



Interim Progress Report

Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families

May 31, 2022



Homeland
Security



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I. Introduction

The Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families (Task Force) submits this interim report on the recent progress of the implementation of Executive Order 14011 (E.O. 14011), *Establishment of Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families*.¹ As of May 17, 2022, the Task Force has facilitated the reunification of 260 children with their separated parents in the United States and provided these families with access to behavioral health services. During the last 60 days, the Task Force made noteworthy progress in the following areas:

- Registered 269 additional, potentially eligible families with the Task Force on [Together.gov](https://www.together.gov) and [Juntos.gov](https://www.juntos.gov), bringing the total to 1,344 registered families. This includes families without confirmed reunifications who are outside of the United States, as well as families who were previously reunified and are in the United States. Of those families, 922 separated children have been referred to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to receive assistance in obtaining reunification support services. This includes FRTF (Humanitarian) and Non-FRTF (previously reunified and Parole-in-Place) families who declined services and completed reunifications.
- Contacted 127 families outside of the United States and registered 120 of them during this time through the Department of State's (DoS) Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration's (PRM's) project with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Kids in Need of Defense (KIND). This project has reached 683 families and registered 552 families since its start in September 2021.
- Modified the contract with IOM to help separated families in the United States file for parole-in-place (PIP) and employment authorization. The Task Force referred 279 families registered on [Together.gov](https://www.together.gov) to IOM to help them file requests with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).
- Collaborated with interagency partners through various outreach events and facilitated stakeholder engagement calls which included more than 100 non-governmental (NGO) and international organization partners.
- Moved into the second phase of the PRM-funded UNHCR-implemented "Communicating with Communities" (CwC) education campaign targeting eligible separated families that focuses on more specific messages to counter misinformation and fraudulent schemes that might otherwise exploit families.
- Continued working with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to develop a clear recommendation on future behavioral health services for reunited families. The existing contract was extended until June 10, 2022 to avoid a lapse in services.

¹ 86 Fed. Reg. 8273 (February 5, 2021).

- Continued to engage with Class Counsel in settlement negotiations in the *Ms. L.* litigation.²

² *Ms. L. v. ICE*, No. 18-cv-0428-DMS (MDD) (S.D. Cal. Mar. 8, 2019).

II. Executive Order Language

On February 2, 2021, President Biden signed Executive Order 14011 (E.O. 14011). The Executive Order requires regular reports to the President, including:

- (i) an initial progress report no later than 120 days after the date of this order;
- (ii) interim progress reports every 60 days thereafter;
- (iii) a report containing recommendations to ensure that the Federal Government will not repeat the policies and practices leading to the separation of families at the border, no later than 1 year after the date of this order; and,
- (iv) a final report when the Task Force has completed its mission.

III. Recent Progress and Ongoing Efforts

The Task Force continues to reach separated families through its outreach and education efforts, and to increase the momentum of family reunifications. During this reporting period, the Task Force received 269 new registrations from separated families and, as of May 17, 2022, 260 parents or legal guardians have been reunified with their children. Since the last report, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) modified its contract with IOM to provide support to separated families eligible for PIP. Moving into the second phase of its CwC education campaign, the Task Force collaborated with interagency and NGO partners to contact separated families and counter misinformation. The Task Force continued working with HHS to extend mental and behavioral health services to newly reunited families and improve the availability of services to previously reunited families.

Supporting Separated Families When They Come Forward

In this reporting period, 269 potentially eligible parents or legal guardians have registered with the Task Force website, [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/juntos.gov), bringing the total to 1,344. For the registrants who appeared to be living outside of the United States, the Task Force referred them to IOM to complete the parole request process and, if approved for parole, schedule travel to the United States. The referred families represent 589 separated children with families outside of the United States. Of those parents or legal guardians, 260 have been reunified with their children, and 329 are receiving assistance in obtaining reunification support services.

Locating Families and Explaining Reunification Options

From March 7 to May 15, 2022, the DoS/PRM project with UNHCR and KIND contacted 127 separated families via phone, email, or in-person visits, provided them with information on the reunification process, and registered 120 families on [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/juntos.gov). Since the start of the project on September 15, 2021, 683 families have been reached through direct contact, and 552 have been registered. KIND continues to estimate that it takes approximately 20 hours per family to make contact and register families on the website. In addition, KIND's Help Desk now spends significant time supporting the large number of registered families with their ongoing questions. KIND continues to make steady progress reaching, informing, and registering families with known contact information, which is provided to KIND by the *Ms. L.* Steering Committee.³ This effort will continue for the remainder of the project, which ends in September 2022.

Additionally, KIND is reaching out to separated parents who the *Ms. L.* Steering Committee has newly located outside of the United States. KIND's Help Desk also fields an increasing number of independent callers who have been made aware of the resource through public information

³ The *Ms. L.* Steering Committee, appointed by the Court, includes KIND, Justice in Motion (JiM), the Women's Refugee Commission, and the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP. The *Ms. L.* Steering Committee conducts outreach to locate separated families through sharing toll-free numbers and contacting families by mail.

campaigns. These efforts will continue to amplify the Task Force’s message and encourage families to come forward for reunification support.

For families with known contact information who remain unreached, UNHCR is working with KIND on targeted outreach with JiM, using on-the-ground searches for families whom JiM is best positioned to reach, or who KIND was unable to reach by phone. From September 2021 to May 1, 2022, JiM conducted 300 searches and located 182 separated parents. Those families were referred to KIND to provide information on the reunification process and registration.

Supporting Previously Reunified Families in the United States

On December 15, 2021, USCIS began accepting PIP requests for separated children, parents, and certain additional family members already in the United States. As of May 17, 2022, the Task Force received registrations for 214 families already in the United States and 150 of those families have filed for PIP with USCIS. Additionally, of the 214 families who registered, 42 families were previously without confirmed reunifications, which allowed the Task Force to further narrow the list of families who remain without a confirmed reunification.

Since the last report, DHS modified its contract with IOM to include reunification services for previously separated families located in the United States. This contract with IOM enables the Task Force to improve the accessibility of the PIP application process for separated families. Services include helping families complete and file the PIP application and employment authorization application with USCIS. The Task Force has referred the 214 families already in the United States to IOM to inform them of their ability to request PIP.

Increasing Outreach Efforts to Improve Public Awareness

Through collaboration with interagency stakeholders and leveraging its all-of-government approach, the Task Force continues its robust outreach and education campaign to reach families who remain separated and encourage them to start the reunification process. The Task Force hosted and participated in various outreach events with stakeholders during this reporting period, with a focus on national and local advocacy groups, to spread the word and inform families on how to come forward to request reunification support. The Task Force also launched an email communication campaign, using U.S. government (USG) listservs to inform interested parties about the progress of the Task Force and available resources to support families. The Task Force continues to explore new ways to inform families and amplify the reunification message.

As reported in the last progress report, UNHCR launched its CwC campaign across four core countries: Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. By mid-April, UNHCR aired initial radio spots in Guatemala and Mexico and released a short video that was posted on the “ACNUR Americas” YouTube channel and shared with UNHCR country offices as well as key partners.⁴ UNHCR is working, with support from its Guatemala office, to translate all radio and video spots into three Mayan languages (K’iche’, Mam, and Q’anjob’al). As the campaign moves into

⁴ ACNUR, Conoce la iniciativa de Reunificación Familiar Juntos.gov (2022), <https://youtu.be/QURo64QdQkE> (last visited May 17, 2022)

the second phase, which will continue through June, it will focus not only on outreach to eligible families but also on messages to counter misinformation and to prevent the exploitation of families through fraudulent schemes. Radio and video spots for this second anti-fraud and anti-exploitation phase are being prepared that will also be translated into both Spanish and the three Mayan languages. UNHCR continues to monitor channels and seek feedback from partners to adjust messaging as needed across the campaign.

In addition, KIND has completed English and Spanish recordings of short “know your rights” videos to explain eligibility and other key topics about the return process for families. The videos will also be recorded in indigenous languages. The videos are in the final stages of being edited and will then be available to families through the Help Desk and other communication channels.

Furthermore, DoS Embassy officials in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador are coordinating with PRM and UNHCR to further amplify information about family reunification via Embassy social media and in public engagements with relevant demographics to raise awareness of and trust in the family reunification process and counter misinformation.

On April 19, 2022, U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala William Popp released a video in English and Spanish which received great traction, encouraging eligible families to register with the Task Force and explaining how to reach KIND’s Help Desk.⁵

Improving the Availability of Behavioral Health Services

As of May 2, 2022, a *Ms. L.* Court Order gave SAMHSA the authority to provide behavioral health services to *Ms. L.* class members for up to one year while final settlement negotiations continue. These services include pre-reunification counseling, clinical treatment services, behavioral health case management, psychoeducation, and parenting support.⁶ The Task Force will continue to work with SAMHSA to implement its authority and develop clear recommendations on future services to support successful reunifications. The USG is currently exploring options for a contract to facilitate behavioral health services for families to take effect in June. The existing behavioral health services contract expires on June 10, 2022.

Settlement Negotiations

The Task Force continues to consult with the Department of Justice, which remains engaged in confidential settlement negotiations with the plaintiffs in the *Ms. L.* litigation.

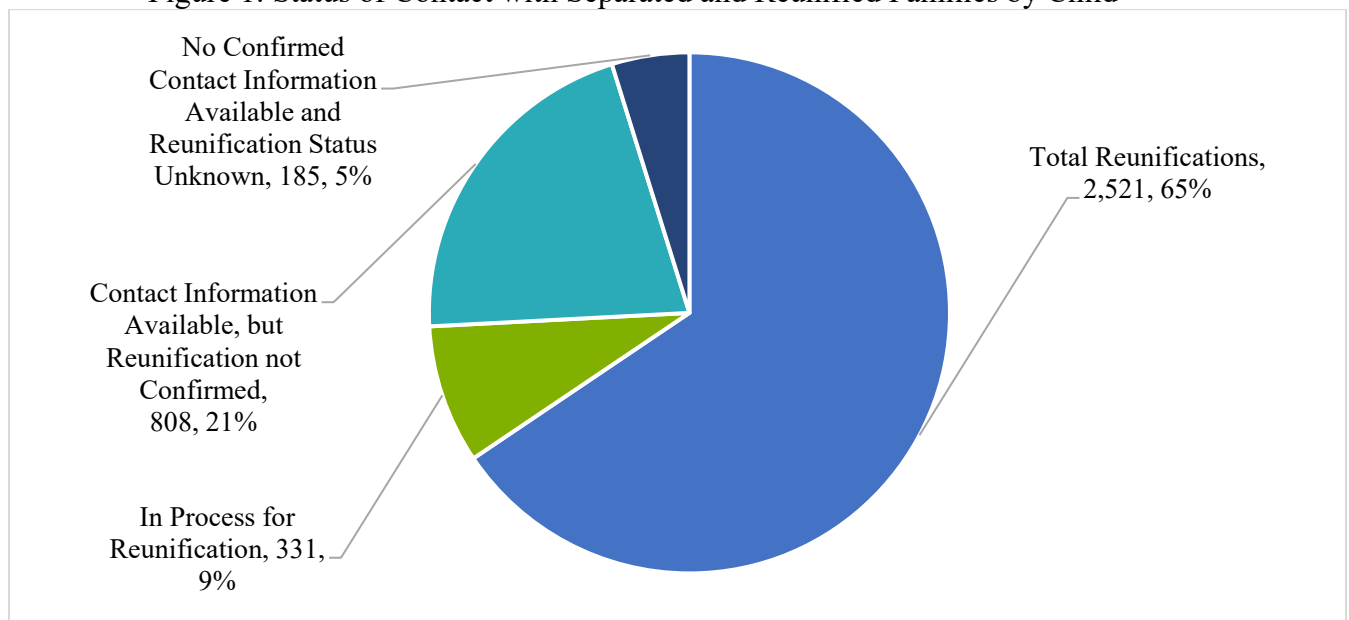
⁵ US Embassy Guatemala, Twitter (2022), https://twitter.com/usembassyguate/status/1516591458001821698?s=20&t=fX23b_9ZutTmb0PofkSA1g (last visited May 17, 2022)

⁶ *Ms. L v. ICE*, No. 18-cv-0428-DMS (MDD) (S.D. Cal. May 2, 2022).

IV. Update on Task Force Data

During this reporting period, the Task Force continued to improve its data tracking practices, enhancing its monitoring and reporting capabilities. As of May 17, 2022, the Task Force identified 3,843 children within the scope of E.O. 14011.⁷ The Task Force has reunified, through close coordination with NGOs and attorneys representing the separated families, 260 children with their parents. Prior to the establishment of the Task Force, 2,261 families were reunified bringing the total number of known reunified children to 2,521. There are 329 children who are in the process of being reunified by the Task Force.⁸ There are an additional 993 children for whom the Task Force has not confirmed reunification with their parents and who are not currently in the process of being reunified.

Figure 1: Status of Contact with Separated and Reunified Families by Child



Source: DHS and records related to the *Ms. L.* and *Ms. J.P.* litigation.⁹

⁷ The number of in-scope separations can increase or decrease over time due to the Task Force's continuous effort to refine and improve its data and tracking of prior family separations.

⁸ Please see Appendix A, Figure 1 for a comparison of reunification data reported in this report with the reunification data reported in the November 29, 2021 Interim Progress Report.

⁹ *J.P. v. Sessions*, No. 2:18-cv-06081 (C.D. Cal) (Nov. 5, 2019).

V. Update on Parole Requests

The Task Force is using DHS's parole authority to permit separated families, on a case-by-case basis, to enter or remain in the United States for purposes of reunification and to receive access to services. As of May 17, 2022, approximately 1,791 parole requests have been filed with USCIS by separated children, parents, and additional family members. The average processing time from registration to travel to the United States is 60 days.

IOM continues to support separated families with in-country processing, including assistance in completing the parole request to be filed with USCIS and, once parole is approved, obtaining required travel documents, such as passports and exit visas. As of May 17, 2022, IOM's processing queue includes all active cases of the 679 separated children and their families both Non-FRTF (reunifications that happened without the help of the Task Force, including PIP) and FRTF, with the majority being in Guatemala.

The Task Force has created a process for separated families who are in the United States to request PIP. During this reporting period, the Task Force has referred 214 families who were already in the United States to IOM to inform them of their ability to request PIP. This includes 42 families who were newly identified as reunified through the PIP process.

DHS now has authorized funding to pay for support services for families requesting PIP, and the Task Force has modified its existing contract with IOM to extend reunification services to families in the United States.

VI. Appendix:

Figure 1: Updated Family Reunification Task Force Data for Separated Children

Data Tracking Separated Children and Reunifications	September 30 Report ¹⁰	November 29 Report ¹¹	January 28 Report ¹²	March 31 Report ¹³	May 31 Report ¹⁴
In Scope for Task Force Support	3,948	3,951	3,842	3,843	3,843
Children Identified as Returned to Home Country	410	410	385	385	385
Parents Identified as Returned to Their Home Country	1,707	1,710	1,643	1,643	1,643
Total Reunifications	2,221	2,248	2,290	2,331	2,521
<i>Reunifications Prior to Task Force Establishment</i>	2,171	2,187	2,184	2,184	2,261
<i>Task Force Reunifications</i>	50	61	106	147	260
Remaining Children Without Confirmed Reunification¹⁵	1,727	1,703	1,552	1,512	1,324
<i>In Process for Reunification</i>	50	206	324	373	331
<i>Contact Information Available but Not Reunified</i>	1,296	1,217	962	931	808
<i>No Confirmed Contact Information Available and Reunification Status Unknown</i>	381	280	266	208	185

Source: DHS and records related to the *Ms. L.* and *Ms. J.P.* litigation.

The Task Force data is continuously changing due to various efforts that include reviewing USG datasets, contacting separated families, and learning about previously unknown family separations, and learning about previously unknown family reunifications. As a result, numbers will increase and decrease from one report to the next, which should not be interpreted as a lack of progress. Learning about the status of separated families brings the Task Force closer to achieving its mandate to identify all separated children and enable and facilitate the reunification of all eligible families.

¹⁰ Data as of September 30, 2021.

¹¹ Data as of November 17, 2021.

¹² Data as of January 17, 2022.

¹³ Data as of March 17, 2022.

¹⁴ Data as of May 17, 2022.

¹⁵ This number does not include cases that may have reunified on their own without the Task Force's knowledge – including those reflected in the *Ms. L.* Joint Status Report.