



Fact Sheet: Zero-Tolerance Prosecution and Family Reunification

Release Date: June 23, 2018

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Health and Human Services (HHS) have a process established to ensure that family members know the location of their children and have regular communication after separation to ensure that those adults who are subject to removal are reunited with their children for the purposes of removal. The United States government knows the location of all children in its custody and is working to reunite them with their families.

As part of the apprehension, detention and prosecution process, illegal aliens, adults and children, are initially detained by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) before the children are sent to HHS' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and parents to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody. Each entity plays a role in reunification. This process is well coordinated.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection

- CBP has reunited 522 Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) in their custody who were separated from adults as part of the Zero Tolerance initiative. The reunions of an additional 16 UAC who were scheduled to be reunited on June 22, 2018 were delayed due to weather affecting travel and we expect they will all be reunited with their parents within the next 24 hours. There will be a small number of children who were separated for reasons other than zero tolerance that will remain separated: generally only if the familial relationship cannot be confirmed, we believe the adult is a threat to the safety of the child, or the adult is a criminal alien.
- Because of the speed in which adults completed their criminal proceedings, some

children were still present at a United States Border Patrol (USBP) station at the time their parent(s) returned from court proceedings. In these cases, the USBP reunited the family and transferred them, together, to ICE custody as a family unit.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

- ICE has dedicated the [Port Isabel Service Processing Center](https://www.ice.gov/detention-facility/port-isabel-service-processing-center) (<https://www.ice.gov/detention-facility/port-isabel-service-processing-center>) as the primary family reunification and removal center for adults in their custody.
- A parent who is ordered removed from the U.S. may request that his or her minor child accompany them. It should be noted that in the past many parents have elected to be removed without their children.
- ICE has posted information in all of its facilities advising detained parents who are trying to locate, and/or communicate with, a child in the custody of HHS to call the Detention Reporting and Information Line for assistance, which is staffed by live operators Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 8 PM.
- The information provided by these parents to the call operators will be forwarded to HHS for action. ICE and HHS will coordinate a review of their custodial data to identify where each child is located, verify the parent/child relationship, and set up regular communication and removal coordination, if necessary.
- Each ICE Field Office has Juvenile Coordinators who manage these cases throughout the immigration court proceedings.
- Further, ICE maintains a publicly available online detainee locator which can be used to locate adults detained by ICE. This site can be accessed at: <https://locator.ice.gov/odls/#/index> (<https://locator.ice.gov/odls/#/index>)

ICE has completed the following steps toward reunification:

- Implemented an identification mechanism to ensure on-going tracking of linked family members throughout the detention and removal process;
- Designated detention locations for separated parents and will enhance current processes to ensure communication with children in HHS custody;
- Worked closely with foreign consulates to ensure that travel documents are issued for both the parent and child at time of removal; and
- Coordinated with HHS for the reuniting of the child prior to the parents' departure from the United States.

U.S. Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement

- Minors come into HHS custody with information provided by DHS regarding how they illegally entered the country and whether or not they were with a parent or adult and, to the extent possible, the parent(s) or guardian(s) information and location. There is a central database which HHS and DHS can access and update when a parent(s) or minor(s) location information changes.
- As of June 20th HHS has 2,053 separated minors being cared for in HHS funded facilities, and is working with relevant agency partners to foster communications and work towards reuniting every minor and every parent or guardian via well-established reunification processes. Currently only 17% of minors in HHS funded facilities were placed there as a result of Zero Tolerance enforcement, and the remaining 83% percent arrived to the United States without a parent or guardian.
- Parent(s) or guardian(s) attempting to determine if their child is in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in HHS Administration for Children and Families should contact the ORR National Call Center (www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/orr-national-call-center (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/orr-national-call-center>)) at 1-800-203-7001, or via email information@ORRNCC.com (<mailto:information@ORRNCC.com>) . Information will be collected and sent to HHS funded facility where minor is located. The ORR National Call Center has numerous resources available for children, parent(s), guardian(s) and sponsors.
- Within 24 hours of arriving at an HHS funded facility minors are given the opportunity to communicate with a vetted parent, guardian or relative. While in HHS funded facilities' care, every effort is made to ensure minors are able to communicate (either telephonic or video depending on the circumstances) with their parent or guardian

(at least twice per week). However, reasonable safety precautions are in place to ensure that an adult wishing to communicate with a minor is in fact that minor's parent or guardian.

- Minors in HHS funded facilities are permitted to call both family members and/or sponsors living in the United States and abroad. Attorneys representing minors have unlimited telephone access and the minor may speak to other appropriate stakeholders, such as their consulate, the case coordinator, or child advocate. Additional information on telephone calls, visitation, and mail policies are available in the [policy guide](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied). (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied>)
- Under HHS' [publicly available](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied) (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied>) policy guide for Unaccompanied Alien Children, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) releases minors to sponsors in the following order of preference: parent; legal guardian; an adult relative (brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparent or first cousin); an adult individual or entity designated by the parent or legal guardian (through a signed declaration or other document that ORR determines is sufficient to establish the signatory's parental/guardian relationship); a licensed program willing to accept legal custody; or an adult individual or entity seeking custody when it appears that there is no other likely alternative to long term ORR care and custody.

Topics: [Border Security \(/topics/border-security\)](/topics/border-security), [Immigration Enforcement \(/topics/immigration-enforcement\)](/topics/immigration-enforcement)

Keywords: [Border Security \(/keywords/border-security\)](/keywords/border-security), [Family detention \(/keywords/family-detention\)](/keywords/family-detention), [immigration enforcement \(/keywords/immigration-enforcement\)](/keywords/immigration-enforcement), [UAC \(/keywords/uac\)](/keywords/uac), [Unaccompanied Alien Children \(/keywords/unaccompanied-alien-children\)](/keywords/unaccompanied-alien-children)

Last Published Date: June 24, 2018