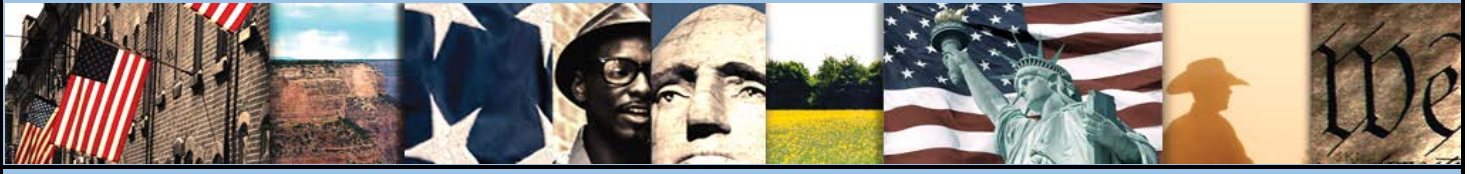




The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) supports the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as it secures the nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.



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. 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 Welcomes New Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Officer Patricia Nation



We're pleased to welcome Patricia Nation, who joined the Department as the Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties on August 3, 2020. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Nation was Senior Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). While at DOJ she served on the AbilityOne Commission, which strives to reduce the unacceptably high percentage of Americans with disabilities who do not have jobs. She also served as a delegate to the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Presidential Initiative.

Before her time with DOJ Ms. Nation, per appointment by the Governor of Arkansas, served as Deputy Counsel in the Office of Civil Rights and Employee Relations at the Arkansas Department of Human Services. She was also appointed to the Specialty Court Task Force of Arkansas to Reduce Jail Recidivism in the Prison Population.

Ms. Nation served as a civil rights trial and appellate advocate in the private sector for more than 20 years, where she changed the way Arkansas state prisons administered antipsychotic drugs to mentally challenged inmates. Her practice focused on employment discrimination; Americans with Disabilities Act, gender, and race-based discrimination; prison litigation; criminal defense; and juvenile proceedings. She also represented Arkansas workers with discrimination claims before the Arkansas Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, pursuant to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Ms. Nation is a graduate of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, where she earned both her bachelor's and law degrees.

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CRCL Launches Monthly Webinar Series on DHS Civil Rights Evaluation Tool

When an organization receives a grant or other type of financial assistance from DHS, those recipient organizations cannot discriminate in their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin (including language), disability, age, sex, or religion. CRCL is responsible for ensuring recipient compliance with federal civil rights laws, and in carrying out that responsibility collects information from recipients via the **DHS Civil Rights Evaluation Tool**.

In July, CRCL kicked off a monthly webinar series to provide technical assistance to recipients on meeting and understanding their requirements related to the tool. The first webinar gave recipients from across the country with grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and other DHS Offices, the opportunity to ask questions about the tool and grants submission process. *View the [webinar presentation slides](#).*

Future webinars for DHS recipients will focus on topics such as developing a nondiscrimination policy, a complaints process, a disability policy and reasonable accommodation process, and a language access plan. For more information, or to register for the monthly series, email: CivilRightsEvaluation@hq.dhs.gov. For more information on recipient civil rights requirements, visit: dhs.gov/resources-recipients-dhs-financial-assistance.

CRCL Hosts Virtual Meetings with Community Stakeholders in Houston and El Paso

Representatives from CRCL's Community Engagement Section recently conducted a series of virtual meetings and calls with diverse community stakeholders in Houston and El Paso, Texas. Over the last several months during the COVID-19 pandemic, CRCL has continued its public engagement with diverse communities in a virtual capacity. While in-person meetings have paused, we continue to connect with our stakeholders to hear about local community concerns. During the calls, stakeholders raised a number of issues involving DHS activities in the area, which included: concerns with immigrant children detained with their parents at certain detention centers in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and concerns with undocumented immigrants experiencing housing issues given the increase in evictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic

DHS Women's Equality Day and Suffrage Centennial Celebration

On August 26, DHS joined the nation in celebrating Women's Equality Day and the centennial of the women's suffrage movement and ratification of the 19th Amendment with a Department-wide virtual commemorative event, sponsored by CRCL.

The theme for the year and occasion, *Valiant Women of the Vote*, was highlighted in opening remarks and throughout the event. In noting its historical significance, speakers also acknowledged that the 19th Amendment did not afford all women the right to vote—particularly Black and indigenous women, despite their participation in suffrage activities. Their determination and contributions, in the face of systemic marginalization, remain a vital part of the history of the suffrage movement and the overall voting rights movement and victories in our country.



The DHS event featured a panel of DHS women senior leaders, moderated by Veronica Venture, CRCL deputy officer and director for EEO and diversity. The esteemed panelists were: Rebekah Salazar, executive director for privacy and diversity, U.S. Customs and Border Protection; Dr. Delisa Walker-Hall, talent development executive, U.S. Secret Service; and Kimberly Walton, executive assistant administrator for enterprise support, Transportation and Security Administration (TSA); who each shared their experiences as present-day trailblazers in the homeland security mission. DHS continues to make strides in hiring and promoting women, who represent nearly 34 percent of our workforce and a myriad of roles across critical mission areas. At TSA, DHS' largest Component, women compose 41 percent of the workforce. Among all Components, USCIS has the most women employees who make up 54 percent of its workforce, and the U.S. Secret Service has the greatest increase in representation since 2015 at more than 8 percent (25 percent total).

20th Anniversary of Executive Order 13166 to Improve Language Access

On August 11, 2020, CRCL marked the 20th anniversary of the signing of Executive Order 13166, “*Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency*,” with two events: a meeting to rollout updates to the DHS Component language access plans, and a roundtable event with frontline personnel focused on effective communication with indigenous language speakers who are served by DHS programs and operations.

The rollout featured remarks from Christine Stoneman, a principal deputy chief with DOJ’s Civil Rights Division. In a statement to federal agencies that day, Ms. Stoneman said: “Today, we celebrate and acknowledge the advancements that you and your agencies have made. Now, more than ever, we see that the success of government efforts depends on our ability to communicate effectively and accurately with the public. Whether it is a state or local government informing constituents about the criteria for a safe and successful phased re-opening, or a federal agency helping people adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic, we know mission success relies on the ability to reach all members of the public, regardless of their race or national origin, and in a language they understand.” Periodically evaluating and updating language access plans, policies, and procedures helps to ensure that the Department’s language access programs are effective. In 2019 and 2020, DHS Components updated their existing language access plans, which can be found at: <https://www.dhs.gov/language-access>.



Following the rollout meeting, our indigenous languages roundtable brought together DHS Components and frontline personnel that work on language access for individuals who interact with DHS personnel from across the country, including the U.S. southern border. A panel of representatives from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, ICE, and USCIS discussed current practices for interacting with indigenous individuals from Central American countries. The questions and dialogue focused on identification of languages at first encounter, availability and use of qualified interpreters, and observations from our 2019 roundtable where various indigenous experts spoke. CRCL plans to host a similar roundtable in the future with community members and DHS personnel.

CRCL Hosts National Webinar for the 2020 Specialized Analytic Seminar Series

Last month, CRCL partnered with the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis and the DHS Privacy Office to present a national webinar as part of the I&A Specialized Analytic Seminar Series. More than 140 fusion center personnel, law enforcement networks, Sheriff’s offices, and intelligence officers participated in an interactive session that featured experts from fusion centers in two states (Ohio and Florida) as well as DHS Privacy Office staff. The topics included “True Threats v Hyperbole” and “Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Issues in COVID and Unrest” as well as a question and answer session where the DHS Privacy Office fielded questions on FOIA, Appropriate Terminology and how much social media research can be done by analysts when they see a potential threat. The strong response to the announcement of the session, which was held a little over two weeks ago from this publication’s date, is an important indication of the interest in, and need for, timely training and outreach on privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties issues. In addition, DHS received more than 80 questions and proposed training topics from our state and local homeland security partners on future topics they wish to see addressed.

CRCL Presents to the International Association of Emergency Managers

This month CRCL’s Anti-discrimination Group, along with colleagues from FEMA’s Office of Equal Rights and the DOJ’s Civil Rights Division, presented to the Diversity Committee of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). The presentation focused on the legal requirements and resources available to assist emergency managers in ensuring nondiscrimination on the basis of race in emergency management.

While emergencies and disasters affect all people, the ability of communities of color to access critical recovery programs, activities, and services often has been hampered. In a recent open letter from the IAEM-USA Diversity Committee to emergency managers, the Committee stated their commitment to action. “As individuals we must address our own beliefs, feelings, assumptions and biases in a way that’s open and honest to ourselves. But as emergency managers, the time has come to move this from a conversation to action—we MUST take steps towards racial and social equity.”



During the presentation, CRCL staff emphasized the need for consistent and routine engagement with diverse racial, ethnic, and limited English proficient (LEP) populations in emergency planning, programs, and activities. The committee further explained, “We need to identify and build trust with key figures to lend their voices and partnerships in advance. Meaningful partnerships can assist when faced with responding to the destruction of our communities from the next virus, disaster, environmental catastrophe, social justice issue or death from the hands of another.” DOJ staff also emphasized that emergency managers should take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to the information and services they provide to LEP persons. Inclusive, whole community preparedness protects the lives of first responders and the people they serve. The committee further noted, “We have a job to do—to respond to our communities’ needs and, in some cases, to help restore and recover—but we cannot do this effectively if we don’t understand the communities or populations we serve.”

The presentation also discussed technical assistance resources on civil rights in emergencies, including the [joint agency Title VI guidance on nondiscrimination in emergency management](#) issued by DOJ, DHS, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Transportation. For more information on the joint guidance and other resources for emergency managers, visit the DHS Civil Rights in Emergencies and Disasters webpage at: dhs.gov/civil-rights-emergencies-and-disasters.

CISA Launches New Webpage and Self-Assessment Tool for Houses of Worship

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security and Agency (CISA) recently launched a [new dedicated webpage](#) with critical information to support faith based-organizations and houses of worship: cisa.gov/faith-based-organizations-houses-worship. The webpage serves as a one stop shop with guidance and resources to inform houses of worship on security-based decisions, and features a [baseline security self-assessment tool](#). CISA also maintains a nationwide presence through regional offices that consist of personnel, including Protective Security Advisors (PSAs), who can assist in enhancing security at houses of worship and related facilities through assessments, exercises, training, and other tangible capabilities.

Learn more about CISA’s resources for house of worship: <https://www.cisa.gov/faith-based-organizations-houses-worship>.

U Visa Certification Form: Best Practices for Law Enforcement

Beginning in December 2019, USCIS began to reject an increased number of U visa petitions where fields were left blank. On December 30, 2019, USCIS added to its website an [alert](#) for Form I-918, *Petition for U Nonimmigrant Status* and Form I-918, *Supplement A, Petition for Qualifying Family Member of U-1 Recipient*, stating:

We may reject your Form I-918 or your Form I-918 Supplement A if you leave a field blank, unless the field is optional. Optional fields include the safe mailing address as well as fields you should only complete if you answered yes to a previous question. You must provide a response to all other questions, even if the response is “none,” “unknown” or “n/a.” We will reject a Form I-918 or a Form I-918 Supplement A that has, for example, an empty field for middle name, for current immigration status, or for information pertaining to a spouse or child.

In July, USCIS announced it also would reject U visa petitions if there are blank fields on the Form I-918B, *Supplement B, U Nonimmigration Status Certification* (Form I-918B), which is completed by law enforcement. For example, USCIS may reject a Form I-918B that has an empty field for middle name, even if the victim does not have a middle name. In order to avoid rejection of the U visa petition, certifying law enforcement officers should ensure that the Form I-918B contains a response in every field, even if the response is “None,” “Unknown” or “N/A.” Since the Form I-918B is valid only for six months from the date of signature, U visa petitioners (or their legal representatives) may ask law enforcement agencies to complete the Form I-918B more than once so that a rejected petition may be refiled.

If you have any questions about this alert, please contact the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services at cisombudsman@hq.dhs.gov or 202-357-8100. For further information on the U visa program, including the Form I-918B instructions, please visit <https://www.uscis.gov/I-918>. DHS has published a U visa law enforcement certification resource guide for federal, state, local, tribal and territorial law enforcement officers, which can be found here: https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs_u_visa_certification_guide.pdf.

CRCL on the Road

*Following guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov) to exercise social distancing, our Community Engagement team will continue to carry out our mission using various virtual and telephonic tools during this national public health emergency. While our team maintains constant communication with federal, state, local, and civil society stakeholders across the country, we encourage anyone who needs to contact us to do so via email to: CommunityEngagement@hq.dhs.gov. Thank you for your flexibility and understanding 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.

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. For more information, including how to make a civil rights or civil liberties complaint about DHS activities, visit: www.dhs.gov/crcl.

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