

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-24-106348](#), a report to the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Marshals Service is responsible for ensuring the safe and humane housing of the nearly 60,000 individuals in federal custody who are awaiting trial or sentencing on any given day. Marshals Service does not own or operate jails, but it partners with private facilities, local governments, and DOJ's Bureau of Prisons to detain these individuals. Strengthening management of federal prisons was added to GAO's high-risk list in 2023.

GAO was asked to review Marshals Service's oversight of facilities it uses to detain individuals. This report assesses the extent to which Marshals Service (1) has implemented mechanisms to identify and address concerns related to detention conditions, and (2) incorporates key steps to assess the performance of its detention operations.

GAO analyzed agency documents; assessed training, facility review, and inquiry data; observed deputy U.S. Marshals conduct reviews of six (of about 1,000) local facilities and contractors conduct a review of one of five private facilities; and interviewed agency officials and federal defenders who represent individuals in custody.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making eight recommendations, including that Marshals Service develop guidance as well as a plan with time frames to provide deputies with training; routinely analyzes available detention operations data; and establish performance goals for the conditions at local detention facilities. Marshals Service concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-24-106348](#). For more information, contact Derrick Collins at (202) 512-8777 or CollinsD@gao.gov.

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U.S. MARSHALS SERVICE

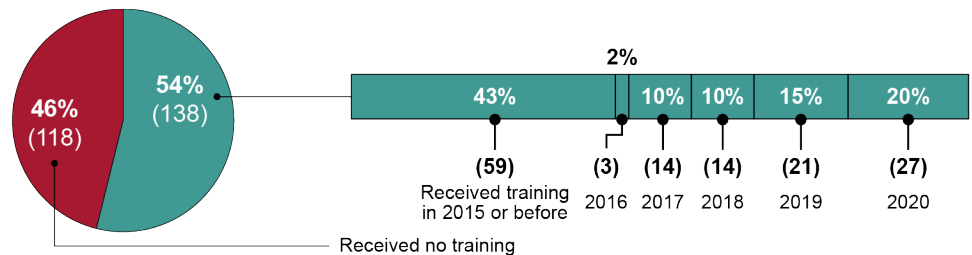
Actions Needed to Better Identify and Address Detention Condition Concerns

What GAO Found

The Department of Justice's (DOJ) U.S. Marshals Service (Marshals Service) uses onsite facility reviews and grievance processes to identify and address concerns related to conditions at private and local detention facilities that house individuals in its custody. However, detention operations could be improved.

Facility reviews. Marshals Service has implemented processes to conduct onsite reviews of facilities to assess whether they meet federal standards for healthcare, sanitation, and other detention conditions. However, deputies who conduct local facility reviews have limited guidance on how to complete them. Moreover, many deputies have not received required training because Marshals Service has not offered training since 2020 (see figure). Although Marshals Service has efforts underway to revise its training, it has not developed a plan and time frames to complete the revisions and ensure deputies receive it.

Percentage and Number of Marshals Service Deputies Who Conducted Local Detention Facility Reviews in Fiscal Year 2023 and Had Not Completed Facility Review Training



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Marshals Service (Marshals Service) data. | GAO-24-106348

Grievance processes. Individuals may submit grievances to facilities or inquiries directly to Marshals Service. However, agency officials told us they have not analyzed the data they collect to determine trends—such as the nature or volume of inquiries related to individuals at certain facilities. For example, GAO analysis of Marshals Service inquiry data submitted from January 2018 through June 2023 found that at least 20 detention facilities received multiple inquiries about prison rape. In addition, at least 20 detention facilities received multiple inquiries about harassment. Marshals Service could routinely analyze such information to determine if changes are needed to improve detention operations.

Marshals Service has not fully incorporated key steps to assess its detention operations. For example, Marshals Service has a performance goal that private facilities meet minimum detention standards and assigns them ratings based on facility reviews. Private facilities have received overall ratings indicating they met minimum standards from 2018 through 2023, according to Marshals Service budget documents. However, Marshals Service does not have a similar goal for local facilities. According to Marshals Service data, some local facilities did not meet certain detention standards. For example, in fiscal year 2023, reviews found that an outside source had not inspected about 10 percent of facilities for food safety within the past 12 months, and about 7 percent of facilities had signs of insects. Establishing a performance goal for the conditions at local detention facilities would help Marshals Service better assess and monitor these facilities.