

More than 2,000 people in ICE custody quarantined for contagious diseases

WASHINGTON — More than 2,000 people in Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody are being quarantined amid an outbreak of mumps and other diseases.

The numbers of immigrants in custody with a contagious diseases has spiked in the past year. For the previous two years, the agency has not encountered a single case of mumps among its detainees.

“As of March 7, 2019, there was a total of 2,287 detainees cohorted for exposure to a detainee with a contagious condition,” said ICE spokesperson Brendan Raedy in a statement.

In the past 12 months, there have been health investigations at 51 ICE detention facilities for mumps, chickenpox and influenza, according to Raedy.

There have been 236 reported cases of mumps, with another 16 suspected cases during this time period.

Mumps is a contagious virus that is typically spread through saliva and mucus. Symptoms include fever, muscle aches, loss of appetite and puffiness around the cheeks and jaw from swollen salivary glands.

Last year, there were 423 people documented with influenza and 461 people with chickenpox in ICE custody, according to the agency.

But from January 2016 to February 2018, there were zero notifications of mumps, and only 73 of chickenpox and 34 of influenza.

“ICE takes very seriously the health, safety and welfare of those in our care. ICE is committed to ensuring the welfare of all those in the agency’s custody, including providing access to necessary and appropriate medical care,” Raedy said in a statement.

Last week, Texas officials announced that nearly 200 people at immigration detention facilities across the state had contracted mumps since October.

The 186 patients ranged from 13 to 66 years old, the Texas Department of State Health Services said Tuesday.

“They should be in isolation,” said Dr. David Persse, of Houston’s public health authority last week.

Persse urged ICE start isolating people who show mumps symptoms and quarantine people who may have been infected.

“To some degree, this is foreseeable, because you’re bringing a lot of people and housing them in tight spaces for long periods,” Persse said.

US officials have been warning of the perils of diseases for migrants arriving in the US, increasingly in large numbers of families and children.

“Migrants travel north from countries where poverty and disease are rampant, and their health can be aggravated by the physical toll of the journey. Many individuals we encounter may have never seen a doctor, received immunizations, or lived in sanitary conditions. Close quarters on trains and buses can hasten the spread of communicable diseases,” said US Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan during congressional testimony last week.

In December, CBP mandated secondary medical reviews of all in children, after two young Guatemalan children died after being in Border Protection custody.

CBP also requested additional medical support from the US Coast Guard and the US Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, as well as coordinating with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to gather data on infectious diseases among migrants in custody.

Migrants who cross the border illegally are generally transferred from Border Protection custody to ICE custody for further processing or release.

ICE said that comprehensive medical care is provided to everyone in custody, including access to nurses, physicians, and to 24-hour emergency care.

It was unclear Monday, if ICE was taking additional steps to deal with issues of

disease in its facilities.

Reuters first reported on the quarantine.

Source:

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