



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.



Notice on Scam Phone Calls

We have been notified by several individuals about scam phone calls that appear to come from the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Hotline, which is 202-401-1474. The callers claim to be from an office within DHS and make false statements to gather personal information. In some instances these callers have been hostile and threaten to call the police if the individuals contacted do not comply. These calls are not legitimate. If you receive a call from this number, do not answer it, and do not provide any information if you do. You can report any incidents to your local law enforcement office. Please know that calls into our hotline remain unaffected and that we continue to receive and process information.

International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

On February 6, 2019, the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties join other U.S. government agencies and the international community in calling for an end to the practice of female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C).

FGM/C is the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for no medical reason. The United Nations reports that more than 200 million women and girls around the world have undergone some form of FGM/C. On Zero Tolerance Day, we are raising awareness about this practice, which is happening here in the United States, in small towns and big cities alike. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates approximately 500,000 girls in the United States are at risk of having FGM/C performed on them.

FGM/C is a human rights violation and a crime under federal law and in 28 states. When committed against children, it is a form of child abuse. People who commit this crime can face prison time and significant immigration consequences. We support ongoing efforts nationwide that uphold laws criminalizing FGM/C.

We continue to work with interagency partners to implement the [Department of Homeland Security’s Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting \(FGM/C\) Outreach Strategy \(PDF, 263 KB\)](#) and provide resources highlighting FGM/C-related assistance to women and girls who have undergone or are at risk of FGM/C. We will continue to identify opportunities to #EndFGM in the United States and worldwide.

Read more information about the practice of FGM/C in the [USCIS FGM/C brochure \(PDF, 714 KB\)](#), the [U.S. Government Fact Sheet \(PDF, 573 KB\)](#), and on the [United Nations’ Zero Tolerance Day](#) website.

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DHS Establishes National Vetting Center

Established pursuant to National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM)-9, *Optimizing the Use of Federal Government Information in the Support of the National Vetting Enterprise*, the [National Vetting Center \(NVC\)](#) is the next step in the U.S. government's maturation of protecting the homeland post 9/11. The NVC is a collaborative, interagency effort to provide a clearer picture of threats to national security, border security, homeland security, or public safety posed by individuals seeking to transit our borders or exploit our immigration system. The NVC strengthens, simplifies, and streamlines the complex way that intelligence, law enforcement, and other information is used to inform operational decisions and allows departments and agencies to contribute their unique information, all while ensuring compliance with applicable laws and policies and maintaining robust privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties protections.

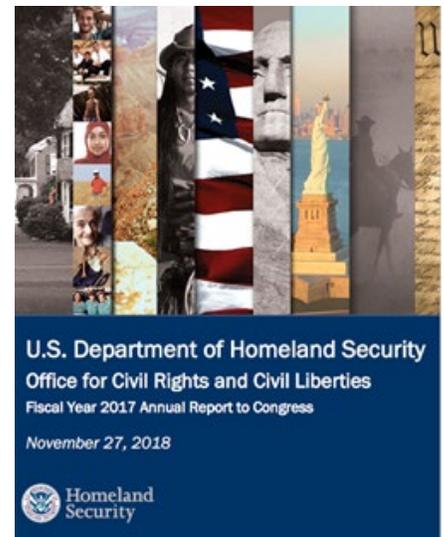
Read more about [NVC](#) activities and operations, including the [NVC Privacy Impact Assessment \(PIA\)](#), which assesses the risks to privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties presented by the NVC and the vetting programs that will operate using the NVC, the [National Vetting Governance Board Charter](#), and the [Privacy, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties Working Group Charter](#).

CRCL Publishes FY 2017 Annual Report to Congress

CRCL is pleased to announce the release of its [Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2017 Annual Report to Congress](#). In accordance with 6 U.S.C. § 345 and 42 U.S.C. § 2000ee-1, the report highlights CRCL's activities and accomplishments, including:

- Implementing CRCL's Enhanced Southern Border Community Engagement Plan;
- Participating in the DHS Detention Standards working group;
- Hosting the DHS Language Access Symposium; and
- Developing a DHS Disability Employment fact sheet.

These efforts continue to reflect the Department's dedication to securing the country while protecting our freedoms, including core civil rights and civil liberties values of liberty, fairness, and equality under the law. Read the full report here: <https://www.dhs.gov/publication/crcl-annual-reports>.



CRCL Participates in UN Meeting on Forced Displacement

According to the United Nations forced displacement has reached unprecedented levels in the Western Hemisphere over the past year. Governments in the region estimate that hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children have fled Venezuela, Nicaragua, and the North of Central America (Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala).

In response to this issue, in December the [UN High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#) hosted its second annual closed door meeting with senior officials from across the U.S. government and UNHCR regional experts to discuss how to collectively reinforce current efforts, and address displacement challenges in the region. CRCL Officer Cameron Quinn participated in this meeting along with several other DHS officials.

The discussion focused on four objectives: 1) identify strategies currently working in the region and recent achievements in Mexico and Costa Rica; 2) assess new opportunities for the U.S. and UNHCR to partner to advance a robust regional response; 3) evaluate how the U.S. has been affected by forced displacement in the region; and 4) take stock of recent efforts to address domestic challenges and how UNHCR can provide support. The meeting provided an opportunity for CRCL to connect with new federal partners, and CRCL will stay engaged with UNHCR on this issue moving forward.

Notice on Community Engagement Roundtables

CRCL was impacted by the recent lapse in federal government funding and resulting partial shutdown of operations. As a result, the CRCL quarterly community engagement process is behind schedule, and a majority of the 18 quarterly roundtables are either delayed or cancelled. Our team diligently working to reschedule and coordinate these roundtables over the coming months. In the meantime, if we can be of assistance, please contact us via email at: communityengagement@hq.dhs.gov.

CRCL Visits Southern Border

In December, several representatives from CRCL's Community Engagement and Immigration Sections and Compliance Branch traveled to San Diego and San Ysidro, California and Tucson and Nogales, Arizona to conduct a number of meetings and site visits with local community stakeholders. In each location, CRCL representatives met with leaders from several non-governmental organizations and faith-based groups to hear on-the-ground concerns involving immigration issues on the border and its impacts in local communities. Over the course of the trip, stakeholders raised a number of issues, including: challenges for asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, queue management in Mexico, and medical treatment at ports of entry, among others.



CRCL representatives tour the Nogales Port of Entry

The visit occurred as part of CRCL's southern border community engagement plan. Additional visits are planned in the coming months to follow-up with stakeholders in California and Arizona, as well as in other southern border cities.

CRCL Reviews Disability Accommodations at San Ysidro Port of Entry

In December, CRCL returned to the San Ysidro, California port of entry to follow-up on an initial onsite investigation conducted in August 2018. The investigation concerned two complaints of disability discrimination filed by pedestrian travelers under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. Following its investigation in August CRCL was able to resolve the complaints informally with the travelers. Since the complaints were filed, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) issued a muster to officers at San Ysidro, which provides guidance on interacting with individuals with invisible or "hidden" disabilities that are not immediately apparent. In addition, construction has been completed at one of the pedestrian entry points of the facility, and CBP has installed permanent shaded bench seating and a drinking fountain for travelers' use prior to their inspection—which are amenities designed particularly to assist pedestrian travelers with disabilities.



San Ysidro Port of Entry

CRCL Leads Workshop at Seminar on Domestic Terrorism

In December, CRCL participated in the "2018 Specialized Analytic Series Seminar on Domestic Terrorism," which brought together over 100 state and local fusion center analysts and law enforcement personnel from around the country. This event, sponsored by the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, focused on the threat of domestic terrorism through a series of case studies.

During the seminar, CRCL presented a workshop on "*Reporting Considerations on Movements vs. Groups: Focus on the NSI Sovereign Citizen Adherent Guidance*," which engendered a robust discussion among the participants on the DHS guidance, which analyzes when suspicious activities meet the national standard for sharing through the Nationwide SAR (*suspicious activities reporting*) Initiative. The discussion highlighted an exploration of the balance between homeland security interests and protection of individuals' rights to free speech and association, which can be particularly challenging in situations involving officer safety concerns. CRCL will continue to collaborate with fusion center partners to further develop the CRCL fusion center training program.

CRCL Holds Roundtable Meetings in Chicago

In December, representatives from CRCL traveled to Chicago, Illinois to lead roundtable meetings with local community stakeholders. Attendees included representatives from several non-governmental organizations and immigration advocacy groups. During the first meeting leadership from the Syrian Community Network (SCN) provided a presentation on the mission and work of SCN: “To empower Syrian refugees in achieving a seamless transition and relocation to the U.S. through connecting people to the right services and support networks.” Later, a CRCL representative provided an overview of the National Vetting Center (NVC) and its role in the federal screening and vetting process. In addition, CRCL encouraged interested stakeholders to review the recently posted National Vetting Center Privacy Impact Assessment. Participants raised questions about the future vetting of asylum and refugee programs by the NVC. In addition community members asked general questions regarding civil rights and civil liberties protections. Also during the meeting, participants raised questions regarding DHS efforts to address domestic violent extremism and the need to continue to mitigate threats, including those directed toward religious and ethnic communities. At the second roundtable, which focused on immigration and related policies, participants raised a number of issues involving the scheduling of immigration court appearances, requests for rescheduling adjustment of status interviews, and the USCIS Information Services Modernization Program, among others.



Class Action Member Identification Notice

On November 30, 2018, in *Zhang v. USCIS*, No. 15-cv-995, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia certified a class that includes any individual with a Form I-526, Immigrant Petition by Alien Entrepreneur, that was or will be denied on the sole basis of investing loan proceeds that were not secured by the individual’s own assets. The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia vacated these denials and ordered USCIS to reconsider the petitions.

If you believe you have received an I-526 denial solely on this ground and would like to identify yourself as a potential class member, please email USCIS.ImmigrantInvestorProgram@uscis.dhs.gov, using the subject line “Zhang Class,” and provide the following:

1. Name
2. Alien Number (if any)
3. Date of birth
4. I-526 receipt number (if available)
5. Date of I-526 denial
6. Copy of I-526 denial (if available)

Note: Identification as a potential class member is subject to USCIS verification and does not grant any immediate rights, as immigrant petitions must meet all eligibility requirements and the court’s decision is presently under consideration for appeal.

CRCL on the Road, Winter 2018

December 17 – Tucson, Arizona

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

February 11-13 – Tucson/Phoenix/Nogales, Arizona

CRCL conducted a series of meetings with community leaders and advocacy groups along the Southern border.

December 21 – San Diego, California

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

February 13 – Seattle, Washington

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

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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