control. These are delicate situations when someone is sick and vulnerable. They just care about control. I thought I came to this country to escape abuse, mistreatment and disrespect. But it's the same here.”

The complaints were submitted to the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) and the Office of Inspector General (OIG) on behalf of the women by the American Immigration Council (“Council”), American Immigration Lawyers Association (“AILA”), Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (“CLINIC”), Immigrant Justice Corps, Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (“RAICES”), and the Women’s Refugee Commission (“WRC”).

These six organizations urge both CRCL and OIG to conduct a prompt and thorough investigation into these examples immediately and to take swift action to fully address the systemic problems highlighted by these cases. Advocates have heard from women about many more medical care problems, including 74 additional instances at the facility in Dilley, Texas alone, since June 2015. The medical abuses highlight the urgent need to #EndFamilyDetention.

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