



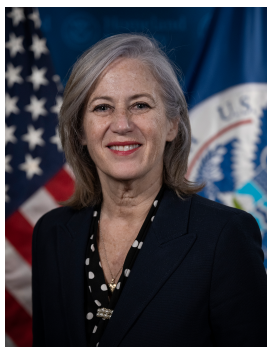
The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) supports the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as it secures the nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.



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 civil rights 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-civilrights-complaint>.

Message from CRCL Officer Katherine Culliton-González



I am pleased to be the newly appointed [Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#). I know many of you have worked with CRCL and members of our dedicated staff for many years. I thank you for your support of our work to advance and integrate civil rights and civil liberties in the Department’s programs and activities. I also worked with CRCL earlier in my career when I was special counsel for immigrants’ rights and access to justice at the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF). Coming back to CRCL in this role is truly a full circle moment, and I am excited to serve.

I have dedicated my career to the advancement of civil and human rights and to protecting our values as a nation of immigrants. I know we all strive to be aware of our collective challenges and vulnerabilities in this effort and I look forward to working with you to identify solutions in order to preserve civil rights and civil liberties while securing the homeland. In addition to working with MALDEF, my experience includes protecting human rights as a Fulbright Scholar in Latin America, protecting voting rights as an attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice and at Advancement Project, leading immigrant sanctuary work as senior counsel with Dēmos, and more recently, serving as director of the Office of Civil Rights Evaluation at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and Chair of the Civil Rights Committee for the Hispanic National Bar Association.

Over the last several weeks, CRCL staff and I have been engaged in many of the Biden Administration’s immediate priorities including participating in the Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families, which is focused on reuniting children separated from their families at the U.S.-Mexico border and supporting the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other interagency partners on ensuring equity in vaccine distribution by participating in FEMA’s Civil Rights Advisory Group, which evaluates the policies,

Inside

[Message from CRCL Officer](#)

[Alejandro Mayorkas Sworn in as DHS Secretary](#)

[DHS Issues NTAS Bulletin](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccines and Equitable Vaccine Distribution](#)

[DHS Statement on Equal Access to COVID-19 Vaccines and Vaccine Distribution Sites](#)

[CRCL Releases Semiannual Reports to Congress](#)

[DHS Announces Process to Address Individuals in Mexico with Active MPP Cases](#)

[Joint DHS Statement on Zero Tolerance Day for FGM](#)

[CRCL on the Road](#)

[Contact Us](#)

practices, strategies, and plans in place to identify and eliminate inequities. I am also looking forward to giving opening remarks at DHS' internal Black History Month celebration of great African-American leaders, which is just another way that we are committed to advancing equity and ensuring protection of everyone's civil rights.

In the upcoming months, I hope to engage with you virtually and hear from you about what is happening on the ground and in your communities with DHS policies; I want to see how we can collectively do and be better.

I look forward to continuing an open, transparent, and fully engaged dialogue with you and our staff as we work across our many CRCL missions—from engaging with diverse ethnic and faith-based communities across the country and abroad to investigating alleged civil rights violations, and from advising on policy development to promoting and advancing equal opportunity and diversity initiatives throughout DHS.

Sincerely,

-Kathy

Katherine Culliton-González

Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Alejandro Mayorkas Sworn in as Secretary of Homeland Security



On February 2, 2021, Alejandro Mayorkas was officially sworn in as the seventh Secretary of Homeland Security. Secretary Mayorkas took the oath after the Senate voted to confirm him. As Secretary of Homeland Security, Mayorkas now leads the third largest federal department in the U.S., which includes the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Transportation Security Administration, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the U.S. Secret Service.

“DHS bears an extraordinary weight on behalf of the American people, the weight of grave challenges seen and unseen,” said Secretary Mayorkas. “It is the greatest privilege of my life to return to the Department to lead the men and women who dedicate their talent and energy to the safety and security of our nation. I will work every day to ensure that they have the tools they need to execute their missions with honor and integrity. The mission of the Department of Homeland Security is to safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values. The U.S. is a welcoming and empathetic nation, one that finds strength in its diversity. I pledge to defend and secure our country without sacrificing these American values.”

Secretary Mayorkas is the first immigrant to serve in the role of DHS Secretary. His parents arrived with him and his sister to the U.S. as refugees after fleeing Cuba in 1960. Secretary Mayorkas previously served as the DHS Deputy Secretary from 2013 to 2016. Prior to holding that position, he was the Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the agency charged with operating the largest immigration system in the world.

DHS Issues National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) Bulletin

On January 27, 2021, DHS issued a [National Terrorism Advisory System \(NTAS\) Bulletin](#) after consultation with the intelligence community and law enforcement partners. There is currently a heightened threat environment across the U.S. that is likely to persist over the coming weeks. DHS does not have any information to indicate a specific, credible plot; however, violent riots have continued in recent days and we remain concerned that individuals frustrated with the exercise of governmental authority and the presidential transition, as well as other perceived grievances and ideological causes fueled by false narratives, could continue to mobilize a broad range of ideologically-motivated actors to incite or commit violence.

[Read this Bulletin translated into various languages.](#)

NATIONAL TERRORISM ADVISORY SYSTEM
Bulletin Active Through April 30, 2021

COVID-19 Vaccines and Equitable Vaccine Distribution

In alignment with [President Biden's plan to respond to COVID-19](#), FEMA is working with other federal agencies to coordinate with state, tribal, and territorial authorities and private sector partners and others to assist, augment, and expedite vaccinations in the U.S. DHS and its federal partners are committed to ensuring civil rights during COVID-19 response, and that every person who wants a vaccine can get one—including vulnerable and underserved populations. FEMA has issued a [Civil Rights Checklist](#) to assist state, tribal and territorial partners in understanding and fulfilling their obligations to provide access to vaccine-related programs, activities, and services in a nondiscriminatory manner. CRCL serves on the [FEMA Civil Rights Advisory Group](#), which includes other federal partners with a goal of ensuring vaccine equity is incorporated in all activities FEMA and the Federal Government fund to vaccinate the country. The Civil Rights Advisory Group evaluates policies, practices, strategies, and plans to identify and eliminate inequities. FEMA has deployed Civil Rights Advisors to all regions to assist with equity in vaccine operations—from site selection to vaccine distribution. Regional Disability Integration Specialists and Advisors are also deployed to help ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are integrated in all facets of vaccine center operations. Language services are also a priority and FEMA and its partners continue to analyze community demographics to determine communication needs including translation and interpretation services.

CRCL will continue to participate in the Civil Rights Advisory Group and share important messaging and resources with our community stakeholders. We look forward to engaging with you through our community roundtable meetings and disability stakeholder listening sessions in the weeks and months ahead.

DHS Statement on Equal Access to COVID-19 Vaccines and Vaccine Distribution Sites

DHS and its Federal government partners fully support equal access to the COVID-19 vaccines and vaccine distribution sites for undocumented immigrants. It is a moral and public health imperative to ensure that all individuals residing in the U.S. have access to the vaccine. DHS encourages all individuals, regardless of immigration status, to receive the COVID-19 vaccine once eligible under local distribution guidelines. DHS carries out its mission, including all areas within its COVID-19 response, without discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, or other protected class, and in compliance with law and policy. Further, DHS supports the equitable and efficient distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine to all populations, including historically underserved communities.

To reach underserved and rural communities, FEMA, in collaboration with federal partners, will coordinate efforts to establish and support fixed facilities, pop-up or temporary vaccination sites, and mobile vaccination clinics. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will not conduct enforcement operations at or near vaccine distribution sites or clinics. Consistent with ICE's long-standing sensitive locations policy, ICE does not and will not carry out enforcement operations at or near health care facilities, such as hospitals, doctors' offices, accredited health clinics, and emergent or urgent care facilities, except in the most extraordinary of circumstances.

DHS is committed to ensuring that every individual who needs a vaccine can get one, regardless of their immigration status.

[Read the statement translated into various languages.](#)

CRCL Releases Semiannual Reports to Congress

CRCL has published its [FY 2019 Third and Fourth Quarters Semiannual Report](#) and [FY 2020 First and Second Quarters Semiannual Report](#), as required by section 803 of the *Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007*, 42 U.S.C. § 2000ee-1(f). The Reports include information on CRCL's investigative work during this time period.

DHS Announces Process to Address Individuals in Mexico with Active MPP Cases

Building on a series of Executive Orders, the Biden Administration is announcing another step in our phased strategy to reform the nation's immigration system. Beginning on February 19, DHS will begin phase one of a program to restore safe and orderly processing at the southwest border. DHS will begin processing people who had been forced to "remain in Mexico" under the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP). Approximately 25,000 individuals in MPP continue to have active cases.

Individuals should not take any action at this time and should remain where they are to await further instructions. DHS will soon announce a virtual registration process that will be accessible from any location. Once registered, eligible individuals will be provided additional information about where and when to present themselves. Individuals should not approach the border until instructed to do so.

"As President Biden has made clear, the U.S. government is committed to rebuilding a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system," said Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas. "This latest action is another step in our commitment to reform immigration policies that do not align with our nation's values. Especially at the border, however, where capacity constraints remain serious, changes will take time. Individuals who are not eligible under this initial phase should wait for further instructions and not travel to the border. Due to the current pandemic, restrictions at the border remain in place and will be enforced."

Through a whole-of-government approach, DHS, the Department of State, and the Department of Justice will collaborate with international partners—including the Government of Mexico and international and non-governmental organizations—to safely process eligible individuals to pursue their cases in the U.S.

This new process applies to individuals who were returned to Mexico under the MPP program and have cases pending before the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR). Individuals outside of the U.S who were not returned to Mexico under MPP or who do not have active immigration court cases will not be considered for participation in this program and should await further instructions. Similarly, those individuals in the U.S. with active MPP cases will receive separate guidance at a later date.

This announcement should not be interpreted as an opening for people to migrate irregularly to the U.S. Eligible individuals will only be allowed to enter through designated ports of entry at designated times. DHS will provide instructions in the coming days for how individuals with active MPP cases may remotely register for in-processing. DHS will continue to enforce U.S. immigration law and border security measures throughout this process.

The U.S and our partners will employ all necessary safety precautions in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, including mandatory face coverings and social distancing. Individuals processed through this program will be tested for COVID-19 before entering the U.S. DHS will only process individuals consistent with its capacity to safely do so while fully executing its important national security and trade and travel facilitation missions.

[Read the statement in Spanish.](#)

Joint Message on International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

On February 6, 2021, the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), ICE, CBP, and CRCL joined other U.S. government agencies and the international community in calling for an end to the practice of female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C). This day serves as an opportunity to reflect on victims who have suffered from FGM/C, including many women and girls who have died or suffered lifelong health complications from the practice. The day also renews a global commitment to the health and well-being of all women, girls, and communities by eliminating the practice.

FGM/C is the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for no medical reason. It is recognized internationally as a human rights violation and a form of child abuse, gender discrimination, and violence against women and girls.

FGM/C is a crime under federal law and in 39 states. When committed against children, it is a form of child abuse. People who commit this crime can face prison time and significant immigration consequences. The CDC estimates approximately 500,000 girls in the U.S. are at risk of having or have had FGM/C performed on them.

On January 5, 2021, the STOP FGM Act 2020 was signed into law, further amending the crime under federal law to align the definition of FGM/C with the World Health Organization's definition, as well as increasing the statutory maximum term of imprisonment for violating the law from five to ten years. On January 13, 2021, the [Department of Justice obtained an indictment](#) in the case of a Texas woman for allegedly transporting a minor for FGM/C, the first indictment under the amended statute.

We reiterate our strong and unwavering support for local, state, national, and international efforts to combat FGM/C.

We continue to work with interagency partners to identify opportunities to #EndFGM in the U.S. and worldwide. Read more information about the practice of FGM/C in the [USCIS FGM/C brochure \(PDF, 714 KB\)](#), the [U.S. Government Fact Sheet \(PDF, 573 KB\)](#), and on the [United Nations' Zero Tolerance Day](#) website.

CRCL on the Road, February*

Portland, Oregon

CRCL convened a series of teleconference calls with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders and organizations.

Boston, Massachusetts

CRCL convened a series of teleconference calls with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders and organizations.

Seattle, Washington

CRCL convened a series of teleconference calls with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders and organizations.

Southern Florida

CRCL convened a series of teleconference calls with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders and organizations.

Additional information, and contacting us

The goal of this periodic newsletter is to inform members of the public and other government partners 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.

CRCL Phone: 202-401-1474 • Toll Free: 866-644-8360 • TTY: 202-401-0470 • Toll Free TTY: 866-644-8361

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 Follow the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties on Facebook at: facebook.com/CivilRightsandCivilLiberties.

*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.