



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 Secretary Mayorkas Announces Family Reunification Task Force Principles

On March 1, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas announced the [principles of the Family Reunification Task Force](#) and the appointment of the Task Force’s Executive Director, Michelle Brané.

“We are dedicating our resources throughout the Department of Homeland Security and the federal government, and bringing our full weight to bear, to reunite children who were cruelly separated from their parents,” said Secretary Mayorkas, who serves as the Chair of the Task Force. “It is our moral imperative to not only reunite the families, but to provide them with the relief, resources, and services they need to heal.”

Secretary Mayorkas announced that Michelle Brané will serve as the Task Force’s Executive Director. Most recently, she served as the senior director of the Migrant Rights and Justice program at the Women’s Refugee Commission. Prior to that, Michelle also held positions at Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, with human rights organizations in India, and as a human rights officer in Bosnia with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

“Michelle has dedicated her entire career to the protection and well-being of the vulnerable, and to ensuring that the dignity and human rights of every individual are respected,” continued Mayorkas. “I am proud that she has agreed to commit her talent to this most urgent work.”

Secretary Mayorkas outlined the Task Force’s principles to heal the families, to the fullest extent the law permits. CRCL Officer Katherine Culliton-González serves on the Reunification Task Force.

[Read the full statement for additional details on the Task Force’s reunification principles.](#)

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DHS CRCL Statement in Support of Asian American Pacific Islander Communities

Consistent with President Biden's statement in "[Memorandum Condemning and Combating Racism, Xenophobia, and Intolerance Against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States](#)," the Department of Homeland Security's Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties condemns the recent hateful attacks against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States. CRCL remains dedicated to advancing inclusion and belonging, as well as protection of civil rights and civil liberties, for people of all races, national origins, and ethnicities.

CRCL's mission is to promote respect for and inclusion of civil rights and civil liberties into all Department policies and activities and to preserve the homeland by protecting the diverse communities that make up the United States of America. Concerned individuals should feel free to contact CRCL at communityengagement@hq.dhs.gov. This statement is [available in multiple languages](#); including Chinese (both Simplified and Traditional), Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Punjabi, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

CRCL Hosts Incident Community Coordination Team Call with AAPI Communities

This month, CRCL activated the Incident Community Coordination Team (ICCT) national conference call to discuss the recent shootings in Atlanta, GA and the rise of hate crimes against the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community nationally. The call was held in response to concerns and requests for information received from several of our stakeholders and partners in AAPI communities across the country.

This ICCT call was the largest held by CRCL thus far, with nearly 800 participants dialed in at one time. The ICCT national call is the only tool of its kind available for rapid two-way communication between the federal government and impacted communities in the aftermath of a homeland security incident or emergency. The ICCT call provides timely information to communities and allows them to provide feedback to senior government officials.

Speakers on the call included a host of senior government officials from the White House, DHS, and the Department of Justice; along with representatives from AAPI advocacy organizations. CRCL Officer Katherine Culliton-González gave opening remarks followed by David Pekoske, senior official performing the duties of the deputy secretary. All speakers offered their condolences to the victims and their families, strongly condemned the shootings, and stood in solidarity with the AAPI community.

Speakers of AAPI background (from government and community) spoke about their personal experiences, including fear for themselves, friends, and family of being harassed and subjected to threats and violence. Community leaders shared how women are a particularly vulnerable subset of the AAPI community for many reasons, including racialized sexism. Elders of the AAPI community have also been disproportionately targeted. Community leaders noted distrust of law enforcement within the AAPI community, and that immigration-related issues have contributed to the distrust of government overall. Suggestions were also given for law enforcement and educational reforms to address the issues raised.

Government officials spoke on current efforts to prevent and combat domestic violent extremism, available grants to help local governments and nonprofits protect against and respond to terrorist attacks, and recent research on mass attacks across the country and ways that communities can report hate crimes.

CRCL will continue its engagement with the AAPI community on these issues, which will include future sessions with Secretary Mayorkas and other senior DHS officials.

Department of Justice's Efforts to Combat Hate Crimes Against Asian American and Pacific Island Communities

On March 5, the Department of Justice held a [listening session with more than a dozen Asian American and Pacific Islander \(AAPI\) community groups](#) as part of its continuing efforts to deter hate crimes and other unlawful acts against the AAPI community. The listening session followed a meeting with U.S. Attorneys in Districts across the country with significant AAPI populations, including: the Northern District of California (San Francisco, San Jose, Oakland), the Central District of California (Los Angeles), the Southern District of Texas (Houston), the Northern District of Illinois (Chicago), and the Southern District of New York (Manhattan).

“No one in America should fear violence because of who they are, what they look like or what part of the world they or their families came from,” said Acting Deputy Attorney General John Carlin, the host of the meeting. “The Department of Justice and our component agencies are committed to bringing all of our tools to bear in supporting AAPI communities as we address the horrific rise in hate and bias incidents occurring across the country.”

Read the [full statement and readout](#).

Message from Secretary Mayorkas on DHS' 18th Anniversary

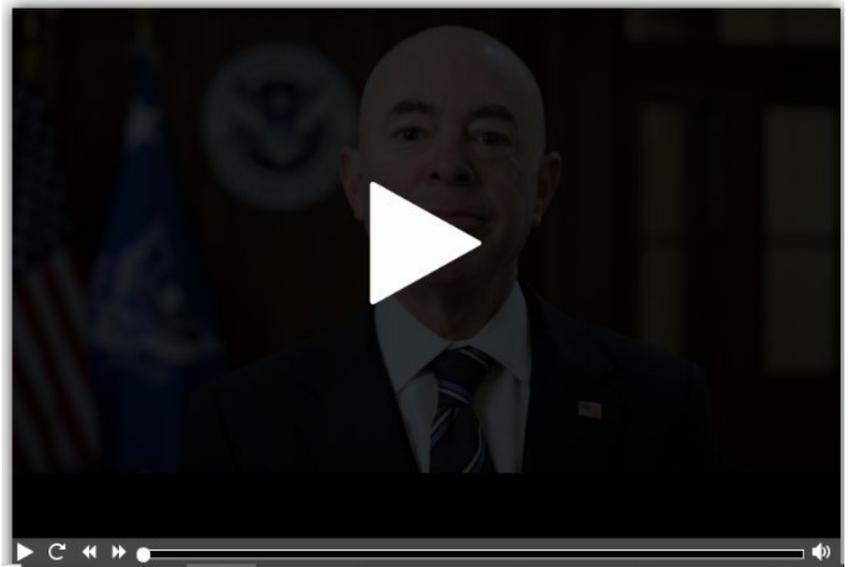
On March 1, in recognition of the Department's 18th anniversary, Secretary Mayorkas shared the [following message and video](#) with the DHS workforce:

Today our Department marks its 18th anniversary. It was 18 years ago to the day that the Department of Homeland Security took its charge to protect the American people. The need and urgency were clear after the horrendous attacks of September 11, 2001.

Together we confront the threats our Nation faces every day. Whether by air, land, sea, or in cyberspace, we are there to protect the American people and our way of life against threats both foreign and domestic. Together we have prevented terrorist attacks, strengthened our cybersecurity and border security, enabled lawful immigration, provided humanitarian relief, supported

communities in the wake of natural disasters, and helped secure the integrity of our election systems. We have facilitated lawful trade and travel, protected critical infrastructure, guarded against biological threats, and developed innovative technologies to advance our mission. We have interdicted drugs, illicit cash, and counterfeit goods, and captured human traffickers and others who endanger our communities. We have played a pivotal role in the battle against an unprecedented global pandemic.

We have not done this alone. We could not succeed without the valuable contributions of our state, local, tribal, territorial, and international partners. We are grateful for, and proud of, our partnerships. Most importantly, we could not achieve our mission without your extraordinary talent and dedication. As we reflect on our beginnings, let us take a moment to renew our vow to each other and to our fellow Americans. It is an honor and a privilege to serve alongside you. Thank you for everything you do.



Secretary Mayorkas Directs FEMA to Support Response for Unaccompanied Children

DHS Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas has directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to support a government-wide effort over the next 90 days to safely receive, shelter, and transfer unaccompanied children who make the dangerous journey to the U.S. southwest border.

The federal government is responding to the arrival of record numbers of individuals, including unaccompanied children, at the southwest border. Since April 2020, the number of encounters at the border has been rising due to ongoing violence, natural disasters, food insecurity, and poverty in the Northern Triangle countries of Central America. The federal government is working around the clock to move unaccompanied children from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) care and to place them with a family member or sponsor until their immigration case is adjudicated. The risks posed by the spread of COVID-19 have made this mission all the more difficult.

“I am grateful for the exceptional talent and responsiveness of the FEMA team,” said Secretary Mayorkas. “I am incredibly proud of the agents of the Border Patrol, who have been working around the clock in difficult circumstances to take care of children temporarily in our care. Yet, as I have said many times, a Border Patrol facility is no place for a child. We are working in partnership with HHS to address the needs of unaccompanied children, which is made only more difficult given the protocols and restrictions required to protect the public health and the health of the children themselves. Our goal is to ensure that unaccompanied children are transferred to HHS as quickly as possible, consistent with legal requirements and in the best interest of the children.” *Read more on [FEMA's support response for unaccompanied children](#).*

Statement by Secretary Mayorkas Regarding the Situation at the Southwest Border

March 16, 2021—There is understandably a great deal of attention currently focused on the southwest border. I want to share the facts, the work that we in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and across the government are doing, and our plan of action. Our personnel remain steadfast in devotion of their talent and efforts in the service of our nation.

The situation at the southwest border is difficult. We are working around the clock to manage it and we will continue to do so. That is our job. We are making progress and we are executing on our plan. It will take time and we will not waver in our commitment to succeed.

We will also not waver in our values and our principles as a Nation. Our goal is a safe, legal, and orderly immigration system that is based on our bedrock priorities: to keep our borders secure, address the plight of children as the law requires, and enable families to be together. As noted by the President in his Executive Order, “securing our borders does not require us to ignore the humanity of those who seek to cross them.” We are both a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. That is one of our proudest traditions.

The Facts

We are on pace to encounter more individuals on the southwest border than we have in the last 20 years. We are expelling most single adults and families. We are not expelling unaccompanied children. We are securing our border, executing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) public health authority to safeguard the American public and the migrants themselves, and protecting the children. We have more work to do.

This is not new. We have experienced migration surges before – in 2019, 2014, and before then as well. Since April 2020, the number of encounters at the southwest border has been steadily increasing. Border Patrol Agents are working around the clock to process the flow at the border and I have great respect for their tireless efforts. To understand the situation, it is important to identify who is arriving at our southwest border and how we are following the law to manage different types of border encounters. *Read Secretary Mayorkas' [full statement on the situation at the Southwest border](#).*

DHS Announces Funding Opportunity for \$1.87 Billion in Preparedness Grants

DHS Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas announced the release of the [funding notice for eight different types of preparedness grants worth nearly \\$1.87 billion](#). Together, these programs provide more than \$1.8 billion in critical funding to assist our state and local partners in building and sustaining capabilities to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism and other disasters. Secretary Mayorkas issued the following statement about this year's grant awards:

“In the almost 20 years since September 11, 2001, the terrorism threat landscape has changed considerably. Today the most significant terrorist threat facing the nation comes from lone offenders and small groups of individuals who commit acts of violence motivated by domestic extremist ideological beliefs. While we continue to lawfully protect against threats posed by foreign terrorist organizations, we also must ensure adequate focus and funding is provided to combat domestic terrorism, some of which is motivated by false narratives and extremist rhetoric spread through social media and other online platforms.

The Fiscal Year 2021 grant guidance will continue to focus on the nation's highest risk areas, including urban areas that face the most significant threats and national priorities. This year, the Urban Area Security Initiative will enhance regional preparedness and capabilities by funding 31 high-threat, high-density urban areas. This represents Congressional intent to limit these funds to those urban areas that represent up to 85% of the nationwide risk.

As with previous years, new capabilities that are built using homeland security grant funding must be deployable if needed to support regional and national efforts. All capabilities being built or sustained must have a clear linkage to the core capabilities articulated in the [National Preparedness Goal](#). **Read the Secretary's [full statement](#) for more information on preparedness grant program allocations for Fiscal Year 2021.**

\$20M in DHS Funding Available for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grants

DHS is making \$20 million available through the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program to help communities across our country develop innovative capabilities to combat terrorism and targeted violence.

“Domestic violent extremism and targeted violence are two of the gravest threats facing our homeland today,” said Secretary Mayorkas. “Over the past few years, the United States has experienced an increasing number of targeted attacks by disaffected individuals motivated by a combination of extremist ideologies and personal grievances. This investment in local communities will help our partners develop sustainable capabilities to address an evolving threat environment, including by preventing attacks and online radicalization.”

Secretary Mayorkas established the following four priorities for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 TVTP Grant Program: (1) preventing domestic violent extremism; (2) enhancing local threat assessment and management capabilities; (3) implementing innovative solutions for preventing targeted violence and terrorism; and (4) challenging online violence mobilization narratives for the first time through this program.

The TVTP Grant Program application period will close on May 25, 2021. State, local, tribal, territorial governments; non-profit organizations; and institutions of higher education are eligible to apply for funds to establish capabilities or fill gaps in their prevention capabilities. Applying for this grant is a multi-step process and it is recommended that applicants begin that process early to allow sufficient time to complete interim steps. Applicants should consult the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) for more specific information.

DHS will host informational webinars to discuss the main elements of the NOFO and will take general questions from interested applicants. Please use the following links to join the webinars:

- Tuesday, March 30, 2:00 PM EST: [click here to join](#)
- Thursday, April 1, 2:00 PM EST: [click here to join](#)

For questions about the TVTP Grant Program, please contact the Office for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention at: TerrorismPrevention@hq.dhs.gov.

HBCU Emergency Management Workforce Consortium Launches Webinar Series

This month, the HBCU Emergency Management Workforce Consortium launched its regionally focused webinar series on strategies for response planning and implementation among historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Established in 2018, the Consortium aims to address emergency response training needs at HBCUs, particularly those in geographic areas that are vulnerable to natural disasters.



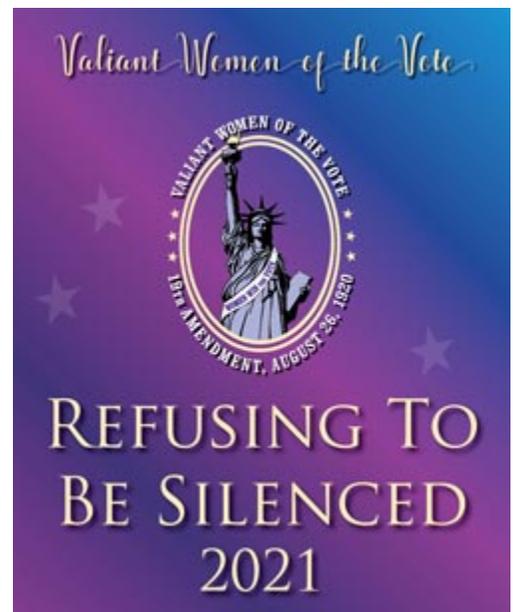
CRCL staff moderated the inaugural webinar, which included an analysis of HBCU preparedness data and a case study presentation on emergency response planning and implantation efforts at Benedict College. Karinda Washington, acting assistant secretary for the DHS Office of Partnership and Engagement, gave the keynote address on strategies that HBCUs can employ to prepare for and respond to disasters, which was followed by a Q&A period and closing remarks from CRCL.

Through this series and other initiatives, the Consortium will continue to make strides in proposed actions to meet the lack of emergency and preparedness training afforded to HBCU students and communities; and develop a pipeline to increase the number of HBCU graduates in emergency management careers. For additional information on the Consortium, visit: <https://www.huttc.org/hbcu-emc>.

CRCL Celebrates Women’s History Month

Throughout the month of March, DHS celebrated National Women’s History Month. From webinars, virtual panels, and online articles about women leading across DHS, employees shared tributes to women from our past, present, and future. This year’s national theme is “Valiant Women of the Vote: Refusing to be Silenced.” Due to the pandemic, the 2021 theme is meant to capture the spirit of these challenging times and continue the celebration from 2020 commemorating the 100th anniversary of women winning the right to vote.

CRCL was pleased to partner with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to host a Department-wide virtual program featuring keynote speaker, Veronica Venture, CRCL’s Deputy Officer and Director of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity. Ms. Venture shared her personal story on becoming a naturalized citizen as a young girl, and how that foundation shaped her public service career. She also shared her experiences on regularly being the “first and only”—the first professional in her family, and the first and only woman and person of color in positions throughout her career. In closing, CRCL Officer Katherine Culliton- González spoke on the courage and sacrifices of the suffragettes and women of color who were denied the right to vote and charged participants to advocate for fair and equitable spaces in our country.



CRCL staff participated in National Women’s History Month events with partners outside of government as well. CRCL Senior Advisor Brenda Abdelall was the keynote speaker at the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee’s National Women’s History Month event where she discussed her new role at DHS in the Biden Administration, her career journey, and her identity as an Arab American woman in government. Ms. Abdelall also joined a panel discussion called “Empowered Women of Arab America” hosted by the Arab America Foundation and discussed challenges and successes she has encountered as an Arab American woman and leader in government.

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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