

Interim Progress Report

Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families

January 30, 2023



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*.¹ As of January 17, 2023, the Task Force has facilitated the reunification of 599 children with their parents in the United States and provided those families with access to behavioral health services. Between November 18, 2022, and January 17, 2023, the Task Force made noteworthy progress in the following areas:

- Reunified 53 children with their parents or legal guardians. 123 potentially eligible families registered with the Task Force on [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/juntos.gov). Of those families that registered, approximately 56 separated children have been referred to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to receive assistance in obtaining reunification support services. The remaining were determined as out of scope for services at this time and will continue to be under review with the Task Force.
- Provided an additional 111 *Ms. L. v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Ms. L.)*² class members with behavioral health case management services and 78 *Ms. L.* class members with behavioral health assessment and treatment, in coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
- Contacted 76 previously unreachable families outside of the United States and registered 64 separated families to date 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 Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and Kids in Need of Defense (KIND). This project has reached 969 families and registered 814 families since its inception in September 2021.
- Continued family reunification outreach campaigns in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador through the PRM-funded, UNHCR-implemented "Communicating with Communities" (CwC), including the dissemination of KIND's series of Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) videos now available in certain Mayan languages.
- Awarded a program management contract to support Task Force data management and program operations to ensure efficient family reunifications and consistent tracking.
- Shared updated contact information of families without confirmed reunifications with UNHCR, the *Ms. L. Steering Committee*, and behavioral health and support services provider, Seneca Family of Agencies, as part of a newly executed contract with SAMHSA which now includes direct outreach to eligible families.

¹ 86 FR 8273 (Feb. 5, 2021).

² *Ms. L. v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforce*, No. 3:18-cv-00428 (S.D. Cal) (Feb. 26, 2018).

- Partnered, with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), to develop an interactive voice response (IVR) capability via the USCIS Contact Center to allow callers to ask specific questions about humanitarian parole and work authorization timelines, and request status updates from a USCIS representative trained on the Task Force process.

II. Executive Order Language

On February 2, 2021, President Biden signed 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 one 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 make progress completing the directives set for it through President Biden’s Executive Order. During this reporting period, the Task Force received 123 registrations from potentially separated families, reunited 53 children with their parents or legal guardians, and connected an additional 111 *Ms. L.* class members with behavioral health case management services and 78 *Ms. L.* class members with behavioral health assessment and treatment in coordination with HHS, SAMHSA. Based on additional data mining from USG data systems, the Task Force shared updated contact information for families without confirmed reunifications with UNHCR, Seneca Family of Agencies, and the *Ms. L.* Steering Committee. Additionally, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) awarded a program management contract to support Task Force data management and program operations to ensure efficient family reunifications and consistent tracking of work and progress. Further, USCIS developed IVR capability via its Contact Center to provide additional assistance to callers with Task Force-specific processing questions. Together, these efforts continue to encourage families to come forward for support while bringing the Task Force closer to its goal of providing all eligible separated families with the opportunity to reunify.

Supporting Separated Families When They Come Forward

In this reporting period, 123 potentially eligible families registered with the Task Force website, [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/juntos.gov), bringing the total number of registrations to 1,999 families. Eligible registrants were referred to IOM to complete the humanitarian parole request process and, if appropriate, schedule travel to the United States. As of January 17, 2023, the Task Force has referred a total of 896 separated children of families living outside of the United States and 403 separated children of families living in the United States to IOM for assistance.

During this reporting period, the Task Force shared updated contact information, obtained following new data mining results from USG data systems, for families without confirmed reunifications with UNHCR and the *Ms. L.* Steering Committee. This effort will allow for additional outreach to occur to potentially eligible families and provide them with information on the opportunity for reunification. Additionally, USCIS developed a Task Force-specific IVR capability via the USCIS Contact Center to better serve families calling the center with questions. Applicants, advocates, and attorneys can now ask specific questions about humanitarian parole and work authorization timelines and request status updates from a USCIS representative trained on the Task Force process. Further, callers can reschedule biometrics appointments and use IVR capability for inquiries that cannot be resolved through USCIS’ online tools and require live assistance. Interested parties can call +1(800) 375-5283 from Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm EST and should say “Family Reunification Task Force” to be directed to the proper channels.

Administering Behavioral Health Services for Reunified Families

In this reporting period, SAMHSA coordinated services for an additional 111 *Ms. L.* class members with behavioral health case management services and 78 *Ms. L.* class members with

behavioral health assessment and treatment. Through a contract with the service provider, Seneca Family of Agencies, which began on June 10, 2022, SAMHSA has directly notified 413 *Ms. L.* class members of the availability of behavioral health services. SAMHSA has provided 735 class members with behavioral health case management services and has provided 385 class members with behavioral health assessments and treatment. Since the beginning of the prior behavioral health contract, the U.S. Government has provided a total of 1,296 class members with behavioral health assessments and treatment.

Locating Families and Explaining Reunification Options

From November 7 to December 31, 2022, the DoS/PRM project with UNHCR and KIND contacted 76 separated families located outside of the United States who had been previously unreached and provided them with information on the reunification process. The project registered 64 families on [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/). Since its start on September 15, 2021, the project has reached 969 families through direct contact and has registered 814 families.

In addition, KIND's Help Desk continues to spend a significant amount of time supporting the large number of registered families with their ongoing questions. The Help Desk has now assisted over 850 callers total. 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 and the Task Force. The Task Force regularly conducts searches of available government data systems for any new contact information to provide to the Steering Committee. KIND will be initiating phone outreach to these families and will continue to do so for the remainder of the project.

UNHCR also continues to work with KIND on targeted outreach with Justice in Motion (JiM). JiM conducts on-the-ground searches for families KIND is unable to reach by remote means. As of December 31, 2022, JiM has reached 408 of the 502 separated parents referred to them from the project's start. JiM continues to search for the remaining 94 parents. JiM helped many of those 408 families to register with the Task Force, and all were referred to KIND to receive information about the reunification process and answers to questions.

Maintaining Public Awareness

UNHCR continues to maintain public awareness through its CwC efforts, including through social media posts and banners/posters displayed on UNHCR mobile units and at community centers across four core countries: Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Additionally, KIND completed and published its series of FAQ videos for parents in K'iche', Mam and Q'anjob'al, and UNHCR is helping to amplify the series' distribution to target audiences. Of note, 17 percent of callers to KIND's Help Desk speak a language other than Spanish or English, with a significant majority speaking indigenous Guatemalan languages. In recent months, the number of Help Desk callers speaking indigenous Guatemalan languages have increased, which may be attributable to UNHCR's targeted CwC efforts during the fall in those languages, including an intensive radio campaign in Guatemala.

Anti-fraud messaging as part of UNHCR's CwC efforts continues to be important. Over this reporting period, some parents reported to the Help Desk that they received calls from individuals falsely claiming to be affiliated with the reunification program and attempting to charge parents steep fees. In response, the Help Desk and IOM are coordinating more closely to help parents verify callers' identity, and UNHCR will, in coordination with DoS, amplify social media outreach to raise awareness about fraud and exploitation of parents, in coordination with U.S. Embassies.

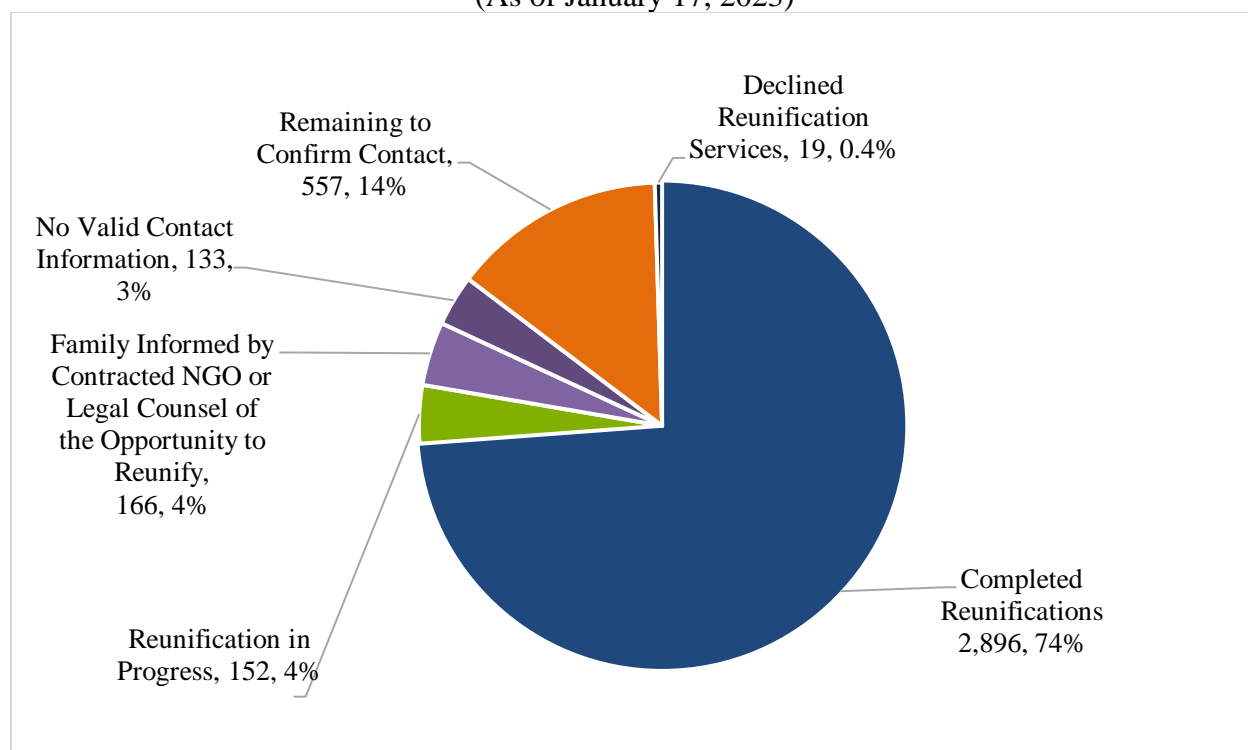
Settlement Negotiations

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 January 17, 2023, the Task Force has identified 3,923 children within the scope of E.O. 14011,³ and by closely coordinating with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and attorneys representing the separated families, the Task Force reunified 599 children with their parents. Prior to the establishment of the Task Force, 2,297 children were reunified, bringing the total number of known completed reunifications to 2,896. As of January 17, 2023, there are 152 children with reunifications in progress by the Task Force.⁴ There are also an additional 557 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 234 children may have 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. Given ongoing litigation, the Task Force does not directly contact separated families and relies on the *Ms. L.* Class Counsel to verify contact information.

Figure 1: Status of Contact with Separated and Reunified Families by Child
(As of January 17, 2023)



Source: DHS and records related to the *Ms. L.*⁵ and *Ms. J.P.* litigation.⁶

³ 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.

⁴ Please see Appendix, Figure 1 for a comparison of reunification data reported in this report with the reunification data reported in the September 14, 2022, Interim Progress Report.

⁵ *Ms. L v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforce*, No. 3:18-cv-00428 (S.D. Cal) (Feb. 26, 2018).

⁶ *J.P. v. Sessions*, No. 2:18-cv-06081 (C.D. Cal) (Nov. 5, 2019).

V. Update on Parole Requests

The Task Force continues to use DHS's humanitarian parole authority to permit separated families, on a case-by-case basis, to enter and remain in the United States for purposes of reunification and to receive access to services. As of January 17, 2023, approximately 4,005 individuals (separated children, parents, and additional family members) have filed parole requests with USCIS through the Task Force process. The average processing time from registration to travel to the United States is 145 days.⁷ Processing times vary due to the complex nature of remaining cases and the need for additional coordination with IOM and USCIS.

IOM continues to support separated families with in-country processing, including assistance in completing parole requests to be filed with USCIS and, once parole is approved, obtaining required travel documents, such as passports and exit visas. During this reporting period, IOM's processing queue includes 152 active cases of separated children and their families, including previously reunified families, with the majority being in Guatemala.

In the last 60 days, the Task Force referred six families who were already in the United States to IOM to inform them of their option to request parole in place and that IOM could assist in the filing process.

⁷ The processing times for each case vary greatly depending on a family's personal circumstances.

VI. Appendix:

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

Data Tracking Separated Children and Reunifications	Mar. 31 Report ⁸	May 31 Report ⁹	Jul. 31 Report ¹⁰	Sep. 30 Report ¹¹	Nov. 30 Report ¹²	Jan. 29 Report ¹³
In Scope for Task Force Support	3,843	3,843	3,851	3,855	3,811	3,923
Total Reunifications	2,331	2,521	2,634	2,766	2,837	2,896
<i>Reunifications Prior to Task Force Establishment</i>	2,184	2,261	2,269	2,279	2,291	2,297
<i>Task Force Reunifications</i>	147	260	365	487	546	599
Remaining Children Without Confirmed Reunification¹⁴	1,512	1,324	1,217	1,077	958	1,008
<i>In Process for Reunification</i>	373	331	276	191	178	152
<i>Remaining to Confirm Contact</i>	931	808	764	719	486	557
<i>Family Informed by Contracted NGO or Legal Counsel of the Opportunity to Reunify¹⁵</i>	-	-	-	-	136	166
<i>No Valid Contact Information</i>	208	185	177	167	158	133
Declined Reunification Services¹⁶	-	-	-	-	16	19

Source: DHS and records related to the *Ms. L*¹⁷ and *Ms. J. P.*¹⁸ 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 may increase and decrease from one report to the next, which should not be interpreted as a lack of progress.

⁸ Data as of March 17, 2022.

⁹ Data as of May 17, 2022.

¹⁰ Data as of July 14, 2022.

¹¹ Data as of September 14, 2022.

¹² Data as of November 18, 2022.

¹³ Data as of January 17, 2023.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ This data point is a new addition to the Interim Progress Report and will be included in future reports.

¹⁶ This data point is a new addition to the Interim Progress Report and will be included in future reports.

¹⁷ *Ms. L v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforce*, No. 3:18-cv-00428 (S.D. Cal) (Feb. 26, 2018).

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

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.

Since its establishment, the Task Force has tracked various metrics to capture the work behind identifying separated children, reaching, and informing the family about reunification, and providing families with support services throughout the reunification process and once they have arrived in the United States. Below are numbers representing some of these efforts to highlight the complexity of the work and the level of effort required to reunify a separated family.

Figure 2: Additional Family Reunification Datasets

Task Force By The Numbers	Totals
Average hours required to contact and register a separated family¹⁹	20
Number of unique visits to <u>Together.gov/Juntos.gov</u>²⁰	52,403
Number of families registered on <u>Together.gov/Juntos.gov</u> to reunite & receive support services²¹	1,999
Number of additional household members qualified for IOM support services²²	1,995
Average number of families reunified each month since September 2021²³	40

¹⁹ Data from KIND

²⁰ Data from Together.gov/Juntos.gov website for December 19, 2021, through January 18, 2023

²¹ Data from FRTF Case Management System as of January 17, 2023

²² Data from FRTF Case Management System as of January 17, 2023

²³ Data from FRTF Case Management System as of January 17, 2023