



# Interim Progress Report

Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families

*July 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 recent progress of the implementation of Executive Order 14011 (E.O. 14011), *Establishment of Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families*.<sup>1</sup> As of July 14, 2022, the Task Force has facilitated the reunification of 365 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 206 additional, potentially eligible families with the Task Force on [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/juntos.gov), bringing the total to 1,550 families. Of those newly registered families, 106 separated children were referred to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to receive assistance in obtaining reunification support services.
- Contacted 43 families outside of the United States and registered 75 families on [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/juntos.gov) 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 726 families and registered 627 families since its start in September 2021. During this reporting period, KIND exhausted its remote outreach efforts (attempts to contact by phone, WhatsApp, and/or text messages) to the 713 separated parents outside the United States with known contact information from the lists provided to KIND by the *Ms. L* Steering Committee in October 2021. The remaining separated parents have been referred to JiM for on-the-ground search efforts, and these individuals may still be reached through UNHCR's CwC campaign and contact the Help Desk, except for three separated parents (in Brazil and Denmark) who are out-of-scope for JiM searches or UNHCR's CwC campaign.
- Advanced the second phase of the PRM-funded UNHCR-implemented "Communicating with Communities" (CwC) education campaign, including more in-person and online outreach with a focus on specific messages to counter misinformation and fraudulent schemes that might otherwise exploit families.
- Hosted three public engagements to inform the public on the parole in place (PIP) process and amplify the reunification message. Task Force Executive Director Michelle Brané, along with other U.S. government (USG) officials, presented up-to-date guidance, best practices on filing with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and responded to questions from the public.
- Updated its policy of who can apply for parole under the Task Force process to better support separated families to promote family unity and facilitate reunifications.
- Continued working with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)-Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to develop a

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<sup>1</sup> 86 Fed. Reg. 8273 (Feb. 5, 2021).

clear recommendation on future behavioral health services for reunited families. The new contract with SAMHSA began on June 10, 2022 and is fully funded for one year.

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

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<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

## 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 support an all-of-government approach to amplify the reunification message and encourage separated families to come forward to receive reunification support. During this reporting period, the Task Force received 206 new registrations from separated families, and 105 parents or legal guardians have been reunified with their children by the Task Force. Additionally, the Task Force collaborated with interagency and NGO partners to contact separated families and counter misinformation as part of the second phase of the PRM-funded UNHCR CwC education campaign. The Task Force hosted three public engagements to inform the public on the PIP process and updated its policy on who can apply for parole under the Task Force process to better support separated families. All of these efforts resulted in a continued flow of families coming forward, bringing the Task Force closer to its goal of providing all eligible separated families the opportunity for reunification.

#### Supporting Separated Families When They Come Forward

In this reporting period, 206 potentially eligible families registered with the Task Force website, [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://together.gov/juntos.gov), bringing the total to 1,550 families. Eligible registrants were referred to IOM to complete the parole request process and, if appropriate, schedule any travel to the United States. As of July 14, 2022, the Task Force has referred a total of 591 separated children with families outside of the United States and 260 separated children with families living in the United States to IOM for assistance. Of those families, 305 have been reunified with their children, and 276 are receiving assistance in obtaining reunification support services. Ten families have declined the opportunity to reunify.

#### Locating Families and Explaining Reunification Options

From May 16 to July 11, 2022, the DoS/PRM project with UNHCR and KIND newly contacted 43 separated families, providing them with information on the reunification process, and registered 75 families on [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://together.gov/juntos.gov). Since its start on September 15, 2021, the project has reached 726 families through direct contact and registered 627 families. KIND continues to estimate that it takes approximately 20 hours per family to make contact, answer questions, and register families on the website. In addition, KIND's Help Desk continues to spend 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. This effort will continue for the remainder of the project, which ends in September 2022.

Additionally, KIND is continuing outreach to separated parents whom 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 UNHCR's public information campaigns. These community-focused outreach efforts will continue to amplify the Task Force's message and encourage eligible 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, through on-the-ground searches for families whom JiM is best positioned to reach, or who are referred to JiM after KIND was unable to reach them by remote means. From September 2021 to June 30, 2022, JiM initiated 360 searches and located 218 separated parents. Many of those families were registered by JiM, and all were referred to KIND to provide more information on the reunification process and to field parents' detailed questions.

## Increasing Outreach Efforts to Improve Public Awareness

In the last 60 days of this reporting period, UNHCR expanded its CwC campaign across four core countries: Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. In addition to distributing thousands of print materials (posters, flyers, and contact cards) and engaging with hundreds of partner organizations, institutions, and community leaders to help raise awareness about the program, CwC efforts continued across social and digital media. From the campaign launch through early June, for example, over 18,000 visitors to UNHCR's Facebook site El Jaguar were directed to [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/juntos.gov) to learn more about the reunification program. As another example, UNHCR El Salvador disseminated an awareness-raising audio clip across WhatsApp groups managed by leaders from 46 communities, for an estimated total reach, from campaign launch to mid-June, of over 6,700 people. UNHCR also posted its initial awareness-raising video on the "ACNUR Americas" YouTube channel and shared translations with UNHCR country offices and key partners in three Mayan languages (K'iche', Mam, and Q'anjob'al). By the end of June, UNHCR had posted and shared a second short video focused on raising awareness about the program, countering misinformation, and preventing the exploitation of families through fraudulent schemes. The second video and related radio spots are now being translated into those three Mayan languages. The campaign's second phase (anti-fraud/anti-exploitation) featuring these audio and video materials has been extended through July. UNHCR continues to monitor channels and seek feedback from partners to adjust messaging as needed across the campaign.

In addition, KIND has recorded a series of short informational/FAQ videos to explain eligibility and other key topics about the reunification process for families. The videos are available in Spanish, Q'anjob'al, Mam, Q'eqchi', and English. The Spanish-language videos were released on June 24, 2022, with the release of the other languages to follow. KIND and UNHCR CwC colleagues have developed a strategy to disseminate and highlight the videos through UNHCR and other communication channels beginning in early July.

DoS disseminated family reunification information to audiences in Central America and among the U.S. diaspora community through interviews with U.S. officials and on U.S. Embassy social media platforms, promoting awareness and trust in the process. On July 3, our Ambassadors to Guatemala and Honduras joined Task Force Director Michelle Brane in a media roundtable with local journalists from Guatemala and Honduras, as well as *Telemundo* and *Univision*, resulting in news stories across the region detailing the USG's family reunification efforts and describing eligibility and processes. U.S. Embassies continued public amplification of related topics in June and July.

## Improving the Availability of Behavioral Health Services

On June 10, 2022, a new contract was awarded to SAMHSA with a year contract period and an option to fund four additional years. This contract allows SAMHSA to provide behavioral health services to *Ms. L.* class members for up to one year while settlement negotiations continue. These services include pre-reunification counseling, clinical treatment services, behavioral health case management, psychoeducation, and parenting support.<sup>3</sup> The Task Force will continue to work with SAMHSA to implement its authority and develop clear recommendations on future services to support successful reunifications.

## 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.

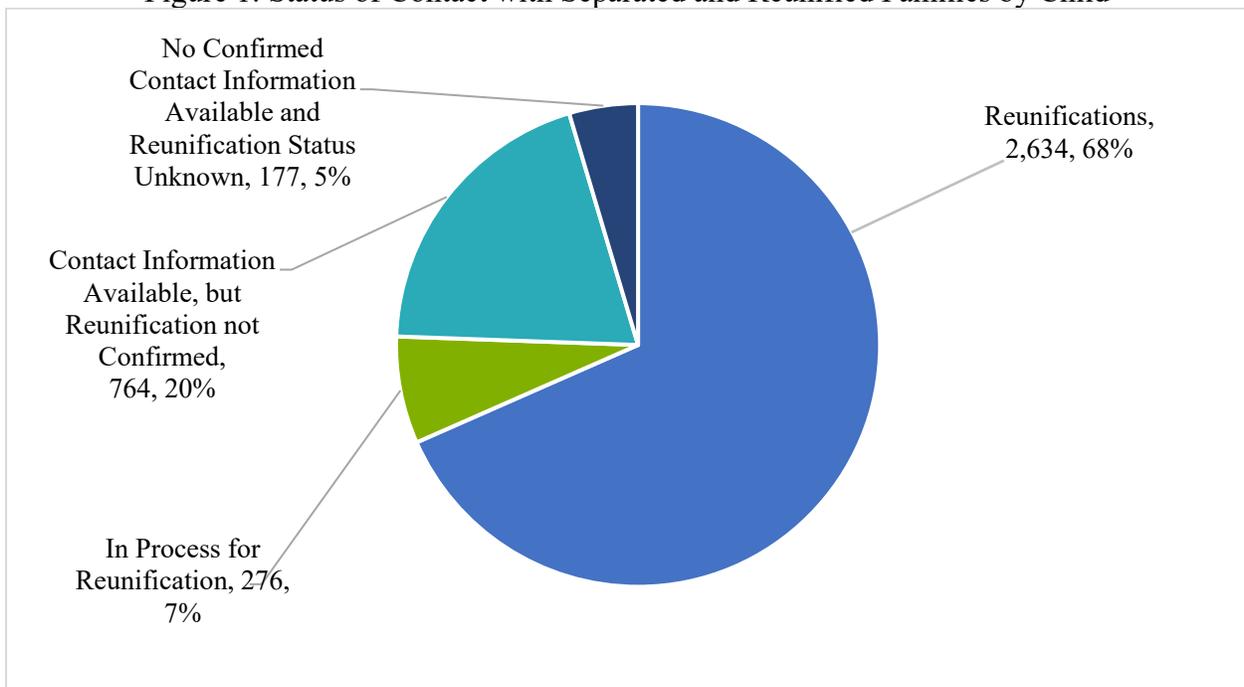
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<sup>3</sup> *Ms. L v. ICE*, No. 18-cv-0428-DMS (MDD) (S.D. Cal. May 2, 2022).

## IV. Update on Task Force Data

As of July 14, 2022, the Task Force has identified 3,851 children within the scope of E.O. 14011.<sup>4</sup> Through the close coordination with NGOs and attorneys representing the separated families, the Task Force has reunified 365 children with their parents. Prior to the establishment of the Task Force, 2,269 families were reunified bringing the total number of known reunified children to 2,634. There are 276 children who are in the process of being reunified by the Task Force.<sup>5</sup> There are an additional 941 children for whom the Task Force has not confirmed reunification with their parents and who are not currently in the process of being reunified; however, the Task Force believes, based on information exchanged through the *Ms. L.* joint status reports that approximately 450 of the 941 children are reunified with their parents in the United States. We continue to work towards improving our data knowledge and expanding our ability to verify reunifications.

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.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Please see Appendix, 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.

<sup>6</sup> *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 July 14, 2022, approximately 2,561 separated children, parents, and additional family members had filed parole requests with USCIS through the Task Force process. 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 July 14, 2022, IOM's processing queue includes 643 active cases of separated children and their families, including previously reunified families, with the majority being in Guatemala.

The Task Force has established a process for separated families who are in the United States to request parole, sometimes referred to as "parole in place" (PIP). During this reporting period, the Task Force referred 41 families who were already in the United States to IOM to inform them of their option to request PIP. The PIP process has helped the Task Force identify 51 families who were previously believed to have been separated.

## VI. Appendix:

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

Data Tracking Separated Children and Reunifications	Sep. 30 Report <sup>7</sup>	Nov. 29 Report <sup>8</sup>	Jan. 28 Report <sup>9</sup>	Mar. 31 Report <sup>10</sup>	May 31 Report <sup>11</sup>	Jul. 31 Report <sup>12</sup>
<b>In Scope for Task Force Support</b>	3,948	3,951	3,842	3,843	3,843	3,851
<b>Children Identified as Returned to Home Country</b>	410	410	385	385	385	389
<b>Parents Identified as Returned to Their Home Country</b>	1,707	1,710	1,643	1,643	1,643	1,650
<b>Total Reunifications</b>	2,221	2,248	2,290	2,331	2,521	2,634
<i>Reunifications Prior to Task Force Establishment</i>	2,171	2,187	2,184	2,184	2,261	2,269
<i>Task Force Reunifications</i>	50	61	106	147	260	365
<b>Remaining Children Without Confirmed Reunification<sup>13</sup></b>	1,727	1,703	1,552	1,512	1,324	1,217
<i>In Process for Reunification</i>	50	206	324	373	331	276
<i>Contact Information Available but Not Reunified</i>	1,296	1,217	962	931	808	764
<i>No Confirmed Contact Information Available and Reunification Status Unknown</i>	381	280	266	208	185	177

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 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.

<sup>7</sup> Data as of September 30, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Data as of November 17, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Data as of January 17, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Data as of March 17, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Data as of May 17, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Data as of July 14, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> 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.