



The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) supports the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as it secures the nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.



CRCL Operations During COVID-19 Response

Per guidance from the [U.S. Office of Personnel Management](#) in response to COVID-19, CRCL is operating under telework flexibilities while continuing to serve and support the public. As a result, mail operations may be impacted and our response to mailed letters may be delayed. If you wish to file a complaint, the best method of submission at this time is via email to: CRCLCompliance@hq.dhs.gov. CRCL staff will continue to monitor this email address, and our toll-free hotline for your questions at: 1-866-644-8360, TTY: 1-866-644-8361. For additional details on how to file a civil rights complaint, visit: <https://www.dhs.gov/file-civil-rights-complaint>.

DHS Releases First-Ever Equity Action Plan

Release Date: April 14, 2022

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the release of its first-ever [DHS Equity Action Plan](#), which identifies seven focus areas to comprehensively advance equity across the Department’s policies, programs, and operations. This Plan includes a commitment to ensure the Department’s civil rights offices have the resources they need to carry out their critical missions.

“The Department of Homeland Security interacts with the public on a daily basis more than any other federal agency. Since January 2021, DHS has taken several meaningful steps to ensure we are equitably serving the public and every community across the country,” said Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas. “The DHS Equity Action Plan builds on our Department’s progress in better integrating equity into the full range of DHS activities and reinforces our commitment to continuing this critical work.”

The DHS Equity Action Plan’s focus areas have the greatest potential for advancing equity across the Department’s activities. These focus areas, whose selection was informed by feedback from external stakeholders representing underserved communities, include:

- 1. Applying for naturalization:** DHS will conduct a comprehensive review of policies, regulations, forms, and operations to identify barriers that may impede access to naturalization among underserved communities and make recommendations on how to appropriately, and lawfully, remove these barriers.
- 2. Accessing humanitarian protection during immigration processing:** DHS will improve access to humanitarian protection during immigration processing by addressing language and disability access gaps and enhancing access to relevant information and resources.

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3. **Bidding on DHS contracts:** DHS will expand engagement with small businesses owned by or supporting members of underserved communities to ensure more equitable access to DHS contracting opportunities.
4. **Countering all forms of terrorism and targeted violence:** Diverse communities are disproportionately impacted by domestic violent extremism and targeted violence. DHS will further expand its efforts to provide underserved communities with the tools and resources they need to prevent individuals from radicalizing to violence and increase local capabilities to combat all forms of terrorism and targeted violence.
5. **Filing complaints and seeking redress in DHS programs and activities:** DHS will enhance its communication with the public regarding the right to file complaints and seek redress without retaliation regarding DHS programs and how those processes work.
6. **Airport screening:** DHS will enhance and standardize employee training and improve screening-technology capabilities to advance equity for members of underserved communities.
7. **Accessing Trusted Traveler Programs:** DHS will [expand gender-identification options](#) for certain trusted traveler programs, including TSA PreCheck®, and enhance access to these programs for individuals with limited English proficiency.

DHS released its Equity Action Plan pursuant to [Executive Order 13985](#), *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*. The Executive Order called on federal agencies to review their programs and policies and assess whether members of underserved communities face systemic barriers in accessing benefits and opportunities.

Read the DHS Equity Action Plan [here](#).

DHS Secretary Mayorkas Participates in Ramadan Engagement

This month, DHS Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas participated in a Ramadan engagement co-hosted by CRCL and the Dar Alnoor Islamic Community Center in Manassas, Virginia. During the event, DHS leadership, including senior officials from CRCL and the Office of Partnership and Engagement, had an opportunity to meet with local Muslim community leaders, many of whom have supported the Department’s [Operation Allies Welcome \(OAW\)](#), thank them for their support, listen to their feedback, and engage with the community during the holy month of Ramadan for Muslims. During the meeting, Secretary Mayorkas engaged in discussion with community members who raised concerns regarding delays at U.S. ports of entry due to secondary screening, delays in asylum processing, impact of watchlist and related redress mechanisms, protecting places of worship, as well as other concerns. Secretary Mayorkas responded to questions and discussed current initiatives taking place to ensure equity across the Department. He thanked attendees for their participation and for their continued engagement with DHS.



CRCL Spotlight: Haris Tarin



In August 2021, Haris Tarin, a Senior Policy Advisor with CRCL’s Community Engagement Section, answered a call to serve Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), the multi-agency effort to support vulnerable Afghans, many of whom worked alongside us in Afghanistan for the past two decades, to resettle in the U.S. After serving as the Cultural Competency Advisor, in January of 2022, Mr. Tarin started serving as Chief of Staff of OAW, coordinating interagency processes to help resettle and integrate our Afghan allies into American communities.

Why did you join OAW? What is your role and how has it evolved?

I joined OAW in the very early days—I saw the call for volunteers and I immediately knew I wanted to share my knowledge and expertise with this critical effort. From my own experience leaving Afghanistan as a young child, I felt an immediate need to help. I traveled overseas to work with DHS colleagues from the Front Office, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to develop and implement plans and procedures for processing, vetting, and screening individuals. There was a critical and immediate language need to share basic information with the Afghan people about the vetting process they would soon experience. Much of my time was spent on the ground developing materials and translating information to share widely with many people who were unsure of what to expect next.

Soon after, I traveled back to D.C. to assist with operations at DHS. Secretary Mayorkas had announced the formation of the Unified Coordination Group (UCG), and I joined the group to assist with the next phase of OAW as Afghans arrived in the U.S. and traveled to safe haven locations at military bases across the country. We spent long days working on policies and procedures and developing cultural competency materials for the UCG and staff supporting the safe havens.

What does a typical day look like?

Especially in the early days, every day was different. So much of our time was dedicated to helping our guests at the safe havens and developing procedures and plans to assist them through a wide range of services: from meals and lodging, to healthcare and medical access. It's pretty amazing that hundreds of births have occurred at the safe havens—just one example of how we focused on supporting the immediate needs of our guests. While each day brought ever-changing work priorities, one theme was consistent: long hours! We usually began before 8 a.m. and often work well past 8 p.m. Despite the long hours, I continue to be energized by our mission and helping so many of our guests settle in homes and new communities across the country. It has been incredibly rewarding.

What part of OAW do you find most satisfying?

By far, my favorite part of the work is meeting and interacting with many Afghan men, women, and children in the safe havens. It's a powerful and sometimes overwhelming feeling to know that we are helping the Afghan people who have helped us for so many years in Afghanistan. I am touched every time I hear someone tell me how thankful they are to be here and to know that their families are safe—that they can finally breathe a sigh of relief.

What has been the most challenging part of supporting the mission?

Because of my own experience leaving Afghanistan with my family, I have to remind myself to separate my experience and personal story from the individuals with whom I meet. I have met so many wonderful people through OAW and their stories feel very familiar to me—I have to remind myself to detach at the end of the day, which is sometimes easier in theory than practice.

Coordinating OAW has been an impressive undertaking. What best practices can government learn from this mission?

Early on, DHS established the UCG to ensure unity of effort across all phases of OAW. Under the UCG, federal, state, and local government partners, along with nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector have worked in tandem to implement a broad range of services from initial processing and screening, providing COVID-19 testing and vaccinations, other medical services, and resettlement processing. The UCG model has been incredibly successful in organizing support for many aspects of the resettlement process. I have seen the best of government come together to quickly find solutions every step of the way. The UCG model is a best practice that I hope will continue to be used across government.

How can the public help OAW?

OAW is working with Welcome.US, a national non-profit that supports newly arrived Afghans and their families. People who are interested in assisting can visit [Welcome.US](https://www.welcome.us) to learn about ways to get involved.

In addition, OAW is working with the Community Sponsorship Hub to support the launch of the Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans, a new program which enables groups of individuals and community organizations across the country to directly support Afghans who are resettling across the U.S. The program will enable groups of individuals to apply to be vetted, trained, and certified to form sponsor circles to provide initial resettlement assistance to Afghans as they arrive and build new lives in local communities across the country. For more information on the Sponsor Circle Program and to learn how to apply to form a sponsor circle to support arriving Afghans, visit www.sponsorcircles.org.

DHS Releases Fiscal Year 2022 Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity

DHS released the [Fiscal Year 2022 Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention \(TVTP\) Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity](#), an annual competitive funding opportunity which is available to assist local communities develop sustainable capabilities to prevent targeted violence and terrorism in the United States. The program is managed by the DHS [Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships \(CP3\)](#) in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Applications are due Wednesday, May 18, 2022 at 5PM EDT. DHS recommends that you review [the NOFO at Grants.gov](#). Other resources include:

- [NOFO and Fact Sheets in English and Spanish](#)
- [FY22 TVTP Grant Program Presentation](#)

Upcoming Fiscal Year 2022 Nonprofit Security Grant Program Technical Assistance Webinar Series (2.0)

FEMA's Grant Programs Directorate (GPD), in partnership with the DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, invites faith-based, community, and nonprofit organizations to participate in upcoming webinars regarding the fiscal year FY 2022 Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP). The NSGP provides funding support through a competitive process for facility hardening and other security enhancements to nonprofit organizations at high risk of a terrorist attack and promotes emergency preparedness coordination and collaboration between public and private community representatives, as well as state, local, tribal, and territorial governments.

FEMA and its partners are committed to providing quality customer service to all nonprofit organization stakeholders, including socially vulnerable, underserved, and under-represented communities. As such, and building on last year's efforts, GPD is offering informational [NSGP webinars](#) (seek link for details), for all nonprofit organizations interested in learning more about the FY 2022 NSGP priorities, eligibility, and application process.

If you have any questions regarding these webinars, or require special accommodations, please contact FEMA-NSGP@fema.dhs.gov.

DHS Announces New Measures to Better Serve Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender Non-Conforming Travelers

Release Date: March 31, 2022

Today, on International Trans Day of Visibility, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced new measures to better serve all Americans, regardless of their gender identity. Through technology updates, process changes, and expanded partnerships, TSA and CBP are improving their screening procedures and ensuring they are conducted in a manner that respects the dignity of each individual. These measures are part of a concerted effort by the Biden-Harris Administration to advance equality for transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming Americans.

“DHS is committed to protecting the traveling public while ensuring that everyone, regardless of gender identity, is treated with respect,” said Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas. “The new measures announced today are part of a whole-of-government effort to promote equity and inclusion in all our programs and processes. We are proud to work with our interagency partners on this effort and look forward to rapidly implementing these changes to better serve the American public.”

The new DHS efforts announced today include:

- **Implementing enhanced screening technology:** TSA will update its current Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) scanners with new technology that increases security and efficiency by reducing false alarm rates and pat downs for the traveling public. By replacing the current, gender-based AIT system, this new, more accurate technology will also advance civil rights and improve the customer experience of travelers who previously have been required to undergo additional screening due to alarms in sensitive areas. TSA will begin deploying this new technology in airports throughout the country later this year.
- **Adopting more efficient, less invasive screening procedures:** TSA will update its Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) to permit less invasive screening procedures for certain passengers who trigger the AIT scanner in a sensitive area. This change will reduce pat downs for TSOs and the traveling public without compromising security and will be in effect until the new gender-neutral AIT screening technology is deployed.
- **Making TSA PreCheck more inclusive:** TSA will update its TSA PreCheck program this year to include an “X” gender marker option on its application to ensure the TSA PreCheck system accurately reflects traveler gender and keeps pace with identity documents that offer the “X” gender marker option, including U.S. passports beginning April 11.
- **Expanding airline partnerships to enhance the overall travel experience:** TSA is working closely with air carriers across the nation to promote the use and acceptance of the “X” gender marker to ensure more efficient and accurate passenger processing.
- **Streamlining identity validation:** TSA updated its checkpoint SOP to remove gender considerations when validating a traveler’s identification at airport security checkpoints. This ensures that TSOs can accurately and efficiently validate an individual’s identity while avoiding unnecessary delays caused by
- a mismatch in gender information on the boarding pass and identification document (e.g., driver’s license or passport) and/or the gender presentation of the traveler.
- **Facilitating effective communication at U.S. ports of entry and beyond:** CBP has provided a job aid and memorandum to all staff that will serve as a guide for facilitating effective communication with the diverse public CBP serves, including LGBTQI+ individuals. The guidance includes using gender-neutral language and an individual’s self-identified pronouns and name.
- **Updating Trusted Travel Programs to align with the U.S. Department of State’s passport options:** CBP will soon issue a Federal Register Notice for public comment to evaluate whether to update the Trusted Traveler Programs application form to add an “X” gender marker option.

Read the [White House Fact Sheet](#) to learn more about the Administration’s effort to better serve the transgender community.

Review the [TSA webpage for Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender-Nonconforming Passengers](#) for more information on all gender-related updates, including changes to AIT screening protocols, identity-verification practices, and the TSA PreCheck program.

CRCL Releases Semiannual Reports to Congress

CRCL has published its [FY 2021 Third and Fourth Quarters Semiannual Report](#) as required by section 803 of the *Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007*, 42 U.S.C. § 2000ee-1(f). The Reports include information on CRCL’s investigative work during this time period.

CRCL on the Road, April*

Seattle, Washington

On April 6, CRCL hosted a virtual regular roundtable meeting with diverse community leaders in the Seattle area.

*Following continued guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) to exercise social distancing, our Community Engagement team will continue to carry out our mission using various virtual and telephonic tools during this national public health emergency. While our team maintains constant communication with federal, state, local, and civil society stakeholders across the country, we encourage anyone who needs to contact us to do so via email to: CommunityEngagement@hq.dhs.gov. Thank you for your flexibility and understanding during this time.

Additional information, and contacting us

The goal of this periodic newsletter is to inform members of the public about the activities of the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, including: how to file complaints; ongoing and upcoming projects; opportunities to offer comments and feedback; etc. We distribute our newsletters via our stakeholder email list and make them available to community groups for redistribution. Issues of the newsletter can be accessed online at: www.dhs.gov/crcl-newsletter.

If you would like to receive this newsletter via email, want to request back issues, or have other comments or questions, please let us know by emailing crcloutreach@dhs.gov. For more information, including how to make a civil rights or civil liberties complaint about DHS activities, visit: www.dhs.gov/crcl.

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