



# Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families Interim Progress Report

September 30, 2022

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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 September 14, 2022, the Task Force has facilitated the reunification of 487 children with their separated parents in the United States and provided these families with access to behavioral health services. Between July 15 and September 14, 2022, the Task Force made noteworthy progress in the following areas:

- Registered a total of 1,710 potentially eligible families with the Task Force on *Together.gov/Juntos.gov*. Of those families, approximately 628 separated children have been referred to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to receive assistance in obtaining reunification support services.
- Since the June 10, 2022 start of the behavioral health contract administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Task Force has provided 449 individual class members with behavioral health case management services and 153 with behavioral health treatment.
- Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas and Task Force Executive Director Michelle Brané met with a reunified family to hear about their experience.
- Conducted new data searches of U.S. government (USG) systems for unreached families and received from the *Ms. L.* Steering Committee updated reports on who have been successfully contacted. These updates improve the Task Force’s ability to reach families without confirmed reunifications, as well as focus efforts to reach more families.
- Contacted 111 previously unreached families outside of the United States and registered 66 of them on *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). In total, this project has reached 837 families and registered 693 families since its start in September 2021.
- Continued with the second phase of the PRM-funded UNHCR-implemented “Communicating with Communities” (CwC) education campaign, focusing on specific messages to counter misinformation and fraudulent schemes that might otherwise exploit families, as well as maintained general awareness-raising messages and activities.
- Continued to engage with Class Counsel in settlement negotiations of the *Ms. L.* litigation.<sup>2</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup> *Ms. L. v. ICE*, 3:18-cv-00428-DMS-MDD (Feb. 26, 2018).

## 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 be reunified. During this reporting period, the Task Force received 157 new registrations from separated families, and 112 parents or legal guardians have been reunified with their children by the Task Force. The Secretary of Homeland Security and Task Force Executive Director Michelle Brané met with a reunited family in Washington, D.C., to hear about their experience. Additionally, the Task Force searched USG data systems and shared contact information and efforts with the *Ms. L.* Steering Committee, all in the name of finding more unreached families. These efforts supported 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, 157 potentially eligible families registered with the Task Force website, [Together.gov](https://www.together.gov)/[Juntos.gov](https://www.juntos.gov), bringing the total number of registrations to 1,711 families. Eligible registrants were referred to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to complete the parole request process and, if appropriate, schedule any travel to the United States. As of September 14, 2022, the Task Force has referred a total of 628 separated children of families outside of the United States and 320 separated children of families living in the United States to IOM for assistance. Of those families, 487 have been reunified with their children and twelve families have declined the opportunity to reunify.

#### Administering Behavioral Health Services for Reunified Families

As of September 14, 2022, the behavioral health contract, which started on June 10, 2022 and is administered by SAMHSA, has directly notified 111 class members of the availability of behavioral health services. Under the contract, SAMHSA has provided 449 class members with behavioral health case management services, referred 58 class members to behavioral health services, and provided 153 class members with behavioral health assessment and treatment. Services provided through the previous behavioral health contract, which was narrower in scope of available services, have been uninterrupted.

#### Continuing Efforts to Contact Families Who Remain Separated

On August 12, 2022, Secretary Mayorkas and Task Force Executive Director Brané met with a reunited family in Washington, D.C. The purpose of this meeting was to learn about the families' experience with the reunification process and to use their feedback to improve communication materials and to increase effectiveness and delivery of reunification services and support.

#### Locating Families and Explaining Reunification Options

## *Deliberative and Pre-decisional*

From July 11 - September 11, 2022, the DoS/PRM project with UNHCR and KIND contacted 111 separated families, providing them with information on the reunification process, and registered 66 families on [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/juntos.gov). Since its start on September 15, 2021, the project has reached 837 families through direct contact and registered 693 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.

Additionally, KIND continues 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.

During this reporting period, KIND also conducted remote outreach (attempts to contact by phone, WhatsApp, and/or text messages) and provided registration support to approximately 100 additional parents in the expanded class that have been located by the *Ms. L.* Steering Committee subsequent to the list of 713 separated parents outside the United States provided to KIND by the Committee in October 2021. For families with known contact information who remain unreached, UNHCR is working with KIND on targeted outreach with Justice in Motion (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 August 31, 2022, JiM had successfully reached 306 of the 392 separated parents referred to them from the project start, with JiM searches still ongoing for the other 86 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.

## Maintaining Outreach Efforts to Promote Public Awareness

In the last 60 days, UNHCR continued its CwC campaign across four core countries: Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. This campaign leverages social media and other communication channels to share information and inform separated families. From the campaign launch through early September, for example, over 31,000 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 process. El Jaguar has over 60,000 followers, mostly migrants and refugees from Central American countries, thus elevating the visibility among potentially eligible separated parents from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador of materials like UNHCR's CwC publications and KIND's FAQ videos that have been posted there. UNHCR also posted and shared both an initial awareness-raising video and a second short video focused on countering misinformation and preventing the exploitation of families. UNHCR continues to monitor channels and seek feedback from partners to adjust messaging as needed across the campaign.

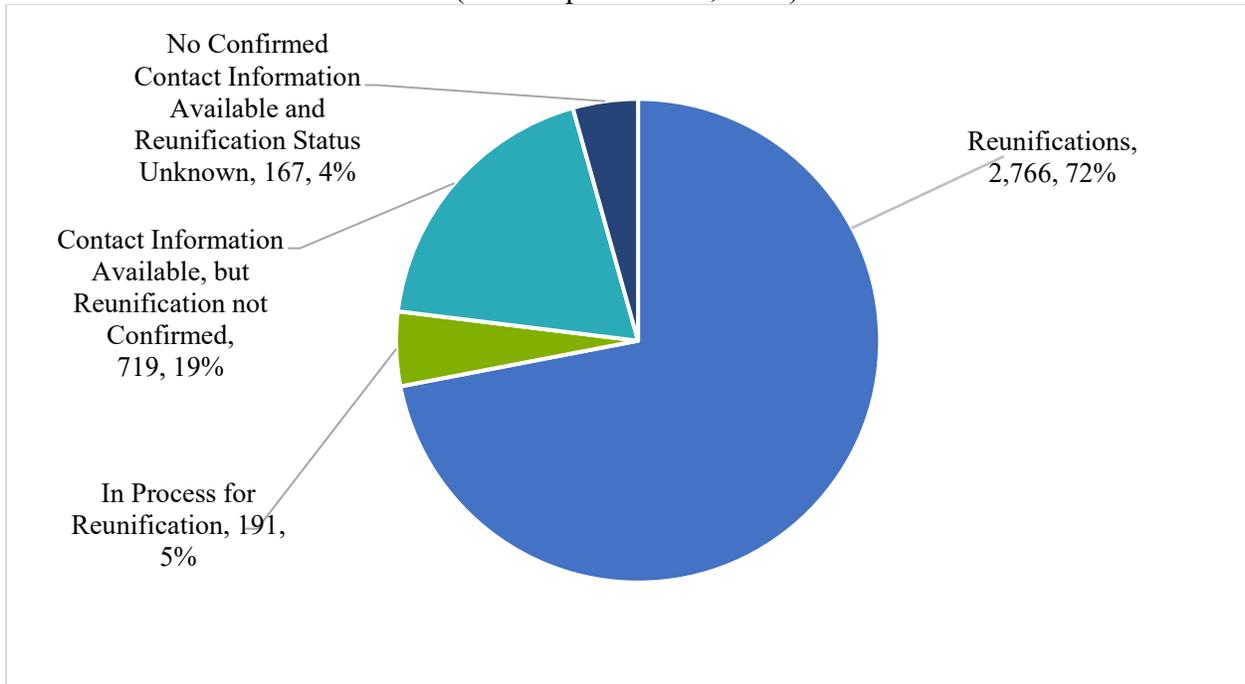
## Settlement Negotiations

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.

## IV. Update on Task Force Data

As of September 14, 2022, the Task Force has identified 3,855 children within the scope of E.O. 14011.<sup>3</sup> Through the close coordination with NGOs and attorneys representing the separated families, the Task Force has reunified 487 children with their parents. Prior to the establishment of the Task Force, 2,279 families were reunified bringing the total number of known reunified children to 2,766. As of September 14, 2022, here are 191 children who are in the process of being reunified by the Task Force.<sup>4</sup> And an additional 886 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 397 of the 886 children are reunified with their parents in the United States. The Task Force continues to work towards improving its data knowledge and expanding its ability to verify reunifications. Given ongoing litigation, the Task Force does not directly contact separated families and relies on the *Ms. L.* Class Counsel to verify this information.

Figure 1: Status of Contact with Separated and Reunified Families by Child  
(as of September 14, 2022)



Source: DHS and records related to the *Ms. L.* and *Ms. J.P.* litigation.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</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>4</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>5</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 the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) 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 September 14, 2022, approximately 3,133 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 September 14, 2022, IOM's processing queue includes 546 active cases of separated children and their families, including previously reunified families, with the majority being in Guatemala.

During this reporting period, the Task Force referred 47 families who were already in the United States to IOM to inform them of their option to request parole in place.

## VI. Appendix:

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

Data Tracking Separated Children and Reunifications	Jan. 28 Report <sup>6</sup>	Mar. 31 Report <sup>7</sup>	May 31 Report <sup>8</sup>	Jul. 31 Report <sup>9</sup>	Sep. 30 Report <sup>10</sup>
<b>In Scope for Task Force Support</b>	3,842	3,843	3,843	3,851	3,855
<b>Children Identified as Returned to Home Country</b>	385	385	385	389	316
<b>Parents Identified as Returned to Their Home Country</b>	1,643	1,643	1,643	1,650	1,581
<b>Total Reunifications</b>	2,290	2,331	2,521	2,634	2,766
<i>Reunifications Prior to Task Force Establishment</i>	2,184	2,184	2,261	2,269	2,279
<i>Task Force Reunifications</i>	106	147	260	365	487
<b>Remaining Children Without Confirmed Reunification<sup>11</sup></b>	1,552	1,512	1,324	1,217	1,077
<i>In Process for Reunification</i>	324	373	331	276	191
<i>Contact Information Available but Not Reunified</i>	962	931	808	764	719
<i>No Confirmed Contact Information Available and Reunification Status Unknown</i>	266	208	185	177	167

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>6</sup> Data as of January 17, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Data as of March 17, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Data as of May 17, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Data as of July 14, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Data as of September 14, 2022.

<sup>11</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.