

Frequently Asked Questions: Family Reunification Process

What is the Family Reunification Task Force (“Task Force”) and what does it do?

In February of 2021, U.S. President Biden created an interagency Family Reunification Task Force that includes the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security and State to locate and reunify families that were forcibly separated.

Certain families who were separated between January 20, 2017, and January 20, 2021, can now apply to reunify and return to the United States through the process the Task Force set up, by registering their cases on the Together.gov or Juntos.gov website. KIND is assisting separated individuals who are outside the United States with this process through our Help Desk. ([Click here for more information about the Help Desk and how you can call.](#)) If you have questions about the reunification and return process or whether you or someone you know may qualify, please call KIND’s Help Desk for assistance: supportkind.org.

Who is eligible to apply for reunification?

Parents or legal guardians who meet **ALL** the following criteria can apply to return to the United States under this process. The parent or legal guardian must have been:

1. forcibly separated from a child under 18 years old at the time of the separation
2. by the U.S. government
3. at the U.S.-Mexico border
4. between January 20, 2017, and January 20, 2021.

A separated child who meets the above criteria can also apply to return, even if they are now older than 18. If the family has already reunified in the country of origin, both the parent or legal guardian and the child remain eligible to apply to travel to the United States.

If you meet **ALL** the above criteria and you are currently outside the United States, you can apply to return to the United States regardless of your and your child’s current locations or your child’s current age. KIND is providing assistance to separated individuals who are outside the United States through [KIND’s Help Desk](#). Separated parents and children who are currently in the United States are now eligible to apply for permission to remain in the United States for three years under a temporary status called Parole in Place. If you and your child are both currently in the United States, please visit the [Together.gov](https://together.gov) or [Juntos.gov](https://juntos.gov) websites for more information about Parole in Place.

In addition to separated parents, separated legal guardians who meet the above four criteria can also seek reunification and return to the United States through the Task Force process. Legal guardians must have a guardianship document or order issued by a judge showing they are the child’s legal guardian to be eligible. A caregiver who does not have a legal guardianship status or document is not eligible to apply. If you have questions about your legal guardian status, please call [KIND’s Help Desk](#).

Who is not eligible to apply?

Certain individuals are not eligible for benefits under the Task Force reunification process. You may not qualify if you were:

- **Separated from a child outside of the qualifying dates.** Only those who were separated between the dates of January 20, 2017, and January 20, 2021, may qualify.
- **Not the parent or legal guardian of the child from whom you were separated.** Individuals other than a parent or legal guardian who were separated from a child at the border are not eligible. In other words: aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, or adult siblings who were separated from a child at the border are not eligible to apply for reunification and return to the United States.
- **Separated from a child over 18.** If your child was over the age of 18 at the time you were separated, you also do not qualify.
- **Not separated at the U.S.-Mexico border.** Families that were separated in the interior of the United States, for example in an immigration enforcement action such as a raid, are not eligible to apply.
- **Not separated by the U.S. government.** Families that separated on their own when entering the United States, families separated in Mexico or during travel to the United States, and families separated by the Mexican government or other individuals are not eligible. Only families separated by the U.S. government are eligible.

What if the Task Force says I am not eligible for reunification and travel to the U.S., but I am afraid to remain in my country?

The Task Force process is only available for those who are *eligible*. If you are afraid to remain in your country, call [KIND's Help Desk](#). KIND can screen your case and may be able to assist you with another type of referral. If you believe your case was wrongly denied you may also call the KIND Help Desk to discuss your options.

What benefits does the Task Force reunification process offer?

People approved to reunify and return to the United States will be allowed to live in the United States for 3 years under a temporary status called *humanitarian parole*. You can apply to renew your parole before it expires. You can also apply for permission to work in the United States. If you qualify for this reunification process, *you can also apply to have certain members of your family come with you*, and if they qualify, they will be eligible for the same benefits. The reunification process, including travel to the United States, is free for those who qualify. If you qualify, you will also be eligible for certain free services in the United States to provide emotional and other support as you reunite with your family.

Separated individuals who are currently in the United States may be eligible for a different form of parole called Parole in Place, which also provides a three-year permission to remain in the United States. Please visit the [Together.gov](#) or [Juntos.gov](#) websites if you are in the United States and have questions about Parole in Place.

How does the reunification process work?

- If you are outside the United States and believe you may qualify for this process, contact [***KIND's Help Desk***](#). We will help you to determine if you may qualify and can help you register your case on the [***Together.gov***](#) or [***Juntos.gov***](#) websites. KIND's assistance through the Help Desk is free of charge.
- Once the Task Force receives your information, they will confirm if you qualify to reunify and return to the United States. KIND's Help Desk can assist you to register and answer your questions about the process, but only the Task Force can determine if you qualify.
- If you qualify, you will be contacted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for assistance with the reunification and return process. IOM is a trusted partner of the U.S. government that helps ensure humane migration. Someone from IOM in your country will contact you or the person you designate as your representative to help you start the reunification and return process.
- IOM will help you prepare and submit your application for humanitarian parole and obtain necessary travel documents, such as passports, birth certificates, minor authorizations and other documents to exit your country. If you are approved, IOM will also help you with travel arrangements. This process is free for those who qualify.
- The Task Force will review your application. Generally, the Task Force will try to make decisions about applications within 90 days, although each case is unique and some may take longer. Please be patient as the Task Force reviews your application and do not quit your job or travel to the U.S. If you are outside the US, you should remain outside the US to apply for this reunification process.
- Once you travel to the United States, you will be able to apply for work authorization.
- Your parole is valid for 3 years and is renewable.

What is humanitarian parole?

Humanitarian parole is a temporary permission to enter and live in the United States. Individuals with humanitarian parole are also eligible to apply to work in the United States. Humanitarian parole will be granted for three years. Humanitarian parole is not a permanent status and does not lead to lawful permanent residence or citizenship. Humanitarian parole expires after three years, but it is renewable and can be renewed before it expires. Humanitarian parole does not allow you to travel freely between your country and the United States. If you wish to return to your country during your parole and then reenter the United States, you will have to apply for a specific permission to do so. If you leave the United States during your parole without this permission, you may not be allowed to reenter the United States.

Humanitarian parole grants you temporary status to remain in the United States, but while in the United States you are still subject to local and federal law, and if you are arrested for any reason you could be detained again by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and lose your parole.

Can I bring my family members with me to the United States?

If you qualify for the reunification process, you can also apply to have certain members of your family come with you. The Task Force will make determinations about who can accompany you on a case-by-case basis. If you have family members who qualify to travel with you, IOM will also help them apply to reunify and travel to the US. Please call [***KIND's Help Desk***](#) if you have questions about who can travel with you.

How soon can you work after arriving to the United States?

If you are granted humanitarian parole, you can apply for a work permit and social security card as soon as you arrive to the United States. You can begin to work as soon as you receive your work permit and social security card. **The Task Force is working to expedite work permits for separated families, but the process can still take several months.**

How much does it cost to reunify and return to the United States? Do I have to pay?

There is no cost to register your case on the [Together.gov](https://www.together.gov) or [Juntos.gov](https://www.juntos.gov) websites or to file an application for humanitarian parole to reunify and return to the United States for separated parents or legal guardians and separated children. There is also no cost for the support and assistance you will receive from IOM or for your travel to the United States if you are a separated parent or legal guardian or separated child. If someone tells you that you need to pay money to return to the United States to reunify with a child through this program that is not true. **If someone asks you to give them money to help you to reunify, do not pay them.** Call [KIND's Help Desk](https://www.kind.org/helpdesk) to report the incident and confirm if the call is legitimate. The Task Force and IOM will never ask you for money. The KIND Help Desk is also a free service to help you learn about the process, answer your questions and register your case.

How do I know this is legitimate and not a scam?

You can visit the [Together.gov](https://www.together.gov) or [Juntos.gov](https://www.juntos.gov) websites and the [Family Reunification Task Force website](https://www.familyreunification.gov) to learn more about reunification and return to the United States. The Family Reunification Task Force website also includes information about how to recognize and report scams.

Do I need a lawyer?

You do not need a lawyer to apply for reunification and return to the United States.

What if I have a criminal history or had previously entered the United States without authorization?

Those with criminal histories in the United States or their countries may not be eligible to apply. The Family Reunification Task Force will evaluate all cases individually to determine if a family qualifies. If you believe that you meet the eligibility criteria but have questions about possible criminal history, including prior entries to the United States, please call [KIND's Help Desk](https://www.kind.org/helpdesk). There is no penalty to register your case on the [Together.gov](https://www.together.gov) or [Juntos.gov](https://www.juntos.gov) websites to determine if you qualify to apply to reunify and return to the US.

Will information that is provided to the Task Force through Together.gov or Juntos.gov be shared with Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE)?

Information submitted through [Together.gov](https://www.together.gov) or [Juntos.gov](https://www.juntos.gov) will be used to confirm eligibility for reunification under the Family Reunification Task Force Process. Individuals who register on Together.gov will not be referred to ICE for removal from the United States based solely on information provided to the Task Force through Together.gov or Juntos.gov. However, the information may be shared with national security and law enforcement agencies, including ICE and Customs and Border Protection, for purposes other than removal, such as to identify or prevent fraudulent claims, for national security purposes, or to investigate or prosecute a criminal offense.

What is the KIND Help Desk and how can I call?

KIND, a non-profit organization, and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, are supporting the U.S. Government's efforts to help reunite separated families. If you have questions about the reunification and return process or need help with your registration, please contact KIND's Help Desk by phone or [e-mail](#). KIND's Help Desk has staff available to provide information and answer any questions about the reunification process in over nine languages. The Help Desk has dedicated phone numbers in Central America, Mexico, Brazil, and the United States. The Help Desk is open from Monday-Friday from 10 am – 7 p.m. CST/Guatemala/El Salvador/Honduras. The Help Desk is made possible with funding from the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. For additional information, please see our [flyers](#).