



MEMORANDUM

Date: February 13, 2026

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshar 
County Administrator

Re: **Information Pertaining to Pima County Health Department's Role and Activities in Federal Facilities**

On February 3, 2026, Members of the Board of Supervisors requested additional information regarding Pima County Health Department's approach to addressing public health within proposed federal facilities, as well as the extent of public health authority over such facilities. Please find attached a Memorandum prepared by Dr. Theresa Cullen, Public Health Director, outlining the Department's role in supporting public health concerns within federal facilities located in our jurisdiction.

Pima County Health Department does not hold primary public health authority within facilities operated by federal agencies such as U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). However, the Department maintains collaborative relationships with many of these facilities to provide technical guidance, resources, and support aimed at protecting public health.

JKL/dym

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Theresa Cullen, MD, MS, Public Health Director, Health Department

Date: February 13, 2026

To: Jan Leshar
County Administrator

From: Theresa Cullen, MD, MS 
Health Department Director

Re: Information Pertaining to Pima County Health Department's Role and Activities in Federal Facilities

This memorandum is in response to the Board of Supervisors' request for information regarding how the Pima County Health Department (PCHD) addresses public health concerns in federal facilities operating within Pima County.

Background

The Health Department is committed to protecting and preserving the health of all individuals in Pima County. While federal facilities operate under their own jurisdiction and the Health Department does not have primary authority within those facilities, we have historically maintained collaborative relationships that support shared public health objectives with the shared goal of community wellbeing and safety.

Past Collaborative Efforts

Historically, the Health Department's approach has been grounded in state statutes and regulations along with partnership and coordination with federal agencies, state health authorities, and community organizations.

Examples include:

- **Measles Outbreak (2016):**

In 2016, a measles outbreak occurred within a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facility in Arizona. The facility was a privately operated, city-contracted facility that housed over 1400 detainees with roughly 500 staff members including federal ICE staff and contract staff of four distinct employers. During this outbreak, PCHD engaged in the following ways:

- Engaged in a multi-county response with Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) and support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Provided vaccines at county clinics and community outreach sites for the detention center staff and their families residing in Pima County, and other unvaccinated Pima County residents.

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- **Public Health Response During COVID-19 (2020–2024)**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, PCHD worked extensively with federal agencies, state partners, and community organizations to mitigate transmission risks in facilities and shelters serving federally processed individuals. While PCHD does not hold primary authority within federal facilities, PCHD provided technical guidance, resources, and collaborative support to protect public health when requested. Key examples include:

- Transitional Shelter Support (Casa Alitas and Drexel Facility):
Assisted Casa Alitas and Drexel Facility in Tucson, which housed legally processed asylum seekers transported by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). PCHD provided guidance on COVID-19 testing, infection control, and outbreak prevention measures directly to these facilities.
- CBP Soft-Sided Facility at Los Reales:
Constructed by CBP on leased private property as a temporary processing site (April 2021–March 2025). PCHD offered prevention control guidance and resources when requested. CBP distributed masks and conducted medical screenings through contracted providers per the CBP Enhanced Medical Efforts Directive but did not provide COVID-19 testing as far as we are aware. CBP did not share medical information of individuals in custody with PCHD.
- Federal Bureau of Prisons:
Collaborated with ADHS to monitor and manage a COVID-19 outbreak. ADHS provided isolation and quarantine guidance, while PCHD followed up with staff residing in Pima County, including testing, monitoring exposed staff, and administering vaccines.
- FEMA Partnership for Community Testing:
During the COVID-19 Omicron surge, PCHD partnered with FEMA to operate a high-capacity, drive-through COVID-19 testing site at Pima Community College's West Campus, providing approximately 2,000 tests per day to promote equity and protect community health.
- Southwest Key Youth Shelter (Unaccompanied Minors):
PCHD helped monitor COVID-19 cases among youth and staff at this federally contracted, state-licensed shelter. PCHD provided isolation and quarantine guidance, vaccinations, PPE, and rapid tests as needed. Partnered with ADHS to conduct Infection Control Assessment and Response (ICAR) visits, collaborated on tuberculosis exposure management, and implemented measles response protocols.

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- Pool Inspections

During this time, PCHD also performed routine pool inspections at several hotels which were contracted by Pima County to shelter and screen legally processed asylum seekers (though pools remained closed and inaccessible to residents).

Current Engagement with Federal Facilities

PCHD is maintaining a collaborative relationship with federal partners to protect the health of the surrounding community and coordinates with Department of Homeland Security Public Health leadership when concerns arise. Pima County works with ADHS to provide guidance and support for outbreak response vaccination campaigns and infection control measures when staff or community members are affected. Collaboration with federal partners typically includes technical assistance and coordination with local healthcare partners to ensure effective public health interventions.

During a recent measles response, the Health Department worked with state and federal partners to ensure alignment of public health actions across local, state, and federal systems to protect surrounding communities.

The Health Department is currently reviewing relevant statutes and regulations ([A.A.C. R9-6-202, R9-6-203, and R9-6-207](#)) in consultation with state health partners and the County Attorney's Office to confirm guidance and roles regarding Pima County's public health authority in circumstances related to ICE detention centers.

If an ICE detention facility becomes operational in Pima County, the Health Department will maintain communication with facility leadership and ADHS and respond to federal requests as appropriate.

TC

C: Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator