



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 civil rights 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-civilrights-complaint>.

CRCL Officer Testifies at House Hearing on Empowering Women and Girls and Promoting International Security



On July 23, CRCL Officer Cameron Quinn testified before the U.S House Committee on Oversight and Reform, Subcommittee on National Security on “Empowering Women and Girls and Promoting International Security.” In her testimony, Ms. Quinn discussed the DHS Implementation Plan under the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). She was joined by fellow key witnesses Ambassador Kelley Currie, U.S. Department of State; Assistant Administrator Michelle Bekkering, U.S. Agency for International Development; and Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Stephanie Hammond, U.S. Department of Defense.

The hearing addressed the goals and objectives of the WPS strategy and how U.S. principles on women, peace, and security are applied in the implementation of U.S. foreign and defense policy.

As the Department’s designated lead on WPS, Ms. Quinn shared that DHS has a real opportunity to influence international efforts to improve women’s inclusion in foreign security partners’ activities. This includes current priorities the Department has identified that impact WPS, including:

- Sponsoring training for foreign partners at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers’ (FLETC) facilities;
- Providing trainers to support the State Department-operated International Law Enforcement Academies; and
- Initiating liaison officer exchanges and familiarization visits.

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Ms. Quinn noted that the Department’s first reporting period next year will focus on collecting data to show the extent to which women are currently included in DHS training opportunities, and how much DHS and partner agency funding supports this training. This baseline information will be used to identify areas for future improvements.

In addition to DHS training and exchange programs, the Department will continue to identify activities that fit with metrics of the WPS Strategy, such as global efforts to end female genital mutilation, and combatting human trafficking, which affects vulnerable women and children worldwide.

Watch the [full video of the hearing](#).

DHS Celebrates 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

July 26, 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a landmark federal civil rights law. Over the past 30 years, the ADA has improved the lives of millions of individuals with disabilities by guaranteeing equal access to public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications.

This year’s theme, “Access, Equity and Opportunity = Inclusion,” emphasizes how the ADA has leveled the playing field, expanded opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and unlocked doors to full inclusion. Thanks to the ADA barriers that hindered Americans with disabilities have been eliminated creating a more inclusive society for all.

At DHS, we are committed to supporting and promoting access, inclusion, and equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in all our mission areas. Whether a person is traveling through airport security, crossing into our country at a port of entry, being sworn in as a naturalized citizen, or applying for assistance following a disaster, DHS takes this obligation seriously.

CRCL leads our efforts to ensure equal access in DHS and DHS-funded programs and activities. CRCL provides guidance and technical assistance to all its Components, as well as to state and local governments, nonprofits, and other DHS grant recipients. CRCL and DHS Components also engage with members of the disability community through listening sessions and other events to gain valuable feedback that helps us to expand and improve our programs and activities. Just this month, CRCL led a meeting where several DHS Components delivered presentations to stakeholders on their efforts to strengthen disability access in DHS public-facing programs, including developing Component-specific [Disability Access Plans](#).

Over the past decade we have more than doubled the number of employees with disabilities at DHS from 11,564 in FY 2010 to 23,417 at the beginning of FY 2020. While the overall DHS workforce has grown in the same time period, the representation of individuals with disabilities at DHS has increased at a faster rate from six percent in FY 2010 to more than 11 percent at the beginning of FY 2020.

Today, we are a better nation thanks to the provisions set forth in the ADA. As we celebrate its 30th anniversary we reaffirm our commitment to a diverse and inclusive DHS workforce and environment for individuals with disabilities and all whom we serve.



DHS Statement on Safety and Enforcement During the 2020 Wildfire Season

On July 2, the Department of Homeland Security issued the following statement on safety and enforcement during the 2020 wildfire season:

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) are concerned about the potential impact of the 2020 wildfire season on western and southwestern portions of the United States, including the current wildfires in Arizona, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada. Our highest priority remains the preservation of life and safety. In consideration of these circumstances, there will be no immigration enforcement initiatives associated with evacuations or sheltering related to the wildfires, except in the event of a serious public safety threat.

Read the statement in various languages: <https://www.dhs.gov/publication/dhs-statement-safety-and-enforcement-during-2020-wildfire-season>

DHS Commemorates LGBT Pride Month

This month, CRCL and DHS Pride, the employee association representing the Department's proudly-serving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) personnel, hosted a Department-wide event commemorating LGBT Pride Month. Over 1,000 attendees joined the virtual event, "Solidarity: Engine of Equality," which featured a panel of speakers from every DHS Component. CRCL Deputy Officer for EEO and Diversity Veronica Venture welcomed attendees and underscored the importance of promoting and fostering inclusivity and diversity in the workplace through observances such as Pride Month. Ms. Venture then introduced keynote speaker, Deputy Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) Melissa Smislova. During her remarks, Ms. Smislova discussed I&A's PRISM (Pride, Resources, Inclusivity, Support, Mentorship) charter, which launched the first I&A employee association focused on empowering the workforce and fostering inclusivity and diversity through representation and advocacy of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, asexual/agender, intersex, and allies (LGBTQQAII+) community at I&A. In her closing, Ms. Smislova challenged every DHS employee to become an ally for fairness and equality across the Department.

Program Moderator, Mr. Brandon Montgomery from the Office of Public Affairs, introduced the distinguished panelists:

- *Angela Morales*, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- *Alana Paige-Bell*, Transportation Security Administration
- *Evelyn Andresen*, U.S. Secret Service
- *Kayla Etheridge*, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- *Stacie Schultz*, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- *Lesley Kal*, Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers
- *Dr. Kimberly Young-McLear*, U.S. Coast Guard (on detail to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency)
- *Jessika Reliford*, Federal Emergency Management Agency

During the panel discussion speakers shared their experiences as members of the LGBT community serving in many different capacities all supporting the DHS mission. Speakers discussed the changing landscape of inclusivity in the federal government, law enforcement, and the military. While agencies have come a long way, especially with the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects gay, lesbian, and transgender employees from discrimination based on sex, there is still more to do. Panelists encouraged attendees to get involved with organizations such as DHS Pride and I&A's PRISM, which provide information and resources to the workforce and promote inclusivity and equality for LGBT employees at DHS.

CRCL Presents at AILA 2020 Virtual Conference

CRCL Deputy Officer for Programs and Compliance Peter Mina recently presented at the virtual American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) Annual Conference on



Immigration Law. Mr. Mina spoke on a panel during the “DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Open Forum,” where he provided an overview of CRCL and discussed its work on immigration-related policy at DHS. He explained CRCL’s proactive policy work, its work reviewing and investigating complaints filed by the public alleging civil rights and civil liberties abuses in DHS policies and activities, and its community engagement activities. He further discussed CRCL’s work on a number of issues such as DHS asylum policies, and ICE and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services policies in light of COVID-19. The session was attended by over 300 individuals.

CRCL Leads Virtual Seminar for 2020 Specialized Analytic Seminar Series

This month, CRCL staff partnered with DHS I&A and the Privacy Office (PRIV) to present a national webinar on “Navigating Privacy, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties Issues Related to Pandemics and Civil Unrest” and “True Threats vs. Hyperbole” as part of the I&A Specialized Analytic Seminar Series. Over 140 state and local homeland security partners joined the interactive session featuring speakers from fusion centers in two states (Ohio and Florida), as well as CRCL and PRIV. A question and answer session followed, and participants raised questions about the Freedom of Information Act, appropriate terminology, and uses of social media in threat analysis. In addition, DHS received over 80 questions and proposed topics for future trainings on privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.

HHS OCR Issues Guidance on Civil Rights Protections During COVID-19

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently issued guidance to ensure that recipients of federal financial assistance understand that they must comply with applicable federal civil rights laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, and national origin in HHS-funded programs during COVID-19. This Bulletin focuses on recipients' compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI).

To help ensure Title VI compliance during the COVID-19 public health emergency, recipients of federal financial assistance, including state and local agencies, hospitals, and other health care providers, should:

- Adopt policies to prevent and address harassment or other unlawful discrimination based on race, color, or national origin.
- Ensure – when site selection is determined by a recipient of federal financial assistance from HHS – that community-based testing sites and alternate care sites are accessible to everyone including racial and ethnic minority populations.
- Confirm that existing policies and procedures with respect to COVID-19-related services (including testing) do not exclude or otherwise deny persons based on race, color, or national origin.
- Ensure that individuals from racial and ethnic minority groups are not subjected to excessive wait times, rejected for hospital admissions, or denied access to intensive care units compared to similarly situated non-minority individuals.
- Provide – if part of the program or services offered by the recipient – ambulance service, non-emergency medical transportation, and home health services to all neighborhoods within the recipient's service area, without regard to race, color, or national origin.
- Appoint or select individuals to participate as members of a planning or advisory body which is an integral part of the recipient's program, without exclusions based on race, color, or national origin.
- Assign staff, including physicians, nurses, and volunteer caregivers, without regard to race, color, or national origin. Recipients should not honor a patient's request for a same-race physician, nurse, or volunteer caregiver.

- Assign beds and rooms, without regard to race, color, or national origin.
- Make available to patients, beneficiaries, and customers information on how the recipient does not discriminate based on race, color, or national origin in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

OCR is responsible for enforcing Title VI's prohibitions against race, color, and national origin discrimination. As part of the federal response to this public health emergency, OCR will continue to work in close coordination with HHS partners and recipients to remove discriminatory barriers which impede equal access to quality health care, recognizing the high priority of COVID-19 testing and treatment.

Roger Severino, OCR Director, stated, "HHS is committed to helping populations hardest hit by COVID-19, including African-American, Native American, and Hispanic communities." Severino concluded, "This guidance reminds providers that unlawful racial discrimination in healthcare will not be tolerated, especially during a pandemic."

"Minorities have long experienced disparities related to the medical and social determinants of health – all of the things that contribute to your health and wellbeing. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified those disparities, but it has also given us the opportunity to acknowledge their existence and impact, and deepen our resolve to address them," said Vice Admiral Jerome M. Adams, Surgeon General, MD, MPH. "This timely guidance reinforces that goal and I look forward to working across HHS and with our states and communities to ensure it is implemented."

CISA Leads 2020 Election Security Efforts

The American electoral process has been targeted by foreign adversaries in past elections. As such, securing election infrastructure and ensuring an election free from foreign interference are national security priorities. Threats to election systems are constantly evolving, so defending these systems requires constant vigilance, innovation, and adaptation. CISA defines foreign interference as malign actions taken by foreign governments to spread disinformation designed to manipulate the public, sow discord and ill will, discredit the electoral process, disrupt markets, and undermine the interests of the American people.

#Protect2020 outreach enables CISA to build on the trust, expertise, and relationships developed through its election security work to broaden state and local cybersecurity risk management efforts. CISA is working with state and local election officials, who are responsible for the operation and administration of more than 8,000 election jurisdictions across the country, to identify and plan for potential vulnerabilities to election infrastructure ahead of and during the 2020 election season. In addition to engaging election officials, CISA's **#PROTECT2020** efforts include engaging political campaigns, political parties, and political committees at the national level.

To learn more, read the [#Protect2020 Strategic Plan](#).

CRCL on the Road, July*

July 13-17 – El Paso, Texas

CRCL convened a series of teleconference calls with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders and organizations.

July 13-17 – Houston, Texas

CRCL convened a series of teleconference calls with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders and organizations.

July 20-24 – Los Angeles, California

CRCL convened a series of teleconference calls with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders and organizations.

July 20-31 – Miami, Florida

CRCL convened a series of teleconference calls with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders and organizations.

July 27-31 – Atlanta, Georgia

CRCL convened a series of teleconference calls with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders and organizations.

*Following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 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 and other government partners 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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