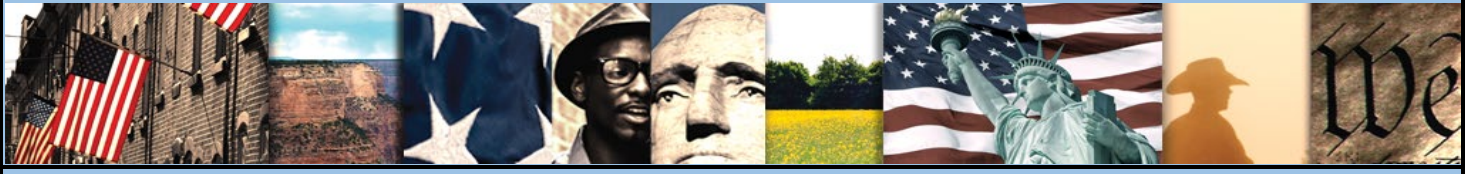




The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) supports the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as it secures the nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.



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>.

Biden Administration Begins to Reunite Families Separated Under Prior Administration

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas and the Family Reunification Task Force announced on May 3 that the Biden Administration will begin to reunite families who were unjustly separated at the United States-Mexico border under the prior administration.

“The Family Reunification Task Force has been working day and night, across the federal government and with counsel for the families and our foreign partners, to address the prior administration’s cruel separation of children from their parents,” said Secretary Mayorkas, who serves as the Chair of the Task Force. “Today is just the beginning. We are reuniting the first group of families, many more will follow, and we recognize the importance of providing these families with the stability and resources they need to heal.”

In February, President Biden signed an Executive Order establishing the Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families (Task Force) to identify parents and children separated by the prior administration. The order directed the Task Force to implement comprehensive strategies that will bring families back together and ensure the families are provided support.

The Task Force has been working tirelessly to establish a complete database of separated families, correct inaccuracies in the files they were provided, and build the processes to find every family and give them the opportunity to reunite and heal. The Task Force is in the process of reviewing additional cases for reunification in the coming months. The Task Force’s initial report is due on June 2, 2021 and will provide a full update on the Task Force’s progress.

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DHS leads the President's Interagency [Task Force](#) on the Reunification of Families and is joined by the Department of State, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Justice. Michelle Brané serves as the Task Force's Executive Director. CRCL Officer Katherine Culliton-González also serves on the Task Force. While the Task Force is leveraging existing authorities, the reunification effort is novel work that has required significant interagency coordination:

- DHS has established a process for accepting parole requests and stands ready to process and receive families as they request to enter the U.S.
- The Department of Health and Human Services is working on facilitating services to support harmed families.
- The Department of State has developed a streamlined system for processing in-country requests for travel documents to enter the U.S.
- The Department of Justice supports the Task Force in related settlement negotiation efforts.

While coordinating all these efforts, the Task Force is also exploring options for long term legal stability for reunified families and identifying and recommending policies to avoid repeating these unnecessary and cruel separations in the future. The Task Force has made critical progress in a short period of time, resulting in reunifications started in early May and continued in the weeks that followed.

Message from our CRCL Officer: Honoring George Floyd

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Today we mark the somber anniversary of George Floyd's murder. We grieve his loss and honor his memory. We also honor the lives of many Black Americans who have been killed during encounters with law enforcement and extend our condolences to their families and loved ones.

This solemn day is another reminder of the need for our collective accountability. We must hold ourselves and each other to the highest standards of our professions, and require that our partners at all levels do the same. We owe this to the public we serve and protect.

Today we also lament the racial inequality and injustice that has divided our nation since its founding and resulted in negative attitudes and violent behavior towards Black Americans and other communities of color. The pain and outrage felt last summer sparked a renewed call for racial and social justice across the country.

One year later, the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) under the Biden-Harris Administration has reinvigorated its efforts to make lasting and impactful change for our communities and our country, including through our continued engagement with communities of color and other stakeholders. I am honored to serve in this Administration and to implement President Biden's Executive Order, [Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#). This Executive Order outlines an ambitious whole-of-government equity agenda that matches the scale of the opportunities and challenges that we face. CRCL also reviews the Department of Homeland Security's policies and programs to help ensure that civil and human rights are integrated into every aspect of the Department's work.

The Department's mission is to safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values. As we work to protect communities across the country, CRCL strives to also protect everyone's fundamental civil rights while seeking equality, equity, and equal protection of the law. On this somber anniversary, we recommit to partnering with you in this continued, and most critically important, pursuit.

In solidarity,
Kathy

CRCL Officer Speaks with Jewish Community

CRCL Officer Katherine Culliton-González gave remarks at a [White House meeting with Jewish community leaders](#) to discuss recent anti-Semitic attacks, where she shared CRCL's recent and upcoming engagement efforts to inform communities of available federal resources to protect themselves and their houses of worship.

DHS Action on the Southwest Border Yields Results

DHS and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) were left to rebuild the capacity to shelter and process children, after having inherited a system that had been entirely dismantled by the prior administration. The infographics and photos demonstrate the tremendous progress that DHS and its partners have made to safely and efficiently transfer unaccompanied children out of U.S. Customs and Border Protection custody and into the care of HHS.

View the [full-size infographics](#) and [photos of current conditions](#).



DHS Recognizes Ramadan in Virtual Event with Muslim Community Leaders

DHS Blog, [May 12, 2021](#)

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has a long-standing history of engagement with diverse ethnic and faith-based communities, including Muslim communities. In recognition of Ramadan, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas joined a virtual roundtable discussion with leaders within the Muslim community, including national and local advocacy and social service organizations. The event was hosted by the [DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties](#) (CRCL) and featured remarks by both Secretary Mayorkas and CRCL Officer Katherine Culliton-González, along with DHS Senior Counselor Kamal Essaheb and CRCL Senior Advisor Brenda Abdelall. This virtual engagement was held in place of the annual Iftar reception hosted by the Department, a tradition which began in 2011.

Secretary Mayorkas acknowledged the leaders participating in the event and their organizations for the critical work they do in communities, particularly to ensure that new U.S. citizens have access to critical services. He noted his concern with the rise in domestic violent extremism and hate incidents that target the Muslim community. Secretary Mayorkas also recognized that many Muslims serve at DHS and across the federal government and thanked them for their service.

DHS has a long-standing history of engagement with diverse ethnic and faith-based communities, including Muslim communities. And on his first day in office, President Biden issued the “Proclamation on Ending Discriminatory Bans on Entry to the United States” to reverse the cruel “Muslim Ban” implemented by the prior Administration and other harmful policies that impacted the Muslim community. CRCL leads the Department’s community engagement efforts by hosting regular meetings in 18 cities across the country that include community leaders, federal, state, and local government officials, and all levels of law enforcement. These roundtables facilitate important dialogue with diverse American communities who feel their civil rights may be affected by DHS activities and programs.

While Ramadan ends today, DHS’s engagement with the Muslim communities will continue. In carrying out the DHS mission to protect our homeland, DHS will continue to protect the diverse communities that make up the fabric of America.

DHS Announces Steps to Protect Border Communities from Wall Construction

The Department has announced initial steps to protect border communities from physical dangers resulting from the previous administration's approach to border wall construction.

On his first day in office, President Biden issued a Proclamation terminating the redirection of funds diverted for border wall construction, pausing all wall construction to the extent permitted by law, and requiring Federal agencies to develop a plan for funds concerning the Southern Border wall. As DHS continues to review the extensive problems created by the prior administration's border wall construction and develop its plans, the department will take the following initial steps consistent with the President's Proclamation to protect border communities:

- **Repair the Rio Grande Valley's Flood Barrier System:** Construction under the prior administration blew large holes into the Rio Grande Valley's flood barrier system to make way for a border wall. The flood barrier system had long provided low-lying regions of Hidalgo County, Texas, protection from catastrophic flooding, and these breaches have threatened local communities. DHS will start work to quickly repair the flood barrier system to protect border communities. This work will not involve expanding the border barrier.
- **Remediate Dangerous Soil Erosion in San Diego:** Improper compaction of soil and construction materials along a wall segment constructed by the prior administration is causing dangerous erosion along a 14-mile stretch in San Diego, California. DHS will begin necessary backfill projects to ensure the safety of nearby border communities. This work will not involve expanding the border barrier.

DHS will soon complete a plan that identifies additional measures to address the damage resulting from the prior Administration's border wall construction.

CRCL Participates in National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program

This month, a CRCL representative participated in a panel discussion on "Federal Title VI and Environmental Justice Priorities" at the [2021 National Environmental Justice Conference & Training Program](#). The virtual event brought together over 700 participants from government, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and academia among others to hear from federal civil rights offices engaged in Title VI enforcement and compliance work related to federally assisted programs affecting human health and the environment. CRCL was joined by leaders from the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and panelists shared federal priorities and agency updates related to environmental justice activities. CRCL's representative discussed several environmental justice considerations for CRCL and DHS including: Ensuring that recipients of DHS financial assistance comply with federal nondiscrimination laws and regulations in carrying programs that affect human health and the environment;

- Supporting FEMA's COVID-19 equity work through participation in the Civil Rights Advisory Group, which provides resources to states, territories, and tribes to ensure equitable vaccine access; and
- Carrying out the goals of the newly released [DHS Environmental Justice Strategy for Fiscal Years 2021-2025](#), which reflects the Department's renewed commitment to upholding the principles of environmental justice while at the same time establishing new goals and objectives to support resilient communities over the next five years.

Since 2012, CRCL has co-chaired the DHS Environmental Justice Working Group (DHS EJ WG) along with the DHS Office of the Chief Readiness Support Officer (OCRSO). The working group meets regularly to identify and discuss programs and policies from an environmental justice perspective. The DHS EJ WG led the development of the updated DHS Environmental Justice Strategy in which Components provided input on strategic goals and objectives to ensure alignment and consistency with Department priorities. Over the next five years, members of the public may review the Environmental Justice Strategy and annual reports and provide input on progress toward achieving our environmental justice goals. For more information, visit: [DHS Environmental Justice Strategy | Homeland Security](#)

DHS Issues a NTAS Bulletin

On May 15, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas issued a [National Terrorism Advisory System \(NTAS\) Bulletin](#) after consultation with the Intelligence Community and law enforcement partners. The NTAS Bulletin advises that the United States is facing threats that have evolved significantly and become increasingly complex and volatile. Specifically, the Bulletin details the threats posed by domestic terrorists, individuals, and groups engaged in grievance-based violence, and those inspired or influenced by foreign terrorists and other malign foreign influences. *Read more about the [NTAS Bulletin](#), which is [available in multiple languages](#).*

CRCL Leads Interactive Training on Disability Access

This month, CRCL continued its webinar series focused on providing technical assistance to recipients of federal financial assistance on meeting their requirements with federal civil rights laws and regulations. Every year, DHS distributes grant funds to assist states, local areas, tribal and territorial governments, nonprofit agencies, and the private sector in fulfilling the homeland security mission. When an organization receives a grant or other type of financial assistance from DHS, they cannot discriminate in their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin (including language), disability, age, sex, or religion.

Beginning in 2020, CRCL has led a series of webinars to provide technical assistance to recipients to help them understand and meet their civil rights requirements. This month's webinar, "Disability Access in Recipient Programs and Activities," focused on recipient obligations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The three-hour interactive webinar provided a comprehensive review of best practices for developing policies and procedures to ensure nondiscrimination and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities to participate in and benefit from the recipient's programs and services. The presentation explained the obligations under Section 504 and provided examples on how recipients can meet their obligations through program accessibility, physical access, effective communications, and reasonable modifications. For more information and to access CRCL's technical assistance webinars, visit [Civil Rights Resources for Recipients of DHS Financial Assistance | Homeland Security](#)



DHS Celebrates Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month

This month CRCL, in partnership with the DHS Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Network, hosted the Department's 2021 AAPI Heritage Month Observance. More than 450 employees across DHS participated in this virtual event. Keynote Speaker Susan Tashiro, Assistant Administrator, Domestic Aviation Operations, Transportation Security Administration, spoke to the event's theme, Advancing Leaders Through Purpose — Driven Service. U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth delivered a pre-recorded message highlighting the rich contributions of the AAPI community, while expressing the need to continue to combat the disturbing increase in racism and hate crimes against AAPIs. CRCL Officer Katherine Culliton-González and Strategic Recruitment, Diversity, and Inclusion Director Sharon Wong also gave remarks highlighting the contributions that AAPIs have made to the Department.

CRCL on the Road

*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 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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