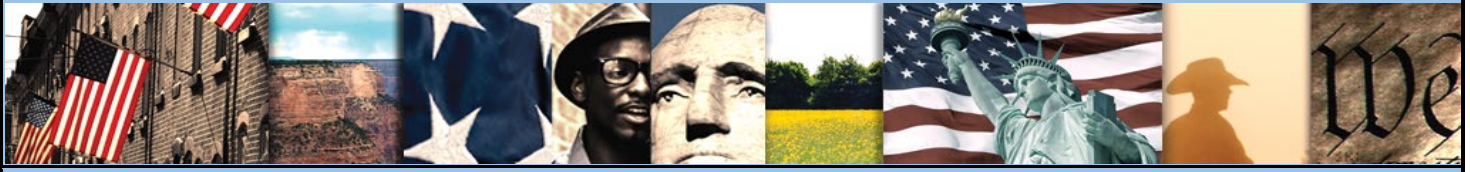




*The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) supports the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as it secures the nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.*



### 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](mailto: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 Celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

On March 1, the Department of Homeland Security celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a special event to honor the workforce and to recognize the approximately 32,000 plank holders who joined DHS on its first day and continue to serve today. The event included special remarks by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. and Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas, along with recorded messages from former President George W. Bush and former DHS Secretary Tom Ridge.

“The Department of Homeland Security was formed out of the tragedy of 9/11, but with an unshakeable resolve of a sacred mission to secure our country and to protect the American people,” said **President Biden**. “Because of you, America is safer, it’s stronger, and it’s better prepared to meet whatever threat we face.”

Over the past 20 years, the threat landscape has evolved. While we continue to face the threat of international terrorism, new threats and challenges have emerged, including increasing incidents of targeted violence, cyberattacks and natural disasters, as well as the unprecedented level of migration in the hemisphere. The 260,000 dedicated public servants of DHS use their skills and expertise to meet the challenges of today’s world and prepare for the threats of tomorrow with expertise, innovation, and unflinching dedication to the mission.

“Our Department will continue to evolve and meet the challenges not only of today, but those of tomorrow,” said **Secretary Mayorkas**. “I express confidence in the security of our future because of you – your talent and your tireless dedication to mission. The foundation of the work we perform now and will perform in the years ahead is the legacy of your service over the past twenty years. Thank you for everything you do.”

#### Inside

[DHS Celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary](#)

[CRCL Participates in IACHR Hearing](#)

[CRCL Training on Language Access During Public Health Emergencies](#)

[Advancing Disability Access at DHS](#)

[DHS Announces \\$2 Billion in Preparedness Grants](#)

[DHS Celebrates Women’s History Month](#)

[CRCL on the Road](#)

[Contact Us](#)

*[continued on next page]*

Today, DHS's agencies and offices work collaboratively to protect the American public in the air by securing air travel; on land by securing the border, responding to natural disasters, protecting critical infrastructure, and administering our nation's legal immigration system; at sea by protecting our coastline and waterways; and in cyberspace by bolstering America's cyber defense and investigating cybercrime. To learn more, visit: [DHS.gov/TodayDHSWill](https://www.dhs.gov/TodayDHSWill).

DHS will continue its anniversary celebration throughout the year, marking DHS@20 with a series of regional anniversary events and workforce awards ceremonies.

- Read President Biden's remarks on [WhiteHouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov) and read Secretary Mayorkas's remarks on [DHS.gov](https://www.dhs.gov).
- Watch the full event [on YouTube](#). See photos from the day on the [DHS Flickr page](#).

### **CRCL Participates in Inter-American Commission Hearing on Deportations to Haiti**

This month, CRCL Senior Official Peter Mina joined with representatives from DHS and the U.S. Department of State in Los Angeles to participate in a public hearing by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The hearing was held at the request of civil society organizations and focused on the U.S. government's treatment and deportation of Haitian migrants, including the expulsion of Haitians under Title 42.

Senior Official Mina spoke on CRCL's work to ensure humane treatment for all migrants, whether they are seeking entry or already in the United States, as consistent with domestic laws and international obligations. He also underscored the Department's commitment to providing essential humanitarian protections for migrants, and their concern with reports of abuses and poor conditions in Haitian prisons, as it relates to the fair treatment of Haitian nationals in the United States. Senior leaders from U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement and the DHS Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans shared additional information, including: how ICE exercises prosecutorial discretion on a case-by-case basis, how decisions are made relating to detention and alternatives to detention, opportunities for relief in the immigration court and appeals processes, coordination efforts with Haitian officials to ensure removal to Haiti is safe, and parole processes for Haitians as well as citizens of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. The full hearing can be viewed online, [click here](#).

### **CRCL Provides Training on Language Access During Public Health Emergencies**

In January, February, and March of 2023, CRCL staff provided training to state recipients of Federal financial assistance on the requirement under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to provide meaningful language access to limited English proficient (LEP) persons in federally assisted programs and activities. The training, titled *Language Access During the COVID-19 Pandemic & Other Health Emergencies*, was developed and presented jointly with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Office of Equal Rights and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Civil Rights.

During the training CRCL, FEMA, and HHS staff shared effective practices numerous states employed to meet their Title VI language access requirements, including in areas such as identifying LEP populations, engaging with community-based organizations, translation of written material, and quality assurance in language services. The training also identified and discussed areas of caution when providing access to LEP individuals, such as use of machine translation tools, reliance on family members for interpretation, and requirements to present government-issued identification to receive COVID-related services. The presentation and more information about Title VI language access obligations can be found on CRCL's [Civil Rights Resources for Recipients of DHS Financial Assistance | Homeland Security](#) webpage under the Recipient Resources menu. The agencies provided the training in response to written allegations that numerous states were not meeting their language access obligations under Title VI in their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Advancing Disability Access at DHS: Highlights of Component Achievements**

CRCL has released a DHS Disability Access Highlights Report, documenting Component work to strengthen disability access between 2019 and 2022. Pursuant to DHS Directive 065-01, in 2016 CRCL provided DHS Components with guidance on conducting a self-evaluation of all public facing programs and activities to identify any barriers to access for individuals with disabilities. Components then developed a plan to address these barriers to improve access. This report provides an overview of each Component's significant achievements in disability access with respect to public facing programs between 2019 and 2022. While continuous improvement will be needed to keep pace with rapid changes to in-person and virtual service delivery in the years ahead, the achievements highlighted in this report lay the foundation for future work in ensuring nondiscrimination and equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities encountered and served by DHS. DHS is committed to ensuring nondiscrimination for individuals with disabilities in its public facing programs and activities. The report and other information about disability access at DHS can be found at: [Disability Access | Homeland Security \(dhs.gov\)](#).

### **DHS Awards \$350 Million in Humanitarian Assistance Through the Emergency Food and Shelter Program**

DHS, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), has announced it will publish a Notice of Funding Opportunity for [\\$350 million under the humanitarian portion](#) of the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) to help local communities around the country better manage the costs of noncitizen arrivals in their communities. This is the first major portion of funding that is being allocated for humanitarian assistance under the Omnibus funding approved in December.”

“With today’s funding of \$350 million for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program, DHS is delivering on our commitment to provide needed support to communities across the country that receive noncitizens who are in immigration enforcement proceedings,” said **Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas**. “At the same time, we are working to quickly stand up the new Shelter and Services Program created by Congress and look forward to awarding funds through this important new program later this fiscal year.”

After the EFSP National Board receives the funds, it will post the FY 2023 application guidance and begin accepting applications. The Board, with support from FEMA, will host a series of webinars for potential applicants to explain how to apply, discuss any changes from the previous year’s application guidance, and provide answers about the application process. The National Board makes all final award determinations.

Interested applicants are encouraged to review the Continuing Resolution 2023 [Guidance](#) to understand eligible items under the program.

## **DHS Announces \$2 Billion in Preparedness Grants**

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas has [announced more than \\$2 billion in funding](#) for eight fiscal year 2023 preparedness grant programs. These grant programs provide critical funding to help state, local, tribal, and territorial officials prepare for, prevent, protect against, and respond to acts of terrorism.

Secretary Mayorkas issued the following statement on this year’s grant awards: “As the threats to our homeland continue to evolve, the Department of Homeland Security is fulfilling a key aspect of its mission by equipping state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, as well as transportation authorities and nonprofit organizations, with vital resources to help them strengthen our nation’s preparedness. The new threat landscape now includes medium- and small-sized jurisdictions and remote locations and encompasses a greater swath of our country than ever before, to include so-called ‘soft targets’ and other targets of opportunity.

“This year, we are therefore expanding the reach of our more than \$2 billion in funding by adding four additional urban areas as grant recipients: Austin, Texas; Honolulu, Hawaii; Jacksonville, Florida; and Nashville, Tennessee. This is in addition to the thirty-six urban areas we continue to support, bringing the total number of funded urban areas to 40.”

DHS has identified six national priority areas in the FY 2023 grant cycle: cybersecurity; soft targets and crowded places; intelligence and information sharing; domestic violent extremism; community preparedness and resilience; and election security. The FY 2023 grant guidance will continue to focus on the nation's highest risk areas, including urban areas that face the most significant threats. This year, the Urban Area Security Initiative will enhance regional preparedness and capabilities by funding 40 high-threat, high-density urban areas. This includes four additional urban areas who will receive funding to build and sustain capability based on an evolving threat environment. This represents Congressional intent to limit these funds to those urban areas that represent up to 85 percent of nationwide risk.

For more information on DHS's preparedness grant programs, visit: <http://www.fema.gov/grants>.

### **CRCL Announces New Complaint Portal**

CRCL is pleased to announce the launch of a new [online portal](#) that members of the public can use to submit allegations about possible violations of civil rights, civil liberties, or human rights by DHS programs, activities, personnel, or contractors.

The online portal is a one-stop shop, offered in ten languages, to submit allegations and other pertinent information related to interactions with DHS. Through the portal, individuals can conveniently submit information about their allegations (including attachments) directly to CRCL and automatically receive a confirmation message and reference number. The new portal also provides easy access for mobile device and tablet users. Additionally, the portal helps streamline CRCL's intake and review of allegations.

Under [6 U.S.C. § 345](#) and [42 U.S.C. § 2000ee-1](#), CRCL reviews and investigates allegations filed by the public about possible violations of civil rights and civil liberties related to DHS. Learn more about CRCL's [complaint portal](#) or find other ways to [submit a civil rights complaint](#) with CRCL.

### **DHS Celebrates Women's History Month**

CRCL hosted the Department-wide commemoration event to celebrate Women's History Month, highlighting this year's theme "Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories." The program featured a keynote speech from DHS Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Erin Waters, which was followed by a panel discussion of women public affairs professionals from across the Department.

The panel shared their insights and experiences on how the theme of women telling their stories has impacted our Nation through the decades.

They also spoke on the importance of women telling accurate and compelling stories, particularly as it relates to their roles as government communicators working on behalf of the Department, the American people and the public. More than 300 DHS employees attended the virtual event.



### **CRCL on the Road**

\* CRCL's Community Engagement team is resuming in-person engagement with diverse communities. We are now conducting virtual, hybrid, and in-person meetings with federal, state, local, and civil society stakeholders across the country. We remain available to respond to any stakeholder questions or concerns via email at: [CommunityEngagement@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:CommunityEngagement@hq.dhs.gov). Thank you for your continued flexibility and partnership 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.dhs.gov/crcl).

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