

# Report in Brief

Date: May 2023

Report No. A-06-21-07003



## Why OIG Did This Audit

During the Federal fiscal year 2021, an unprecedented number of unaccompanied children began arriving at the U.S. southern border. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) had to act quickly to increase the number of shelter beds because additional capacity was needed to manage the increasing numbers of unaccompanied children referred by the Department of Homeland Security and to implement COVID-19 mitigation strategies. As a result, ORR reactivated 1 existing influx care facility (ICF) and opened 14 emergency intake sites (EISs).

Our objective was to determine whether ORR's ICF and EISs conducted required background checks on employees.

## How OIG Did This Audit

We conducted site visits at 1 ICF and 10 of the 14 EISs in 3 States in May and June 2021. The 11 sites were fully operational at the time of our audit start. Across the 11 sites, we reviewed background checks for 259 employees, and across the 10 EISs, we reviewed background checks for 89 detailed Federal employees to verify that required background checks were conducted.

In addition, we reviewed background checks for a sample of 10 drivers and 20 transportation specialists associated with a contract ORR entered into for transportation services.

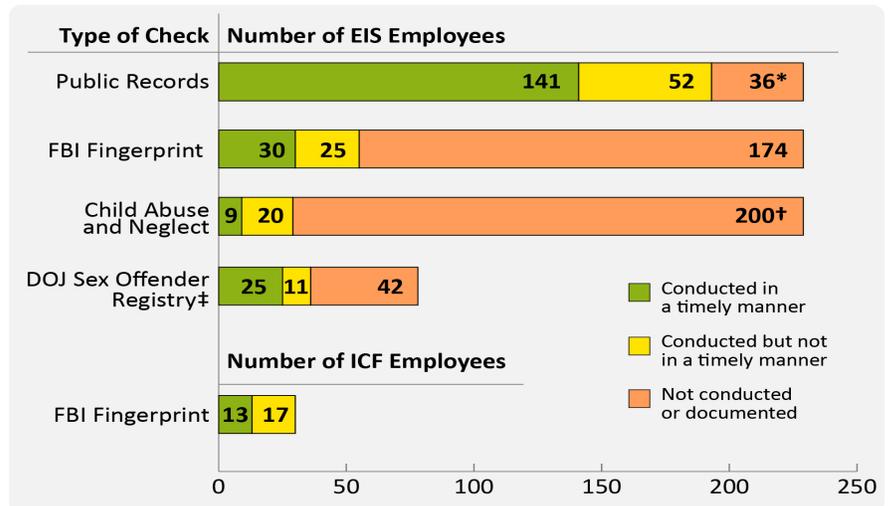
Finally, during our site visits of the ICF and 10 EISs, we assessed procedures in place to control access to the facilities.

## The Office of Refugee Resettlement Needs To Improve Its Practices for Background Checks During Influxes

### What OIG Found

For some employees, ORR's ICF and EISs did not conduct or document all required background checks or did not conduct the checks in a timely manner. In addition, ORR did not require the transportation services contractor we reviewed to conduct background checks on employees as required by ORR minimum standards. The figure summarizes facility compliance with employee background check requirements based on our judgmental sample.

Figure: Summary of Compliance With Background Check Requirements



\* For 6 of the 36 employees, an FBI fingerprint check was conducted prior to hire.

† For 51 of the 200 employees, ORR had waived the Child Abuse and Neglect (CA/N) check requirement.

‡ DOJ sex offender registry checks were only required for employees at the EISs for which ORR issued a waiver (78 employees).

Note: ICFs were not required to conduct public records checks, CA/N checks, or DOJ sex offender registry checks.

The issues we identified occurred primarily because the influx of unaccompanied children required ORR to rapidly set up new facilities in order to expand capacity as well as develop formal policies and procedures related to the EISs.

## **What OIG Recommends and Administration for Children and Families Comments**

We recommend that ORR take the following actions related to background checks: (1) ensure required background checks are conducted on current employees for whom checks were not conducted, (2) clarify and reissue guidance, (3) include a review of each facility's compliance as part of ORR's routine site visit monitoring, and (4) ensure that future awards and subawards for services that involve children include detailed information on required background checks. See the report for additional findings and more detailed recommendations.

In written comments on our draft report, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), commenting on behalf of ORR, concurred with our recommendations and described the actions it has taken to address our findings. For example, ACF stated that ORR worked with both current ICFs (formerly EISs) to initiate required background checks on all employees whose checks were not completed prior to hire. ACF also stated that ORR clarified and reissued guidance on background checks required of EIS staff and volunteers should there ever be a need for future EISs. ACF stated that ORR created monitoring requirements for both ICFs and EISs that include reviewing compliance with all background check requirements and that ORR conducts quarterly on-site monitoring visits to the two, current ICFs.