



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



CRCL and FEMA Conducts Listening Session in Houston

This month, CRCL and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) leadership traveled to Houston, Texas to conduct a listening session focused on improving disaster planning and preparedness for individuals with disabilities. The listening session included representatives from state and local government, as well as nongovernmental organizations and disability advocates. DHS leadership in attendance included: Cameron Quinn, Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties; Linda Mastandrea, Director, FEMA Office of Disability Integration and Coordination; Regis Phelan, Acting Director, FEMA Office of Equal Rights; and Kevin Hannes, FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer. Also in attendance were Maria Town, Director of the Houston Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities; and Marvin Odum, Houston Mayor’s Chief Recovery Officer.

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During the session, participants discussed their concerns, as well as effective practices, related to the impacts of Hurricane Harvey on individuals with disabilities in Houston and the surrounding areas. Meeting attendees discussed a number of issues including: communication access for people with disabilities, access to FEMA resources and programs, concerns with evacuation and sheltering, and disaster recovery, among other areas. CRCL Officer Quinn thanked participants for taking the time to share their experiences, which will improve preparedness, response, and recovery for people with disabilities before the next hurricane season strikes.

CRCL and FEMA will continue to lead similar listening sessions in other locations across the country to work with government and nongovernmental (NGO) partners on improving disaster planning for the whole community, including individuals with disabilities.

ICE Issues Directive on Immigration Enforcement Actions at Courthouses

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has issued a [Directive](#) that sets forth policy regarding civil immigration enforcement actions inside federal, state, and local courthouses. Read the [full directive](#) and [FAQs on sensitive locations](#), including courthouses.

International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

On February 6, 2018, CRCL joined U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and other U.S. government agencies and the global community in calling for an end to the practice of Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting (FGM/C).

The most recent United Nations data says that over 200 million women and girls have undergone some form of FGM/C. On Zero Tolerance Day, the international community breaks the silence around the harm FGM/C causes to women and girls worldwide. We stand together to recognize that FGM/C is a serious human rights abuse that can have a significant impact on women and girls' health.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has estimated that over 500,000 women and girls in the United States are at risk of or have been subjected to FGM/C. Some women and girls are cut on U.S. soil. Others are sent abroad to undergo the procedure. The United States treats FGM/C as a serious crime and, when done to children, a form of child abuse. People who commit this crime can face prison time and significant immigration consequences.

USCIS is committed to expanding its existing efforts to raise awareness of FGM/C in the United States and implementing the [Department of Homeland Security Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting \(FGM/C\) Outreach Strategy](#). USCIS is collaborating with local communities and others in the DHS to gather and share information and best practices to end FGM/C. USCIS is also providing resources highlighting FGM/C-related assistance to women and girls who have undergone or are at risk of FGM/C. USCIS will continue to identify opportunities to **#EndFGM** in the United States and worldwide.

More information about the practice of FGM/C can be found in the [USCIS FGM/C brochure](#), the [U.S. Government Fact Sheet](#), and on the [United Nations' Zero Tolerance Day](#) website.

CRCL Officer Leads Roundtable Meetings in Chicago and Seattle

This month, CRCL Officer Cameron Quinn traveled to Chicago, Illinois and Seattle, Washington joining community engagement roundtable meetings with diverse community stakeholders, advocacy groups, local law enforcement, and other government partners.



In Chicago, CRCL staff joined local DHS representatives from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), FEMA, ICE, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), USCIS, and federal partners from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) in the roundtable discussion, where a number of issues were raised by community stakeholders including ICE enforcement operations and law enforcement uniform standards, as well as immigration enforcement in sensitive locations, including courthouses.

In Seattle, CRCL staff led a community roundtable meeting with an overflow crowd of local immigration advocates and community stakeholders, as well as DHS partners from CBP, ICE, TSA, and USCIS. Representatives from DOJ, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission also attended the meeting, along with local congressional office staff members. Topics discussed included: border patrol agents serving as interpreters, border patrol enforcement on public transportation, concerns regarding alleged profiling practices, access to legal counsel, and reinforcing cultural and religious competency training with CBP personnel.



DHS Announcement on Temporary Protected Status for Syria

On January 31, 2018, DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen announced her determination that an extension of the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for Syria was warranted pursuant to the Immigration and Nationality Act. After carefully reviewing conditions in Syria with interagency partners, Secretary Nielsen determined that the ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary conditions that support Syria’s designation for TPS continue to exist. Therefore, pursuant to the statute she has extended Syria’s TPS designation for 18 months.

“After carefully considering conditions on the ground, I have determined that it is necessary to extend the Temporary Protected Status designation for Syria,” said Secretary Nielsen. “It is clear that the conditions upon which Syria’s designation was based continue to exist, therefore an extension is warranted under the statute. We will continue to determine each country’s TPS status on a country-by-country basis.”

Syrians with TPS status will be eligible to re-register for an extension of their status for 18 months, through September 30, 2019. Prior to the conclusion of the 18 month extension, the Secretary will review conditions in Syria to determine whether its TPS designation should be extended again or terminated.

The decision to extend TPS for Syria was made after a review of the conditions upon which the country’s designation is based, which was ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary and temporary conditions, as well as an assessment of whether those conditions continue to exist as required by statute. Following careful consideration of available information, including recommendations received as part of an inter-agency consultation process, the Secretary determined that the conditions supporting Syria’s designation for TPS continue to exist. Thus, under the applicable statute, the current TPS designation must be extended.

There are approximately 7,000 Syrian TPS beneficiaries. This 18-month extension of Syria’s designation for TPS permits current Syrian TPS beneficiaries to re-register for TPS and remain in the United States with work authorization through September 30, 2019. To be eligible for TPS under Syria’s current designation, along with meeting the other eligibility requirements, individuals must have continuously resided in the United States since August 1, 2016, and have been continuously physically present in the United States since October 1, 2016. Anyone who has been here since the time of the previous designation may be eligible to seek other forms of immigration relief.

Further details about this extension for TPS, including information about the re-registration process and employment authorization documents, will appear in a Federal Register notice.

Message from Secretary Nielsen on the Establishment of the National Vetting Center

Recently, President Trump signed a National Security Presidential Memorandum to establish the National Vetting Center (NVC). The NVC, which will be housed within DHS, will coordinate, oversee, and manage how federal departments and agencies use intelligence and other information to support the vetting of

individuals who may present a threat to national security, homeland security, border security, and public safety. It will leverage the capabilities of the entire U.S. intelligence community to identify nefarious actors and keep them out of our country.

To protect individuals' privacy rights, the NVC will include a standing Privacy, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties Working Group composed of senior privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties professionals from departments and agencies to ensure the proper protection and appropriate use of individuals' personal information.

Read the Secretary's [full statement](#) and [fact sheet](#) on the National Vetting Center.

CRCL on the Road, February

February 1 – Houston, Texas

CRCL and FEMA partners conducted a listening session with Houston-area disability stakeholders on lessons learned following Hurricane Harvey.

February 1 – Orlando, Florida

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

February 5-7 – El Paso, Texas

CRCL representatives conducted meetings with diverse community partners.

February 6-8 – Denver, Colorado

CRCL representatives conducted civil rights and civil liberties trainings for local law enforcement partners.

February 8 – Chicago, Illinois

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

February 14-15 – Seattle, Washington

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

For more information on engagement events, email: communityengagement@hq.dhs.gov.

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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