



Priority 3 (P-3) Refugee Processing

October 25, 2024

Fiscal Year 2024 Report to Congress



**Homeland
Security**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Message from the Director

October 25, 2024

I am pleased to present the following Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 report, “Priority 3 (P-3) Refugee Processing,” which has been prepared by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).



This report was compiled pursuant to direction in Senate Report 118- 85 accompanying the FY 2024 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act (P. L. 118-47).

Pursuant to congressional requirements, this report is being provided to the following Members of Congress:

The Honorable Mark Amodei
Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Lauren Underwood
Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Chris Murphy
Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Katie Britt
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (240) 721-1500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ur M. Jaddou" followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Executive Summary

To have access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), an individual must fall within one of four processing priorities. P-3 refers to family reunification cases for individuals of special humanitarian concern who have immediate family members in the United States who were admitted in certain humanitarian immigrant statuses. Specifically, P-3 processing is available for spouses, unmarried children under 21, and parents of persons lawfully admitted to the United States as refugees or asylees, or persons who are lawful permanent residents or U.S. citizens who previously had refugee or asylum status.

USCIS' Refugee Access Verification Unit (RAVU) tracks and manages review of Affidavits of Relationship (AOR) filed by immediate family members (hereinafter referred to as anchor or U.S.-based relatives) in the United States on behalf of overseas family members who seek consideration for refugee resettlement under the P-3 family reunification program. RAVU conducts a comprehensive paper review of the claimed relationships between the U.S.-based relative and overseas family members listed on the AOR. All AORs are subject to a RAVU review and only those family members on AORs who are cleared by USCIS proceed to a refugee interview with a USCIS officer overseas.

USCIS and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) are examining the P-3 process and considering several efficiencies, including:

- Revisions to the Form DS-7656, *Affidavit of Relationship*;
- Review of the policies and procedures related to DNA testing, which is currently required for certain claimed biological relationships; and
- Digitization of U.S.-based relatives' immigration records.

This report provides an explanation of these efficiencies, including current implementation efforts and anticipated impact on the processing of P-3 refugee applications. This report also provides the current status for the last six fiscal years of P-3 submissions (FY 2018 to FY 2023) for applicants grouped by their referral year to the USRAP and associated case processing stage.



Priority 3 (P-3) Refugee Processing Fiscal Year 2024

Table of Contents

I.	Legislative Language	1
II.	Steps to Re-Examine and Expedite P-3 Processing.....	2
III.	Statistics	2
IV.	Conclusion.....	5
V.	Appendix: Abbreviations	6

I. Legislative Language

This report responds to the direction set forth in the Senate Report 118-85 accompanying the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act (P. L. 118-47), which states:

P3 Refugee Processing.—The Committee directs the Department, in collaboration with the State Department, to produce a report within 90 days of the date of enactment describing steps by the administration to re-examine and expedite P–3 processing, such as by reducing lengthy delays in USCIS’ initial paper review (known as RAVU) of the relationship between the anchor relative and overseas family member listed on the Affidavit Of Relationship [AOR], and to reduce inefficiencies in DNA testing and processing steps that are required only for P–3 cases, which can add years to average processing times. The report should also detail, as of the first day of fiscal year 2023 and each of the six previous fiscal years, the number of P-3 refugee applicants who had submitted an Affidavit of Relationship and were waiting for an initial interview with the resettlement support center [RSC]; who had completed the initial RSC interview and whose applications were not yet submitted by the Refugee Processing Center to the USCIS Refugee Access Verification Unit [RAVU]; whose applications were submitted by the Refugee Processing Center to RAVU and were pending a decision by RAVU; whose applications were decided by RAVU and were pending an RSC pre-screening interview; who completed an RSC pre-screening interview and who were pending USCIS interviews; who had completed interviews and were pending security clearance; who were ready for departure; and have died or gone missing while in the P-3 application process without ever being reunited with their families.

II. Steps to Re-Examine and Expedite P-3 Processing

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the U.S. Department of State's (DOS) Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) are examining the P-3 process and are considering several efficiencies, including:

- Form revision for the P-3 AOR, the DS-7656, *Affidavit of Relationship*, to eliminate non-essential fields and reduce the administrative burden for U.S.-based relatives completing the form. These efforts are currently underway.
 - Ahead of the form revision, PRM issued a Program Announcement alerting resettlement agencies (RA) to stop collecting the data outlined in “*Section III: Information About All of Your Relative(s) Not Previously Provided in Section II*” of the form, effective April 3, 2024¹. This change is low effort and high impact and has immediately reduced processing burden for all users (U.S.-based relatives, Ras, DOS’s Refugee Processing Center, overseas Resettlement Support Centers, and USCIS), while maintaining overall program integrity.
- A review of the policies and procedures related to DNA testing and collection to reduce inefficiencies while maintaining overall program integrity, including exploration of how policies in similar programs may be adapted for use as efficiency measures in the P-3 program.
 - Currently, all P-3 cases that have a parent-child relationship are required to submit DNA results. The Refugee Coordination Center (RCC) identified that it takes an average of over a year (13 months) to receive these results. USCIS is developing a proposal to revise DNA testing requirements that could result in significant reductions to processing times. DNA testing is a critical program integrity measure to counter fraud and USCIS will assess the viability, risk, and operational impacts before any changes are made to DNA testing requirements.
- A review of what actions are needed to reduce delays in USCIS’ initial paper review of the AOR to confirm P-3 access, including the timely digitization of the U.S.-based relatives’ immigration records.
 - In June 2024, RCC implemented an automated process to notify USCIS of A-Files in need of digitization. This process is run monthly and generates a list of newly submitted P-3 cases and associated A-Files to be digitized. Prior to this automated process being implemented, the average case processing time at RAVU (from A-File request to a final decision being rendered) was approximately 50 days. After implementation, average case processing time at RAVU has been reduced to approximately 20 days. For the month of September 2024, average case processing time at RAVU has been reduced even further to an average of 13 days, for an overall reduction

¹ For family members that are material to the adjudication, the information collected in Section III of the DS-7656 is duplicative of information collected during later processing steps (for example, during applicant pre-screening with the RSC). For certain extended family members that are not material to the adjudication, the information collected in Section III is not utilized for adjudicative or security vetting purposes. Therefore, the removal of this data collection requirement in Section III eliminates duplicative work while not lessening program integrity.

in processing time of approximately 74 percent since the implementation of the automated process. USCIS will continue to monitor this process to evaluate its impact on efficiency and reducing processing delays.

III. Statistics

The data below from DOS systems represent the status as of May 6, 2024, for the last six fiscal years of P-3 submissions (FY 2018 to FY 2023), applicants grouped by their referral year to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and associated case processing stage.

USRAP P-3 Referrals FY 2018-2023 (Statuses as of May 6, 2024)												
Fiscal Year Referred	Cases Referred	Applications Referred	Count Applicants Pending AOR Review	Count Applicants AOR Review Completed, Pending RAVU	Count Applicants RAVU Completed, Pending Pre-Screening (PS) Interview	Counter Applicants PS Completed, Pending USCIS Interview	Count Applicants USCIS Interview Completed, Pending Security Clearance	Other*	Count Applicants RFD	Count Applicants Stateside	Count Applicants Closed	Number of Applicants Deceased**
FY 2018	432	695	46	104	82	131	33	78	19	100	102	1
FY 2019	304	516	37	133	57	167	11	37	29	38	7	3
FY 2020	190	334	28	134	21	93	3	23	5	19	8	1
FY 2021	196	373	43	153	13	125	10	14	2	9	4	0
FY 2022	205	376	42	182	29	59	3	24	3	9	25	2
FY 2023	458	853	189	479	17	137	3	5	0	1	22	3
Total	1,785	3,147	385	1185	219	712	63	181	58	176	168	10

*“Other” column: Applicants in the "Other" column are comprised of cases that are "USCIS Interview Completed" and "Security Vetting Completed," but are not ready for departure (RFD) because of pending adjudicative, medical, or assurance statuses. These categories were not included in the original data request.

**Deceased and missing applicants: In addition to the 10 deceased applicants associated with the 1,785 referred cases listed here, there are an additional 16 deceased applicants associated with cases that have no other case members for the range of the listed fiscal years. The data for these additional 16 applicants are not included in the dataset. The USRAP does not systematically track applicants who have gone missing while in the P-3 application process. Those applicants who have gone missing and whose cases were subsequently administratively closed are included in the “Count Applicants Closed” column.

IV. Conclusion

USCIS and PRM are in the process of implementing measures to further expedite P-3 processing. The revisions to the AOR and the digitization of U.S.-based relatives' immigration records outlined in this report will help reduce delays in processing times while maintaining overall program integrity. USCIS and PRM are also exploring how DNA policies in similar programs may be adapted for use as efficiency measures in P-3 refugee processing.

V. Appendix: Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
AOR	Affidavit of Relationship
FY	Fiscal Year
P-3	Priority 3
PRM	Population, Refugees, Migration
PS	Pre-Screening
RA	Resettlement Agency
RAVU	USCIS Refugee Access Verification Unit
RFD	Ready for Departure
RPC	Refugee Processing Center
RSC	Resettlement Support Center
USCIS	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
USRAP	U.S. Refugee Admissions Program