



Interim Progress Report

Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families

September 30, 2023



Homeland
Security



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Table of Contents

I.	Introduction.....	1
II.	Executive Order Language	2
III.	Recent Progress and Ongoing Efforts.....	3
IV.	Update on Task Force Data.....	6
V.	Update on Parole Requests	7
VI.	Appendix.....	8

I. Introduction

The Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families (Task Force) submits this interim report on the implementation of Executive Order 14011 (E.O. 14011), *Establishment of Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families*.¹ As of September 15, 2023, the Task Force has facilitated the reunification of 767 children with their parents in the United States and made behavioral health services available to those families. Between July 17, 2023, and September 15, 2023, the Task Force made noteworthy progress in the following areas:

- Reunified 22 children with their parents or legal guardians.
- Received 106 registrations of families on [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov). Of the 106 families that registered, approximately 71 separated children were referred to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to receive reunification support services. The eligibility of the remaining 80 registered families could not be immediately determined and remain under review with the Task Force.
- Provided an additional 309 *Ms. L.*² class members with behavioral health case management services and 108 *Ms. L.* class members with behavioral health assessments and treatment, executed by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
- Contacted 80 previously unreached families through HHS and Seneca Family of Agencies' outreach efforts, which began in January 2023 through September 15, 2023, and informed them of their potential eligibility to receive reunification support services. Additionally, Justice in Motion (JiM), by way of private funding sources, continues to conduct on the ground searches for eligible class members located outside the United States.
- The Task Force has collected available contact information for U.S. citizen children and their noncitizen parents or legal guardians who were separated by the U.S. government between January 20, 2017, and January 20, 2021, from DHS databases, and coordinated with other components of the government to search for additional contact information in other relevant federal databases. The contact information was shared with plaintiffs and the Steering Committee³. In the next reporting period, the Task Force will begin working with state and local agencies to begin conducting outreach to U.S. citizen children who may be eligible for reunification support services.
- Task Force Leadership and behavioral health service providers travelled to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras and visited with U.S. and foreign government officials; journalists in the region; and with Task Force partners.

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 The Steering Committee, created following the *Ms. L v. ICE* class action lawsuit, includes three nonprofit organization partners: *Kids In Need of Defense (KIND)*, *Justice in Motion and the Women's Refugee Commission*, and the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP.

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 toward completing the directives set forth in President Biden’s Executive Order 14011. During this reporting period, the Task Force received 106 registrations from potentially separated families, reunited 22 children with their parents or legal guardians, connected 309 *Ms. L.* class members with behavioral health case management services, and provided 108 *Ms. L.* class members with behavioral health assessment and treatment in coordination with SAMHSA. The Task Force remains committed to locating and informing eligible families about the option to reunify. To achieve this mission, the Task Force collected available contact information for U.S. citizen children and their noncitizen parents or legal guardians who were separated by DHS between January 20, 2017, and January 20, 2021. Additionally, Justice in Motion (JiM) continues to conduct on-the-ground searches for eligible class members located outside the United States, with costs paid for using private funds. Executive Director Michelle Brané recently travelled to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras to spread the word about the Task Force and encourage families who believe to be eligible to register on [Together.gov](https://www.together.gov). Director Brané was accompanied by members of the Task Force from DHS and HHS and by key personnel from Seneca Family of Services who provide behavioral health support to separated families. Director Brané also visited government officials in each country, as well as with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), indigenous groups, and community leaders to promote the communication of the Task Force’s reunification efforts, existing behavioral health service offerings, and to discuss obstacles or concerns regarding engagement and registration.

Supporting Separated Families When They Come Forward

During this reporting period, 106 families registered with the Task Force website, [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/juntos.gov), bringing the total number of registrations to 2,402 families⁴. Eligible registrants were referred to IOM to complete the parole request process and, if appropriate, schedule travel to the United States. As of September 15, 2023, the Task Force has referred a total of 1,042 separated children whose families live outside of the United States, as well as 587 separated children whose families live in the United States, to IOM for assistance. The Task Force also continues to run a Help Desk that supports individuals who need assistance during the reunification process. The Help Desk is available Monday through Friday from 10 am to 6 pm MDT; contact information can be found on [Together.gov/Juntos.gov](https://www.together.gov/juntos.gov).⁵

A year ago, the Task Force began its work to identify U.S. citizen (USCIT) children who were potentially separated from their noncitizen parents between January 20, 2017, and January 20, 2021. The Task Force’s plan to reunify separated USCIT children consists of four phases: (1) identify potentially separated USCIT children through a review of DHS and other U.S. Government (USG) databases, (2) gather contact information for those identified, (3) perform outreach to all identified children, and (4) provide an opportunity to reunify for those

⁴ The number of families registered with the Task Force has decreased from previous reports due to the exclusion of duplicate registrations in the FRTF Case Management System.

⁵ DHS, “FRTF - Help - FRTF Home.”

https://form.together.gov/frtf/?id=frtf_help&sys_id=fa4336441be27410f50d84cae54bcb52&lang=eng.

who are eligible. During this reporting period, the Task Force completed phases 1 and 2, by collecting available contact information for identified U.S. citizen children and their noncitizen parents or legal guardians. The Task Force coordinated with other components of the government to search for additional contact information in relevant federal databases. The Task Force identified 292 U.S. citizen children and their separated noncitizen parents who may be eligible to receive reunification support. The Task Force will begin phase 3 to conduct outreach to these families to inform them of their eligibility to receive reunification support from the Task Force.

Administering Behavioral Health Services for Reunified Families

Between June 10, 2022, and September 15, 2023, through a contract with the service provider, Seneca Family of Agencies, SAMHSA directly notified 994 *Ms. L.* class members (parents or legal guardians only) of the availability of behavioral case management and behavioral health services, and the program's 24/7 Hotline answered 731 calls. Additionally, SAMHSA has provided 1,318 class members (parents only) with behavioral health case management services and provided 763 class members (parents and children) with behavioral health assessments and treatment (individual and family therapy). Between October 2022 and January 2023, 43 of these class members (parents only) received parenting support and participated in psychoeducational groups. From February 2023 to September 2023, 166 class members (parents only) received parenting support and participated in psychoeducational groups. Additionally, since this service launched in October 2022, 10 class members (parents only) residing outside the United States have accepted pre-reunification counseling services for their children in the United States. Since the USG began delivering this service through the time of this report, 45 children have received at least one pre-reunification counseling session. Overall, the USG has provided 1,596 class members with behavioral health assessments and treatment.

Locating Families and Explaining Reunification Options

On May 1, 2023, IOM assumed from Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) operation of the Task Force's Help Desk, which provides information to callers about eligibility for reunification support and assists with the reunification process. Between July 17, 2023, and September 15, 2023, the IOM-operated Help Desk assisted 304 unique callers, amounting to 1,400 phone calls. Additionally, Seneca Family of Agencies continues to conduct outreach to families in the United States to inform them of their potential eligibility to receive reunification support services and JiM continues searches independently of a government contract. The Task Force is currently working to re-establish support for international outreach through additional or existing partnerships.⁶ Overall, the Help Desk has assisted 2,282 unique callers since its founding in 2021.

⁶ Task Force partner JiM continues searching for previously uncontacted individuals using private funding after its government-funded contract ended at the end of April 2023. JiM never stopped its on-the-ground searches outside the United States, even after the government contract expired. JiM remains committed to searching for class members in their home countries and informing them of the Task Force.

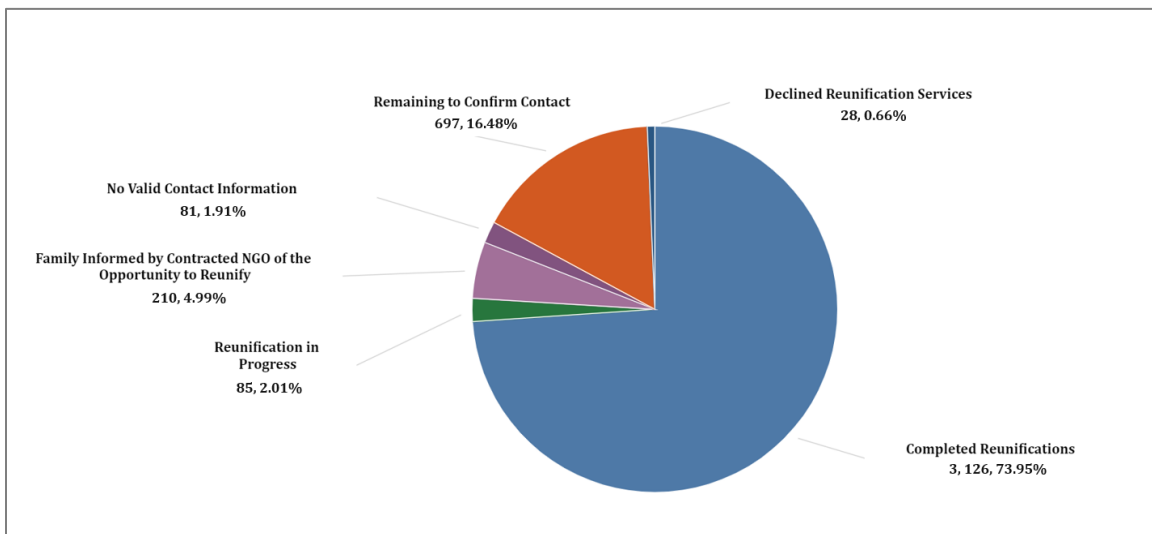
Settlement Negotiations

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 15, 2023, the Task Force has identified 4,227 children within the scope of E.O. 14011,⁷ and, by closely coordinating with NGOs and attorneys representing the separated families, has reunified 767 children with their parents. The Task Force identified 2,222 children as reunified prior to the establishment of the Task Force, and since then has identified an additional 137 children as reunified, bringing the total number of known completed reunifications to 3,126. As of September 15, 2023, there are a total of 85 children in the process of being reunified by the Task Force.⁸ Of the remaining children, 210 had been informed of their eligibility to be reunified, 81 were without valid contact information, 697 were pending confirmation of contact, and 28⁹ children declined reunification services. However, the Task Force believes, based on information exchanged through the *Ms. L.* joint status reports, that approximately 192 of these children may have already 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.

Figure 1: Status of Contact with Separated and Reunified Families by Child
(As of September 15, 2023)



Source: DHS and records related to the *Ms. L*¹⁰ and *Ms. J.P.* litigation.¹¹

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 previous Interim Progress Reports.

⁹ In the July Interim Progress Report, the number of children who declined reunification services were reported as 29. In this reporting period, the number dropped to 28 because a family that had previously declined reunification services reconsidered and is now going through the reunification process.

¹⁰ *Ms. L v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, No. 3:18-cv-00428 (S.D. Cal) (Feb. 26, 2018).

¹¹ *J.P. v. Sessions*, No. 2:18-cv-06081 (C.D. Cal) (Nov. 5, 2019); The 292 families with USC children identified as potentially eligible are included in the “Remaining to Confirm Contact” category.

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 September 15, 2023, approximately 5,336 individuals (separated children, parents, and additional family members) have filed parole requests with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (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 174 days.¹² Processing times vary due to the complex nature of the 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 71 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 12 families in the United States to IOM to inform them of their ability to request parole in place and to assist them with the filing process.

¹² 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	Jan. 29, 2023 Report ¹³	Mar. 31, 2023 Report ¹⁴	May 31, 2023 Report ¹⁵	Jul. 31, 2023 Report ¹⁶	Sep. 30, 2023 Report ¹⁷
In Scope for Task Force Support	3,923	3,925	3,927	3,932	4,227
Total Reunifications	2,896	2,969	3,033	3,092	3,126
<i>Reunifications Prior to Task Force Establishment</i>	2,297	2,317	2,328	2,347	2,359
<i>Task Force Reunifications</i>	599	652	705	745	767
Remaining Children Without Confirmed Reunification¹⁸	1,008	942	868	811	1,073
<i>In Process for Reunification</i>	152	164	136	102	85
<i>Remaining to Confirm Contact</i>	557	478	436	416	405
<i>USCIT Children Remaining to Confirm Contact</i>	-	-	-	-	292
<i>Family Informed by Contracted NGO or Legal Counsel of the Opportunity to Reunify</i>	166	186	208	207	210
<i>No Valid Contact Information</i>	133	94	88	86	81
Declined Reunification Services	19	20	26	29	28

Source: DHS and records related to the *Ms. L*¹⁹ and *Ms. J. P.*²⁰ litigation.

The Task Force data are 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

¹³ Data as of January 17, 2023.

¹⁴ Data as of March 16, 2023.

¹⁵ Data as of May 16, 2023.

¹⁶ Data as of July 16, 2023.

¹⁷ Data as of September 15, 2023

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ *Ms. L v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, No. 3:18-cv-00428 (S.D. Cal) (Feb. 26, 2018).

²⁰ *J.P. v. Sessions*, No. 2:18-cv-06081 (C.D. Cal) (Nov. 5, 2019).

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.

Since its establishment, the Task Force has tracked various metrics to capture the work behind identifying separated children, reaching, and informing families about reunification, and providing families with support services throughout the reunification process and once they have arrived in the United States. Figure 2 presents data indicative of efforts to highlight the complexity of the work to reunify separated families.

Figure 2: Additional Family Reunification Datasets

Task Force by The Numbers	Totals
Average hours required to contact and register a separated family²¹	20
Number of families registered on Together.gov to reunite and receive support services²²	2,706
Number of additional household members qualified for IOM support services²³	2,570
Average number of families reunified each month since September 2021²⁴	32

²¹ Data from KIND

²² Data from FRTF Case Management System as of September 15, 2023

²³ Data from FRTF Case Management System as of September 15, 2023

²⁴ Data from FRTF Case Management System as of September 15, 2023