

UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN PROGRAM FACT SHEET

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is committed to doing its part to ensure a safe, legal, and orderly immigration system that is based on the bedrock principle that unaccompanied migrant children are safe, healthy, and unified with family members or other suitable sponsors as quickly and safely as possible. To that end, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which is responsible for the temporary care of unaccompanied children (UC) referred by immigration officials, is working to reduce the time unaccompanied children spend in Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) custody and ensuring children referred to its care are placed in child-appropriate settings, including using licensed facilities wherever possible, providing education, mental, and health services.

Working to process children safely and effectively

ORR's focus is on limiting the time children spend in CBP custody by swiftly processing UCs so they can be united with family members or suitable sponsors as quickly and safely as possible. While ORR has worked to build up its licensed bed capacity and currently funds almost 13,500 licensed beds, additional emergency capacity is necessary to ensure unaccompanied migrant children are safe and healthy.

ORR is working to limit the time children spend in CBP and HHS custody by:

- Safely increasing capacity in its permanent/licensed network by working with current providers to expand their programs, adding new facilities, and implementing enhanced CDC COVID-19 mitigation strategies;
- Instituting process adjustments that reduce the time it takes to unify UC with sponsors, such as co-locating ORR staff at CBP facilities and utilizing virtual interviews to jump-start the placement process; increasing COVID-19 testing; and streamlining the COVID-19 quarantine process.
- Establishing new Influx Care Facilities
- Establishing safe and orderly Emergency Intake Sites to decrease over-crowding in CBP facilities and facilitate the reunification of children with family members or suitable sponsors.
- Instituting process adjustments that reduce the time it takes to unify UC with sponsors, such as co-locating ORR staff at CBP facilities and utilizing virtual interviews to jump-start the placement process; assisting with travel expenses to unify children with sponsors, increasing COVID-19 testing; and streamlining the COVID-19 quarantine process.

Simultaneously, ORR is aggressively moving toward the long-term goal of acquiring enough state-licensed beds in our care provider network to reduce the need for Influx Care Facilities or Emergency Intake Sites long-term.

Expanding bed capacity

To address reductions in bed capacity and meet anticipated needs, HHS is taking steps to make available a significant increase in bed capacity, including:

- On February 22, HHS opened the Carrizo Springs Influx Care Facility (ICF), adding an additional 952 beds to our care-provider network.
- With the assistance of FEMA, on March 14, HHS opened an Emergency Intake Site for Unaccompanied Children in Midland, Texas.

- Also, with the assistance of FEMA, on March 17, HHS opened an additional Emergency Intake Site for Unaccompanied Children in Dallas, TX, with the potential capacity of 2000 beds.
- These sites provide urgently needed capacity to reduce the number of children remaining in CBP custody for more than 72 hours and provide a safer and less crowded environment where children are cared for, processed as quickly as possible and either released to a sponsor or transferred to an appropriate ORR shelter for longer-term care. These Emergency Intake Sites are intended for use as a temporary measure.

Terminating the 2018 HHS-DHS Interagency Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

HHS is not an immigration enforcement agency. On March 12, 2021, HHS and DHS also announced the termination of a 2018 MOA information sharing agreement under which ORR shared some potential sponsor information with DHS.

DHS and HHS signed a new Memorandum of Agreement that promotes the safe and timely transfer of children. This new agreement does not change safeguards designed to ensure unaccompanied children are unified with properly vetted sponsors who can safely care for them while they await immigration proceedings.