



Interim Progress Report

Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families

March 31, 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 March 16, 2023, the Task Force has facilitated the reunification of 652 children with their parents in the United States and made behavioral health services available to those families. Between January 18, 2023, and March 16, 2023, the Task Force made noteworthy progress in the following areas:

- Reunified 48 children with their parents or legal guardians and 214 families registered with the Task Force on [Together.gov](https://www.together.gov)/[Juntos.gov](https://www.juntos.gov). Of those families that registered, approximately 122 separated children have been referred to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to receive assistance in obtaining reunification support services. The remaining were determined to be out of scope for services at this time and will continue to be under review with the Task Force.
- Provided an additional 121 *Ms. L.*² class members with behavioral health case management services and 176 *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 95 previously unreachable families outside of the United States and registered 87 separated families to date on [Together.gov](https://www.together.gov)/[Juntos.gov](https://www.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), over January and February 2023. This project has reached 1,064 families and registered 901 families since its inception in September 2021 through the end of February 2023.
- Continued to maintain public awareness of the family reunification program in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador through the PRM-funded, UNHCR-implemented "Communicating with Communities" (CwC) information campaign.
- Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas issued a statement³ recognizing the two-year anniversary of the Task Force and the important milestone of the reunification of 600 children with their families.

¹ 86 FR 8273 (Feb. 5, 2021).

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

³ DHS, Press Release, Statement of Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas on the Family Reunification Task Force and the Successful Reunification of More than 600 Children with Their Families (February 2, 2023), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/02/02/statement-homeland-security-secretary-mayorkas-family-reunification-task-force-and>.

- Published a factsheet⁴ highlighting the challenges inherited when the Task Force was established, progress made to support and reunify families, and ongoing efforts of the Task Force in its two years of existence.
- In January, Task Force leadership traveled to the Southwest Border and met with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials and non-governmental organizations who provide direct services to families recently released from DHS custody in the Yuma, Eagle Pass, and Rio Grande Valley sectors to learn about the operational realities of the processing of families encountered by U.S. Border Patrol and CBP's Office of Field Operations.

⁴ DHS, Fact Sheet: A Review by the Family Reunification Task Force on the Second Anniversary of Its Establishment (February 2, 2023), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/02/02/fact-sheet-review-family-reunification-task-force-second-anniversary-its>.

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 the 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 the 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 214 registrations from potentially separated families, reunited 48 children with their parents or legal guardians, connected an additional 121 *Ms. L.* class members with behavioral health case management services, and 176 *Ms. L.* class members with behavioral health assessment and treatment in coordination with SAMHSA. In January, Task Force leadership visited the Southwest border to learn about the day-to-day operations and processing of families from officials on the ground. In addition, the Task Force met with non-governmental organizations who provide direct services to families recently released from DHS custody. The Task Force also recently celebrated its two-year anniversary and, as of February, successfully reunified 600 children with their parents. Finally, the Task Force started identifying U.S. citizen children that were potentially separated from their noncitizen parents under the Zero Tolerance Policy by conducting a thorough search of relevant, available government records. These collective 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, 214 families registered with the Task Force website, [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/juntos.gov), bringing the total number of registrations to 2,213 families. Eligible registrants were referred to IOM to complete the parole request process and, if appropriate, schedule travel to the United States. As of March 16, 2023, the Task Force has referred a total of 916 separated children of families living outside of the United States and 512 separated children of families living in the United States to IOM for assistance. The Task Force also continues to run a Help Desk service to support individuals with questions or in need of assistance while engaging in the reunification or Parole In Place (PIP) process. The Help Desk is available Monday to Friday from 10am to 7pm CST and contact information is listed on [Together.gov](https://www.together.gov)⁵.

During the reporting period, the Task Force continued its family reunification outreach campaigns in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Additionally, the Task Force continued its work - started nearly a year ago - to identify American citizen (AMCIT) children that were potentially separated from their noncitizen parents under the Zero Tolerance Policy. The Task Force’s plan to reunify separated AMCIT children consists of four phases: (1) identify potentially separated AMCIT children through a review of DHS and U.S. Government (USG) databases, (2) gather contact information for those identified, (3) perform outreach to all identified, and (4) ultimately facilitate reunification. The Task Force expects to complete phase one by mid-April.

Administering Behavioral Health Services for Reunified Families

⁵ DHS, “FRTF - Help - FRTF Home.”
https://form.together.gov/frtf/?id=frtf_help&sys_id=fa4336441be27410f50d84cae54bcb52&lang=eng.

Between June 10, 2022 and January 31, 2023, through a contract with the service provider, Seneca Family of Agencies, SAMHSA has directly notified 526 *Ms. L.* class members (parents only) of the availability of behavioral case management and behavioral health services, and the program's 24/7 Hotline has answered 506 calls. Additionally, SAMHSA has provided 856 class members (parents only) with behavioral health case management services and provided 561 class members (parents and children) with behavioral health assessments and treatment (individual and family therapy). Forty-three of these class members (parents only) have received parenting support and psychoeducational groups since these services were implemented in October 2022. Forty-nine class members (parents only) currently residing outside the United States accepted pre-reunification counseling services for their children in the United States since this service launched in October 2022. Overall, the federal government has provided 1,394 class members with behavioral health assessments and treatment.

Locating Families and Explaining Reunification Options

From January 1 to February 28, 2023, the DoS/PRM project with UNHCR and KIND contacted 95 separated, previously unreachable families located outside the United States and provided them with information on the reunification process. During that same period, the project registered 87 families on [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/juntos.gov). Since its start on September 15, 2021, the project has reached 1,064 families through direct contact and registered 901.

In addition, KIND's Help Desk continues to spend a significant amount of time supporting many registered families with their ongoing questions. The Help Desk has assisted over 960 total callers. KIND continued to make progress reaching, informing, and registering families with known contact information provided to KIND by the *Ms. L.* Steering Committee and the Task Force.

UNHCR also continues to work with KIND, through its sub-contractor Justice in Motion (JiM), on targeted outreach. JiM conducts on-the-ground searches for families KIND cannot reach by remote means. As of February 28, 2023, JiM reached 439 of the 578 separated parents referred to them from the project's start. JiM continues to search for the remaining 139 parents. JiM helped many of those 439 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 Communicating with Communities campaign, including through social media posts, as well as displaying banners and posters on UNHCR mobile units and at community centers across four core countries: Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Public awareness efforts include a focus on anti-fraud messaging in response to reports made to the Help Desk of individuals falsely claiming to be affiliated with the reunification program and attempting to charge parents large fees.

Two Year Anniversary of the Task Force & Trip to the U.S.-Mexico Border

In February 2023, the Task Force celebrated its second anniversary. Recognizing the efforts of the Task Force over the past two years, Secretary Mayorkas issued a statement highlighting the important milestone of reunifying 600 children with their families. Additionally, DHS published a factsheet⁶ highlighting the challenges the Task Force inherited upon its establishment, the progress made to support and reunify families, and the ongoing efforts of the Task Force to fulfill its mission.

In January, Task Force leadership also traveled to the Southwest Border and met with CBP officials in the Yuma, Eagle Pass, and Rio Grande Valley sectors to learn directly from operators about the realities of processing families encountered at or between ports of entry. The Task Force also met with non-governmental organizations who provide direct services to families recently released from DHS custody.

Settlement Negotiations

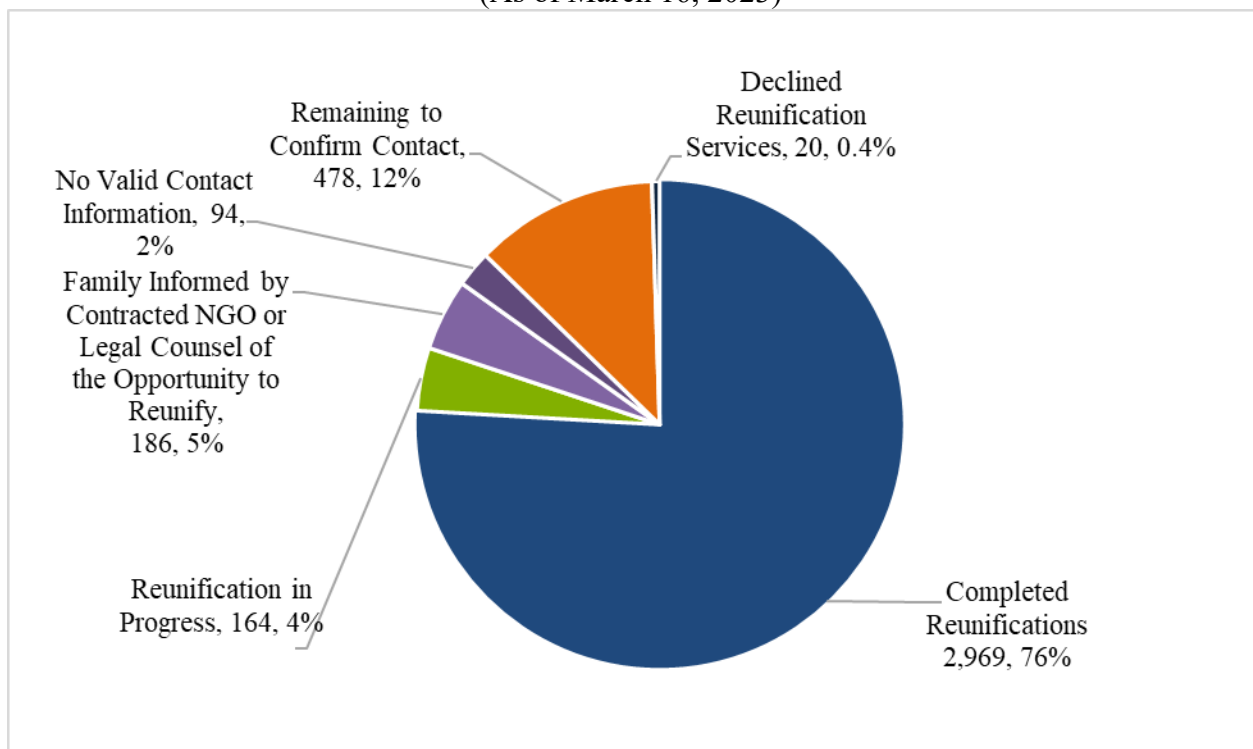
The Task Force continues to consult with the Department of Justice, which remains engaged in confidential settlement negotiations with the plaintiffs in the *Ms. L.* litigation.

⁶ DHS, “Fact Sheet: A Review by the Family Reunification Task Force on the Second Anniversary of Its Establishment.” February 2, 2023. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/02/02/fact-sheet-review-family-reunification-task-force-second-anniversary-its>.

IV. Update on Task Force Data

As of March 16, 2023, the Task Force has identified 3,925 children within the scope of E.O. 14011,⁷ and by closely coordinating with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and attorneys representing the separated families, the Task Force has reunified 652 children with their parents. Prior to the establishment of the Task Force, 2,317 children were reunified, bringing the total number of known completed reunifications to 2,969. As of March 16, 2023, there were 164 children with reunifications in progress by the Task Force.⁸ Out of the remaining children, 186 have been informed of their eligibility to be reunified, 94 need validated contact information, 478 are pending confirmation of contact, and 20 have declined reunification services. However, the Task Force believes, based on information exchanged through the *Ms. L.* joint status reports, that approximately 217 of these 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 data with partners. 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 March 16, 2023)



Source: DHS and records related to the *Ms. L.*⁹ and *Ms. J.P.* litigation.¹⁰

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

⁸ Please see Appendix, Figure 1 for a comparison of reunification data reported in this report with the reunification data reported in the January 29, 2023, Interim Progress Report.

⁹ *Ms. L v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, No. 3:18-cv-00428 (S.D. Cal) (Feb. 26, 2018).

¹⁰ *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 parole authority under section 212(d)(5)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act 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 March 16, 2023, approximately 4,300 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 (if the parole request is approved) is 96 days.¹¹ 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, if parole is authorized, obtaining required travel documents, such as passports and exit visas. During this reporting period, IOM's processing queue includes 164 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 19 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.

¹¹ 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 ¹²	May 31 Report ¹³	Jul. 31 Report ¹⁴	Sep. 30 Report ¹⁵	Nov. 30 Report ¹⁶	Jan. 29 Report ¹⁷	Mar. 31 Report ¹⁸
In Scope for Task Force Support	3,843	3,843	3,851	3,855	3,811	3,923	3,925
Total Reunifications	2,331	2,521	2,634	2,766	2,837	2,896	2,969
<i>Reunifications Prior to Task Force Establishment</i>	2,184	2,261	2,269	2,279	2,291	2,297	2,317
<i>Task Force Reunifications</i>	147	260	365	487	546	599	652
Remaining Children Without Confirmed Reunification¹⁹	1,512	1,324	1,217	1,077	958	1,008	942
<i>In Process for Reunification</i>	373	331	276	191	178	152	164
<i>Remaining to Confirm Contact</i>	931	808	764	719	486	557	478
<i>Family Informed by Contracted NGO or Legal Counsel of the Opportunity to Reunify</i>	-	-	-	-	136	166	186
<i>No Valid Contact Information</i>	208	185	177	167	158	133	94
Declined Reunification Services	-	-	-	-	16	19	20

Source: DHS and records related to the *Ms. L*²⁰ and *Ms. J. P.*²¹ 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. Learning about the status of separated families brings the Task Force closer to achieving its

¹² Data as of March 17, 2022.

¹³ Data as of May 17, 2022.

¹⁴ Data as of July 14, 2022.

¹⁵ Data as of September 14, 2022.

¹⁶ Data as of November 18, 2022.

¹⁷ Data as of January 17, 2023.

¹⁸ Data as of March 16, 2023.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ *Ms. L v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforce*, No. 3:18-cv-00428 (S.D. Cal) (Feb. 26, 2018).

²¹ *J.P. v. Sessions*, No. 2:18-cv-06081 (C.D. Cal) (Nov. 5, 2019).

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 family²²	20
Number of unique visits to <u><i>Together.gov/Juntos.gov</i></u>²³	52,403
Number of families registered on <u><i>Together.gov/Juntos.gov</i></u> to reunite & receive support services²⁴	2,213
Number of additional household members qualified for IOM support services²⁵	2,235
Average number of families reunified each month since September 2021²⁶	36

²² Data from KIND

²³ Data from Together.gov/Juntos.gov website for December 19, 2021, through January 18, 2023

²⁴ Data from FRTF Case Management System as of March 16, 2023

²⁵ Data from FRTF Case Management System as of March 16, 2023

²⁶ Data from FRTF Case Management System as of March 16, 2023