



**WEB INTEGRITY  
PROJECT**

A project of the Sunlight Foundation

# Alterations to the Office of Refugee Resettlement's Website since President Trump's Inauguration



**Web Integrity Project Trend Report**

**September 2019**



The **Web Integrity Project** is a project of the Sunlight Foundation.

Our mission is to monitor changes to government websites, holding our government accountable by revealing shifts in public information and access to web resources, as well as changes in stated policies and priorities. We work with journalists to make our findings public, and we produce policy analyses to evaluate and recommend changes to web governance practices and help ensure access to valuable web resources.

The Web Integrity Project. 2019. *Alterations to the Office of Refugee Resettlement's Website since President Trump's Inauguration: Web Integrity Project Trend Report* (Sunlight Foundation's Web Integrity Project Trend Report)

This report is available online at: <https://sunlightfoundation.com/orr-trend-report/>

For more information go to <https://sunlightfoundation.com/web-integrity-project/>

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#### September 2019

The Web Integrity Project would like to thank our team of volunteers:

- Anne Barraza
- Steven Gentry
- Guanwei Hu
- Connor Roth
- Emily Ward
- Sonja Williams

They are the frontline of our web monitoring research and this report would not have been possible without their thorough and patient work.

We would also like to thank our partners at the [Internet Archive's Wayback Machine](#) — their tool and assistance made this analysis possible.

**Image credits:** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

# Alterations to the Office of Refugee Resettlement's Website since President Trump's Inauguration: Web Integrity Project Trend Report

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September 2019

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# Alterations to the Office of Refugee Resettlement's Website since President Trump's Inauguration: Web Integrity Project Trend Report

## Agency details

According to its website, the [Administration of Children and Families](#) (ACF), a part of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), "promotes the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals and communities." The [Office of Refugee Resettlement](#) (ORR), within ACF, "helps new populations maximize their potential in the United States by linking them to critical resources that assist them in becoming integrated members of American society." Under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, ORR has responsibility for the care of immigrant children who are unaccompanied or separated from guardians.

The ORR's website is hosted at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr>.

## Communications about changes

The office has not proactively communicated about or explained the changes described within this report.

## Known archives

Archived versions of many of the pages discussed in this report, collected at the request of the Department of Health and Human Services or the Federal Depository Library Program Web Archive, are available on Archive-It. See the [Technical Documentation](#) for details.

## Description of Changes

Careful analysis of changes made to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) website since the beginning of the Trump administration (January 20, 2017), focusing particularly on content related to unaccompanied children, reveals three key themes:

- Changes in language, especially adding the word "alien" to the term "unaccompanied child."
- A reduced emphasis on services and benefits.
- A tendency to make swift and frequent changes in reaction to media inquiries and criticism.

For information on the Web Integrity Project's methodology, please review the ["Methodology"](#) section.

### *Hardening of language, especially by the addition of the word "alien"*

In July and August of 2017, ORR began changing and standardizing the terminology it uses on its website when talking about unaccompanied migrant children. Formerly, the terms "unaccompanied child," "UC," or "child" were common, even though the [Homeland Security Act of 2002](#), which entrusted ORR with the responsibility for providing the care of unaccompanied minor children, used an arguably more harsh or

dehumanizing term: “unaccompanied alien child.” In a series of changes, ORR systematically replaced the terms “unaccompanied child,” “UC,” or “child” with “unaccompanied alien child” and “UAC.”

In addition to our usual weekly monitoring of the ORR website, the Web Integrity Project performed a term analysis of 262 pages within the <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr> file path, comparing content within the body of the pages from before January 20, 2017 to content on the pages today. The analysis showed that references to “alien,” “UAC,” “unaccompanied alien child,” and “unaccompanied alien children” increased.

The term, “alien,” which appeared 103 times before inauguration in the pages analyzed, now appears 720 times (an increase of 599%). In many cases, “alien” was added to the middle of the terms “unaccompanied child” and “unaccompanied children.” The number of times the term “unaccompanied child” appeared in the webpages increased from 1 to 322 and “unaccompanied children” from 34 to 319. The use of the terms “unaccompanied child” and “unaccompanied children,” without the use of the term “alien,” decreased by 310 (from 312 to 2) and 283 (344 to 61), respectively.

This shift in language can be seen most clearly in the policy guide, “[ORR Guide: Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied](#).” In the policy guide, which spans 9 URLs and 130,000 words, the term “unaccompanied child” was eliminated. Before January 20, 2017, the policy guide contained 517 references to “unaccompanied child” and “unaccompanied children.” Today it contains six, a 99% decrease. The term, “alien,” which appeared in the policy guide only 10 times before January 20, 2017, is now used 553 times, an increase of 5430%.

The language changes had some curious results. On [May 31, 2017](#), the definitions page of the guide, “Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Guide to Terms” ([Webpage 1](#)), included definitions of “Unaccompanied Child” and “Unaccompanied Alien Child,” explaining that ORR used the term “unaccompanied child” to refer to unaccompanied children (in italics for emphasis):

**Unaccompanied Alien Child (UAC)**  
– UAC is the term used and defined in

the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which created the Unaccompanied Children’s program at ORR. A UAC is a child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States; has not attained 18 years of age; and with respect to whom: 1) there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States; or 2) no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody. *ORR uses the term unaccompanied child instead of the term UAC.*

**Unaccompanied Child** – An *unaccompanied child is the term ORR uses* to refer to a child that meets the definition in the Homeland Security Act of 2002 as a UAC.

By [August 1, 2017](#), the Guide to Terms” page had been altered to remove the [sentence](#) “ORR uses the term unaccompanied child instead of the term UAC.” and now included two definitions of “unaccompanied alien child,” reflecting a change in how ORR refers to unaccompanied children (in italics for emphasis):

**Unaccompanied Alien Child (UAC)**  
– UAC is the term used and defined in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which created the Unaccompanied Alien Children’s program at ORR. A UAC is a child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States; has not attained 18 years of age; and with respect to whom: 1) there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States; or 2) no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody.

**Unaccompanied Alien Child** – An *unaccompanied alien child is the term ORR uses* to refer to a child that meets the definition in the Homeland Security Act of 2002 as a UAC.

In addition to these definitional changes, 54 instances of the term “alien” were added to the page ([Figure 1](#)).

The move toward the terminology “unaccompanied alien child” was reflected in the structure of the website. The links in the main menu at the top of the website and the footer were changed from “Unaccompanied



# Figure 1

A side-by-side comparison of the top portion of the “Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Guide to Terms” page captured on [May 31, 2017](#) and [August 1, 2017](#) by the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine. Yellow highlights indicate added text.

**Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Guide to Terms**  
Published: March 21, 2016

**Care Provider** – A care provider is any ORR funded program that is licensed, certified or accredited by an appropriate State agency to provide residential care for children, including shelter, group, foster care, staff-secure, secure, therapeutic or residential treatment care for children.

**Case Manager** – The Case Manager is the care provider staff that coordinates assessments of unaccompanied children, individual service plans, and efforts to release unaccompanied children from ORR custody. Case Managers also ensure all services for children and youth are documented and maintain case files for unaccompanied children.

**Case Coordinators (CC)** – CC are ORR non-governmental contractor field staff who act as a local ORR liaison with care providers and stakeholders and who are responsible for making transfer and release recommendations. ORR/CC are assigned to care providers on the basis of an ORR/CC to bed ratio; therefore, an individual ORR/CC may be assigned to one or several care providers and a care provider with a large bed capacity may have more than one ORR/CC.

**Child Advocate** – A Child Advocate is an independent third party who is appointed by ORR for select unaccompanied children to make recommendations to various stakeholders regarding the best interest of a child.

**Clinician** – The Clinician is the care provider staff that provides clinical and/or counseling services for unaccompanied children and provides oversight for the unaccompanied child’s mental and emotional health.

**Escape Risk** – Escape risk is the level of risk that an unaccompanied child will attempt to escape from custody.

**Extended Care Group Home** – An extended care group home is a type of residential care provider that provides a group home setting in which the unaccompanied child may attend public school. Unaccompanied children who may be in ORR custody for an extended period may be eligible for this type of placement.

**Family Reunification** – Family reunification is an older term used in the Flores Settlement Agreement to refer to the process of releasing an unaccompanied child to the care of a parent, relative or other sponsor.

**Family Reunification Packet (FRP)** – The family reunification packet is an application and supporting documentation completed by potential sponsors who wish to have an unaccompanied child released from ORR to their care. ORR uses the application and supporting documentation, as well as other procedures, to determine the sponsor’s ability to provide for the unaccompanied child’s physical and mental well-being.

**Group Home** – A group home is a care provider facility that offers a group home setting and that specializes in caring for specific populations (e.g., teen mothers). A group home, which is run by 24-hour staff or house parents, typically houses 4 to 12 unaccompanied children.

**Home Study** – A home study is an in-depth investigation of the potential sponsor’s ability to ensure the child’s safety and well-being. The process includes background checks of the sponsor and adult household members, a home visit(s), a face-to-face sponsor interview and possibly interviews with other household members, and post-release services. A home study is conducted for any case in which the safety and well-being of the unaccompanied child is in question and on any case that meets the mandatory Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2006 home study categories.

**Home Study Provider** – A home study provider is a non-governmental agency funded by ORR to conduct home studies.

**Individual Service Plan (ISP)** – An individual service plan is a plan prepared by the care provider for an individual unaccompanied child that identifies placement and case outcome goals, and delineates services, action steps, and individuals responsible for tasks to achieve the goals.

**Influx** – An increase in the number of unaccompanied children that exceeds the standard capabilities of responsible Federal departments and agencies to process and transport them timely and/or to shelter them with existing resources.

**Influx Care Facility** – A type of care provider facility that is opened to provide temporary emergency shelter and services for **unaccompanied alien children** during an influx or emergency. Influx care facilities may be opened on Federally owned or leased properties, in which case, the facility would not be subject to State or local licensing standards; or, at facilities otherwise exempted by the State licensing authority.

**Legal Guardian** – A legal guardian is a person who was appointed charge or custody of a child in a court order recognized by U.S. courts.

**Legal Service Provider (LSP)** – A legal service provider is an ORR funded contractor, sub-contractor, grantee or sub-grantee that coordinates legal services and pro-bono representation for unaccompanied children in ORR custody.

**Long Term Foster Care (LTFC)** – Long term foster care is ORR-funded community based foster care placements and services to which eligible unaccompanied children are transferred after a determination is made that the child will be in ORR custody for an extended period of time. Unaccompanied children in ORR long term foster care typically reside in licensed foster homes, attend public school, and receive community based services.

**Medical Coordinator** – A medical coordinator is care provider staff who makes medical and dental appointments on behalf of unaccompanied children in care, and maintains logs on an unaccompanied child’s health related information.

**ORR/DCS HHS Processing Center (HPC)** – An ORR designated facility to initially screen and vaccinate children prior to their placement into an Influx Care Facility or standard shelter during an influx period.

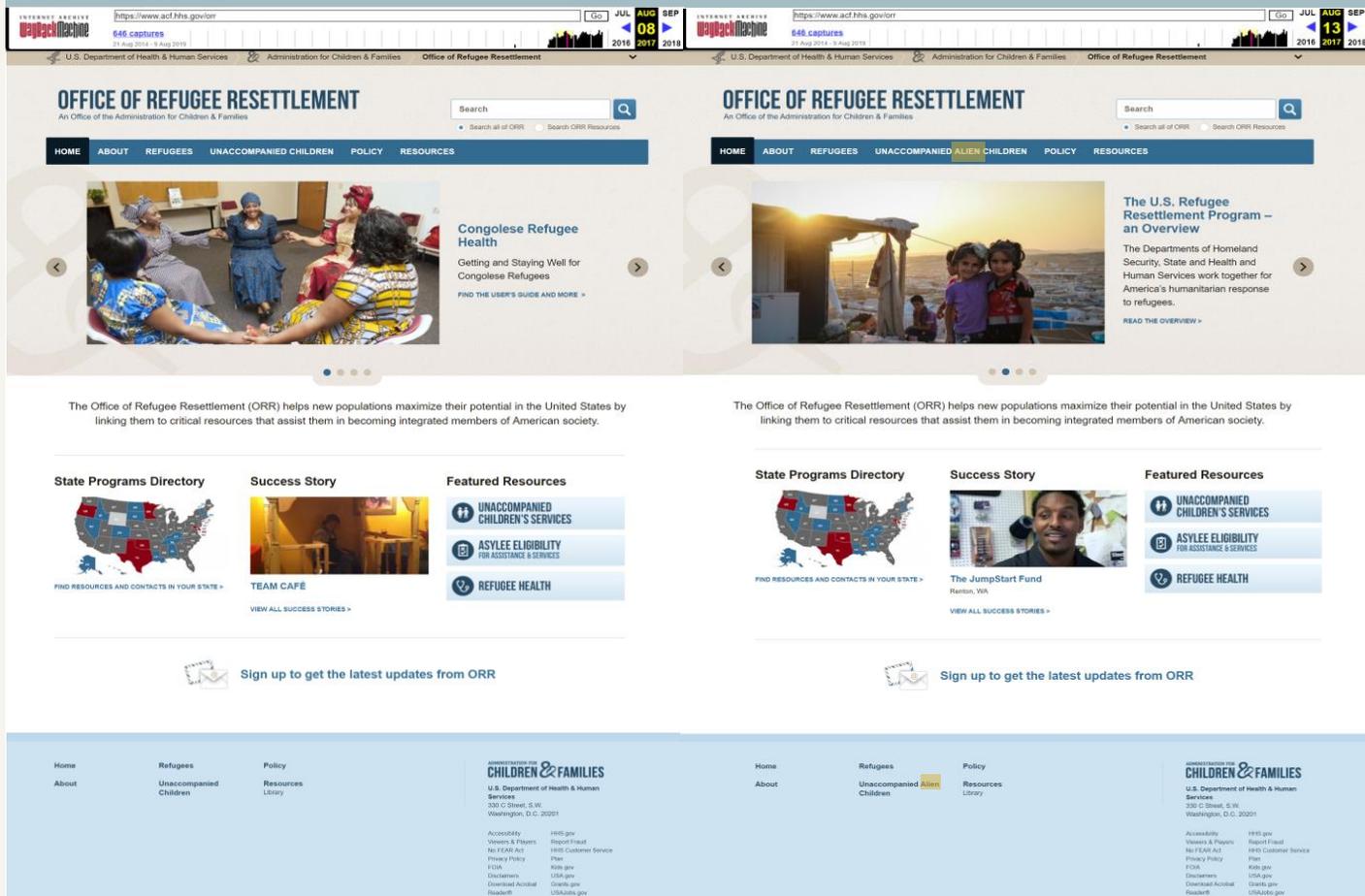
**ORR/Federal Field Specialist (ORR/FFS)** – Field staff who act as the local ORR liaison with care providers and stakeholders. An ORR/FFS is assigned to multiple care providers within a determined region and serves as the regional approval authority for unaccompanied children transfer and release decisions.

**ORR/Headquarters Staff (ORR/HQ)** – ORR staff that work at headquarters and are typically assigned to one of the following teams: ORR/Intakes Team, which receives referrals of unaccompanied children from Federal agencies for placement of unaccompanied children and who designate the initial placement of unaccompanied children into ORR care provider facilities; ORR/Medical Services Team, responsible for adjudicating Treatment Authorization Requests (TARs) and providing consultation and technical assistance in relation to the unaccompanied children program procedures on medical services to ORR staff and grantees; and ORR/Project Officer Team, responsible for the programmatic, and technical aspects of applications and grants and monitoring facilities.

**Placements** – The term placements includes initial placement of an unaccompanied child into an ORR care provider facility, as well as the transfer of an unaccompanied child within the ORR network of care.



A side-by-side comparison of the Office of Refugee Resettlement Homepage captured on [August 8, 2017](#) (left) and [August 13, 2017](#) (right) by the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. The capture shows the main menu and footer with the text “Unaccompanied Alien Children” before and after the term “alien” was included.



Children” to “Unaccompanied Alien Children” between [August 8, 2017](#) and [August 13, 2017](#) ([Figure 2](#)) (See [Webpage 2](#) for more information).

Many of the most systematic additions of the word “alien” between “unaccompanied” and “child” occurred in the June through August 2017 window when ORR was under intense scrutiny over the implementation of the family separation policy. In [Table 1](#), we document prominent examples of the insertion of the word “alien” into a page, with as many as 159 instances of “alien” being added to a single webpage. For example, on the landing page for the Unaccompanied Alien Children

Program at ORR, the “[Unaccompanied Alien Children](#)” page ([Webpage 3](#)), the term “alien” was inserted six times between [June 27, 2017](#) and [August 11, 2017](#). ORR changed the title of the page from “Unaccompanied Children’s Services” to “Unaccompanied Alien Children’s Services” and inserted “alien” into all but one instance of “unaccompanied children” or “unaccompanied child.” Around the same time ([June 12, 2017](#) and [July 6, 2017](#)), ORR altered the “Services Provided” page ([Webpage 4](#)) to add “alien” in the middle of eight instances of “unaccompanied child” or “unaccompanied children.”



## ***A reduced emphasis on services and benefits***

Another theme that is evident on the “[Unaccompanied Alien Children](#)” page ([Webpage 3](#)) is the removal of references to services provided by ORR and a downplaying of their scope where references survive. Between [August 7, 2017](#) and [August 11, 2017](#), ORR removed three references to “services” in the context of the program’s name (Unaccompanied Alien Children’s Services) from the body of the page and the sidebar menu. Additionally, the “[About UCS Program](#)” link (where “S” stood for “Services”) in the sidebar was altered to read “[About UAC Program](#)” (where “A” stands for “Alien”).

In addition to changing the name of the program to exclude the term “services,” ORR has removed language relating to the legal and educational services it provides to unaccompanied children in its care and removed a page detailing the benefits to which refugees are entitled.

In [an earlier report](#), we documented how ORR removed language from its “Services Provided” page ([Webpage 4](#)) related to soon-to-be announced policy changes. Between [March 26, 2019](#) and [May 23, 2019](#), text about the legal, educational, and recreational services provided by ORR-funded facilities in the “best interests of the child” was removed. Text providing descriptions of access to legal services was altered to remove references to “pro bono representation,” “ORR-funded legal representation,” and “court appearance support,” presenting a more limited view of the services offered by ORR. The section titled “Physical and Mental Health Care” was removed, along with the sentence “Children also have access to phones to contact family or legal services.”<sup>1</sup>

“ORR has deemphasized its role as a service provider in some informational publications it produces, including frequently asked questions and fact sheets. As documented in [an earlier report](#), ORR altered its “Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions” page ([Webpage 5](#)) in mid-2019 to reduce the emphasis (that had only been added less than a year earlier) on the

services ORR-funded care facilities provide to children. ORR removed questions and corresponding answers to “Do children in HHS care have access to lawyers?,” “What kind of conditions do children in HHS-funded facilities experience?,” and “What are the procedures for children separated from their parents to communicate with each other?” It also removed from the page the sentence “Children in all other care settings receive education at an HHS facility” (between [July 17, 2018](#) and July 21, 2018).

In successive revisions of the “ORR Fact Sheet on Unaccompanied Alien Children’s Services” ([Webpage 6](#)) in 2018, ORR presented a more limited view of the services it provides children by:

- Removing passages about treating children with “dignity, respect and special concern for individual needs” and providing “the highest quality of care tailored to each unaccompanied child.”
- Inserting the clarification that services are provided to children only “while in ORR custody.”
- Removing references to providing “socialization” services, and adding the qualifier “pro bono” to the statement of ORR’s responsibility to ensure access to legal representation.
- Removing the text “towards a child welfare-based-model of care for children and” from the sentence:

Under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Congress transferred the care and custody of these children to HHS from the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to move towards a child welfare-based-model of care for children and away from the adult detention model.

It should be noted that not all changes made by ORR to its website reduced emphasis on services provided. Between [April 13, 2019](#) and [June 4, 2019](#), ORR overhauled the “About the Program” page ([Webpage 7](#)), leaving a reference to “socialization” as one of the services provided by ORR and adding text explaining:

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<sup>1</sup> On this page, ORR also replaced 8 references to “unaccompanied child” or “unaccompanied children” with “unaccompanied alien child” or “unaccompanied alien children,” and (between [March 26, 2019](#) and [May 23, 2019](#)), removed 14 references to “child” or “children” (not in context of the terms “unaccompanied alien children” or “unaccompanied alien child”) while inserting 13 references to “UAC.”



ORR promptly places an UAC in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interests of the child, taking into consideration danger to self, danger to the community, and risk of flight. ORR looks at each child's unique situation and incorporates child welfare principles when making placement, clinical, case management, and release decisions that are in the best interest of the child.

More recently (between [January 14, 2019](#) and February 1, 2019), ORR removed from a page titled "[Unaccompanied Children Resources](#)," ([Webpage 8](#)) text about and a link to the "Division of Unaccompanied Children's Services (DUCS) Legal Access Project Pro Bono Referral Resource Guide," a "guide to legal service organizations that provide free or low-cost immigration legal assistance and representation for non-detained children in immigration proceedings." No new resources, text, or links were added to replace the removed resource. The Pro Bono Referral Resource Guide, published by the nonprofit Vera Institute of Justice, is still available online, but with a different URL (<https://www.vera.org/publications/unaccompanied-children-pro-bono-directory>).

### ***Swift, Frequent Changes in Reaction to Media Inquiries and Criticism***

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the changes made to ORR's website in the last two years is their reactionary nature.

In June 2018, media interest in the unaccompanied children program peaked. The program was under intense scrutiny, with stories centering on the [consequences for the program of the "zero tolerance" \(or "family separation\) policy](#), in which immigration officials separated children from parents or guardians entering the US illegally, [the absence of plans to reunite separated families](#), conditions in ORR facilities, access to those facilities [for members of Congress](#), and accusations that [the office failed to communicate transparently with the public](#).

Months earlier, ORR had removed its staff directory from its website, perhaps anticipating the likely fallout from a [family separation](#)

[policy that was yet to be announced, but already in force](#). As WIP [reported](#), a combination of live snapshots of the page and removed links suggest that the removal occurred between [October 11, 2017](#) and [December 22, 2017](#).

As early as the same day—June 14, 2018—that ORR made headlines with stories about [HHS's announcement of a new temporary facility in Texas, conditions inside the Casa Padre facility, conditions in facilities run by ORR contractor Southwest Key, conditions at an ORR-funded facility in Combes, Texas](#), as well as [planned protests against immigrant family separations](#), ORR began making changes to its website anew.

Between [June 14, 2018](#) and [June 20, 2018](#), ORR updated statistics on its "[Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions](#)" page ([Webpage 5](#)), and on [June 15, 2018](#), ORR issued a revision of the January 2016 version of the "ORR Fact Sheet on Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services" ([Webpage 6](#)), making some notable changes. Gone was language about how ORR values "[t]reating all children in its custody with dignity, respect and special concern for individual needs," the "child welfare-based-model of care for children," and a paragraph about the push- and pull-factors influencing the decision to "undertak[e] the difficult journey of traveling to the United States, which may include rejoining family already in the United States, escaping violent communities or abusive family relationships in their home country, or finding work to support their families in the home country."

On June 20, 2018, President Donald Trump signed [an executive order ending family separations](#). Media attention turned to the process of reuniting separated families. In response to continuing scrutiny, ORR would go on to edit its "[Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions](#)" page ([Webpage 5](#)) no fewer than six more times before August 8, 2018. In the course of seven weeks ORR:

- Removed text about non-governmental organizations that accept donations to assist refugee families ([June 20, 2018](#) - June 22, 2018).
- Added a passage suggesting the media



was spreading misinformation (June 29, 2018 - July 5, 2018):

In recent days, there has been a great deal of misinformation about the UAC program. This misinformation and the intentional perpetuation of it is a disservice to the hundreds of caseworkers and care providers who are deeply committed to the quality care and safe and speedy placement of UAC to appropriate sponsors. Below are answers to frequently asked questions from community members and media regarding the UAC program.

- Added 11 new questions and answers to

the pre-existing seven questions, covering topics such as why HHS was caring for children separated from their parents, HHS's confidence they can reunite separated families, access to lawyers for unaccompanied children in their care, conditions in the facilities, media access to facilities, access for members of Congress, and HHS' capacity to house increasing numbers of children separated from their families (June 29, 2018 - July 5, 2018).

- Added flattering images of ORR facilities (some of which had appeared in [a June 17, 2018 HHS press release](#)) (June 29, 2018 - July 5, 2018).

## Figure 3

Examples of images from Flickr image galleries ("McAllen" and "San Diego") linked to on the "Gallery" page ([Webpage 9](#)). The Gallery page was added to the ORR website by July 4, 2018.



- Around the same time (between June 28, 2018 and July 4, 2018, based on changes to [Webpage 2](#)), ORR added a new page called “[Gallery](#)” ([Webpage 9](#)), [containing](#) links to seven Flickr image galleries and eight YouTube videos, each depicting positive scenes from an ORR-funded care facility (Figure 3).
- After reporting that ORR was [using DNA testing to reunite separated families](#), added seven new questions and answers

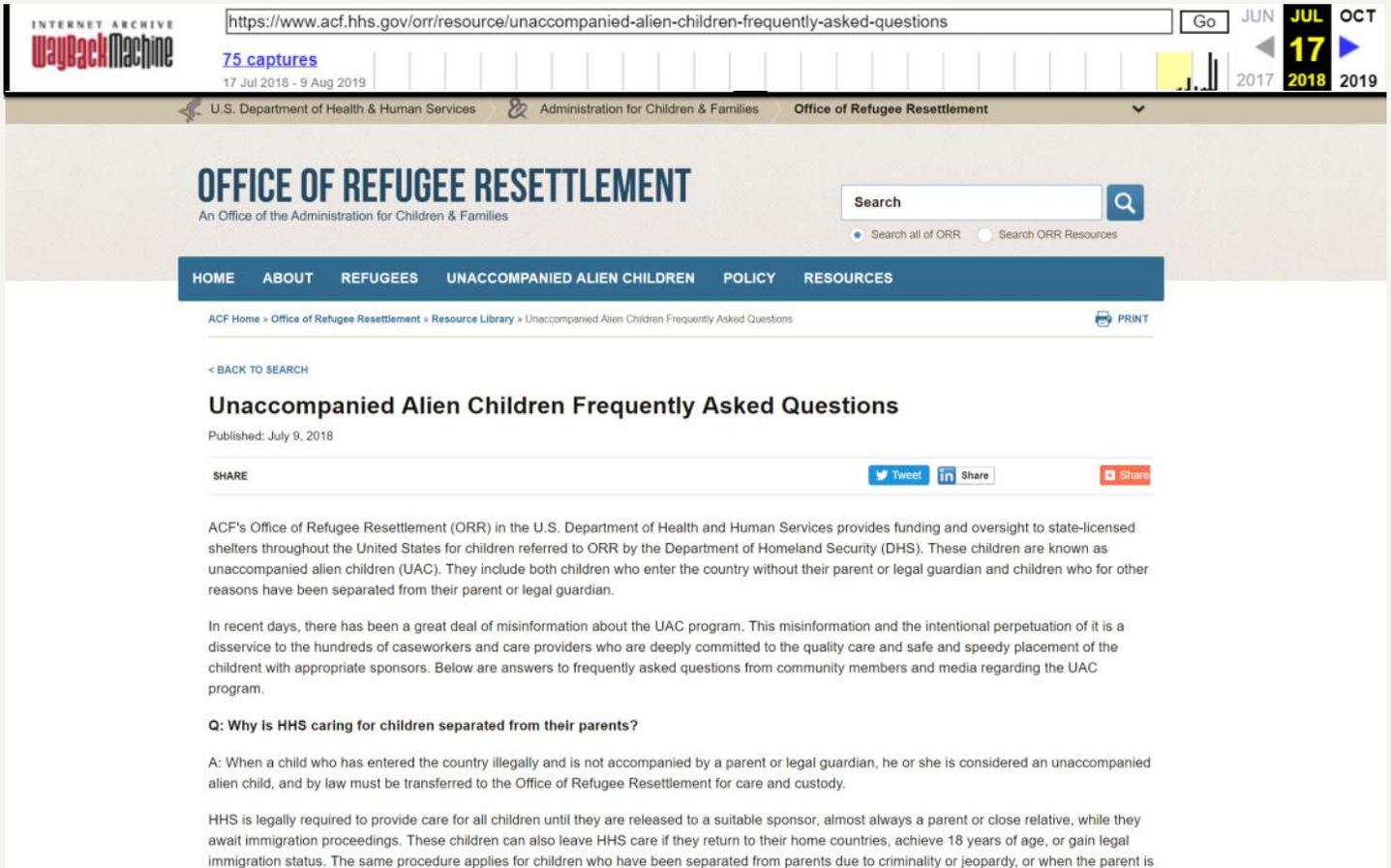
about DNA swabs and other aspects of reunification including the potential for fraud (July 5, 2018 - July 8, 2018). Notably, ORR raised and then declined to answer the question of who was conducting the DNA tests :

**Q. Who is the DNA contractor performing testing?**

A. We are not releasing the contractor information at this time. We have not consulted with the contractor to get that permission.

**Figure 4**

A side-by-side of the top portion of the [July 17, 2018](#) version of ORR’s “Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions” page ([Webpage 5](#)) and the [November 7, 2018](#) version of HHS.gov’s “Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children” page ([Webpage 13](#)), showing borrowed content. (Webpages captured by the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine.)



- Changed the URL of the page to include “alien” in the address (July 8, 2018 - July 11, 2018).
- Removed two questions and answers relating to DNA testing—“Why are you using DNA swabs? Have you done so in the past?” and the unanswered “Who is the DNA contractor performing testing?”—less than two weeks after they were added ([July 17, 2018](#) - July 21, 2018).
- Edited answers relating to the capacity of ORR facilities, community safety, and schooling ([July 17, 2018](#) - July 21, 2018).
- Removed detail about ICE background checks and changed the list of reasons for which parents have been found unsuitable for reunification from “child cruelty, rape, and kidnapping” to “child cruelty, child smuggling, narcotics crimes, robbery convictions, and a warrant for murder” in the question “How does HHS go about confirming the identity of parents, and are there adults in the past year fraudulently claiming to be parents?” ([July 17, 2018](#) - July 21, 2018).
- Added a “Prevention of Sexual Abuse Q&As” section covering ORR’s response to reports of sexual assault, staff hiring and training practices to avoid sexual assault, reporting processes, and the frequency with which sexual assault was reported (July 21, 2018 - [August 8, 2018](#)).
- These changes came around the same time ProPublica reported about sexual abuse in ORR

The screenshot shows the Wayback Machine interface for the URL <https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/unaccompanied-alien-children/faqs/index.html>. The date is set to November 7, 2018. The page content includes a navigation menu with categories like 'About HHS', 'Programs & Services', 'Grants & Contracts', and 'Laws & Regulations'. The main heading is 'Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children'. The text explains that ACF's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provides funding and oversight to state-licensed shelters for children referred to ORR by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). It also addresses a common question: 'Q: Why is HHS caring for children separated from their parents?' with the answer: 'A: When a child who has entered the country illegally and is not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, he or she is considered an unaccompanied alien child, and by law must be transferred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement for care and custody.'



facilities with the headline [Immigrant Youth Shelters: “If You’re a Predator, It’s a Gold Mine”](#). The changes predated [reports of widespread sexual abuse](#) in ORR facilities, which emerged in February 2019.

- ORR also added a page titled [“Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Involving Unaccompanied Children”](#) ([Webpage 10](#)), by [July 3, 2019](#), although this addition was likely in response to a requirement in the Department of Health and Human Services Appropriations Act, 2019 that ORR [“provide detailed information regarding the procedures the Administration follows when child sexual abuse is alleged at facilities operated by ORR contractors.”](#)

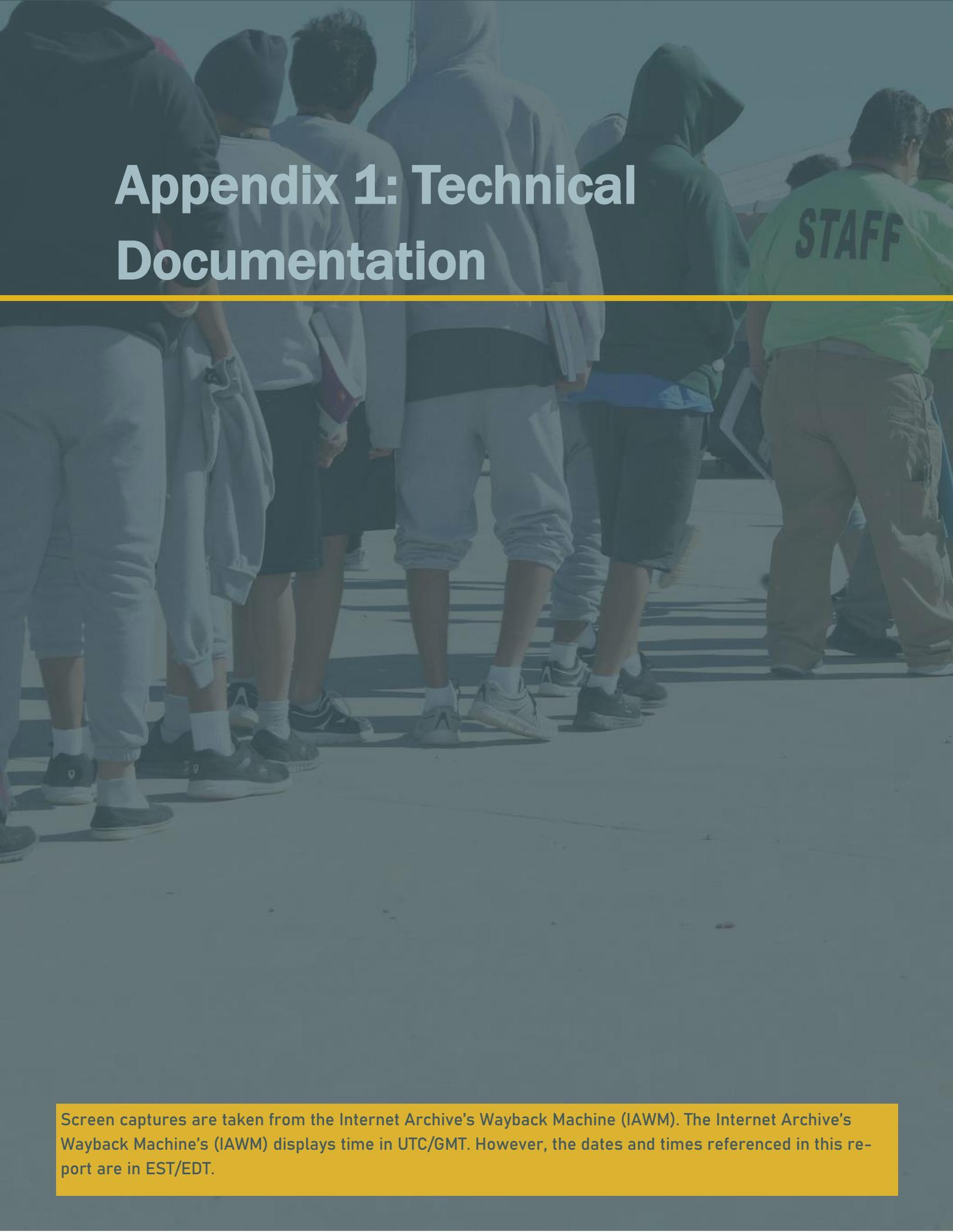
Interestingly, in May 2019, ORR removed the content it added to [Webpage 5](#) between June and August 2018, including the introductory text alleging “misinformation,” the 11 questions and answers and images added between June 29, 2018 and July 5, 2018, the remaining questions about DNA testing added between July 5, 2018 and July 8, 2018, and the “Prevention of Sexual Abuse Q&As” section added between July 21, 2018 and [August 8, 2018](#). These removals returned the page to a form almost identical to what it was before June 14, 2018.

While ORR was busy updating its website in response to the crises, its parent agency, HHS, got in on the act too. By [July 4, 2018](#), HHS had added a page titled “Unaccompanied Alien Children Information” ([Webpage 11](#)) to its website, containing links to fact sheets and recent news releases, a link to [an FAQ hosted on HHS.gov](#) titled “Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children,” contact information, and a photo gallery and a link to a YouTube video presenting conditions in ORR-funded facilities.

It is unclear whether the relationship between HHS’ public relations wing, the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, and ORR’s website and/or communications team

changed or differed from usual during the family separation crisis. ORR syndicated content from [Webpage 11](#) to create a new page with the same name ([Webpage 12](#)), and continues to update it to reflect changes on the HHS page. In the opposite direction, it appears HHS extensively used content from [Webpage 5](#)—including the text claiming misinformation was being spread—to create a new webpage, the “Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children” referenced in the previous paragraph ([Webpage 13](#)) ([Figure 4](#)).



A group of people standing in a line, viewed from behind, with a person in a green shirt labeled 'STAFF' on the right.

# Appendix 1: Technical Documentation

Screen captures are taken from the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine (IAWM). The Internet Archive's Wayback Machine's (IAWM) displays time in UTC/GMT. However, the dates and times referenced in this report are in EST/EDT.

# Webpage 1: Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Guide to Terms

- URL: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-guide-to-terms>
- Changes occurred between [May 31, 2017](#) and [August 1, 2017](#).
- An archived version of the page from [April 30, 2017](#), collected at the request of the Department of Health and Human Services, is available on Archive-It.

**Screenshot 1.1:** A side-by-side comparison of the bottom portion of the “Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Guide to Terms” page captured on [May 31, 2017](#) (left) and [August 1, 2017](#) (right) by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine. The comparison highlights the removed sentence, “ORR uses the term unaccompanied child instead of the term UAC,” and several instances in which the term “alien” was added to the page



**Sponsor** – A sponsor is an individual (in the majority of cases a parent or other relative) or entity to which ORR releases an unaccompanied child out of Federal custody.

**Staff Secure Care** – A staff secure care provider is a facility that maintains stricter security measures, such as higher staff to unaccompanied children ratio for supervision, than a shelter in order to control disruptive behavior and to prevent escape. A staff secure facility is for unaccompanied children who may require close supervision but do not need placement in a secure facility. Service provision is tailored to address an unaccompanied child’s individual needs and to manage the behaviors that necessitated the child’s placement into this more restrictive setting. The staff secure atmosphere reflects a more shelter, home-like setting rather than secure detention. Unlike many secure care providers, a staff secure care provider is not equipped internally with multiple locked pods or cell units; however, the staff secure provider may have a secure perimeter with a “no climb” fence.

**Standard ORR Facility** – ORR shelters that include shelter care, secure care, staff-secure, a residential treatment center, or long term foster care (does not include Influx Care Facilities or HPCs).

**Therapeutic Foster Care** – Therapeutic foster care is a foster family placement funded by ORR for unaccompanied children whose exceptional needs cannot be met in regular family foster care homes and consists of intensive supportive and clinical services in the homes of specially trained foster parents. Foster care programs work in collaboration with foster parents to provide interventions, treatment, protection, care, and nurturance to meet the medical, developmental, and/or psychiatric needs of unaccompanied children. The unaccompanied child typically attends public school and receives community based services.

**Transitional Foster Care** – ORR transitional foster care is synonymous with ORR short term foster care. Transitional foster care is an initial placement option for unaccompanied children under 13 years of age, sibling groups with one sibling under 13 years of age, pregnant/parenting teens, or unaccompanied children with special needs. Unaccompanied children are placed with foster families in the ORR network of care but may attend school and receive most service components at the care provider site.

**Transfer** – A change of placement of an unaccompanied child from one ORR care provider to another ORR care provider.

**Unaccompanied Alien Child (UAC)** – UAC is the term used and defined in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which created the Unaccompanied Children’s program at ORR. A UAC is a child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States; has not attained 18 years of age; and with respect to whom: 1) there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States; or 2) no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody. **ORR uses the term unaccompanied child instead of the term UAC.**

**Unaccompanied Child** – An unaccompanied child is the term ORR uses to refer to a child that meets the definition in the Homeland Security Act of 2002 as a UAC.

**Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program (URM)** – The URM program is the ORR-funded foster care services program available pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1522(d) that establishes legal responsibility, under State law, to ensure that unaccompanied minor refugees and other eligible children (such as children granted asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, T or U status) receive the full range of assistance, care, and services that are available to all foster children in the State.

## Change Details

The following changes occurred between [May 31, 2017](#) and [August 1, 2017](#):

1. **Removed text:**

“ORR uses the term unaccompanied child instead of the term UAC.”

2. **Altered text to include use of the term “alien”:**

**From:**

“**Unaccompanied Child** – An unaccompanied child is the term ORR uses to refer to a child that meets the definition in the Homeland Security Act of 2002 as a UAC.”

**To:**

“**Unaccompanied Alien Child** – An unaccompanied alien child is the term ORR uses to refer to a child that meets the definition in the Homeland Security Act of 2002 as a UAC.”

3. **Added 54 other instances of the term “alien” to the page (see [Table 1](#)).**

INTERNET ARCHIVE Wayback Machine <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-guide-to-terms> Go MAY AUG JUL 31 captures 26 Jul 2016 - 1 Aug 2019 2016 2017 2018

**Sponsor** – A sponsor is an individual (in the majority of cases a parent or other relative) or entity to which ORR releases an unaccompanied alien child out of Federal custody.

**Staff Secure Care** – A staff secure care provider is a facility that maintains stricter security measures, such as higher staff to unaccompanied alien children ratio for supervision, than a shelter in order to control disruptive behavior and to prevent escape. A staff secure facility is for unaccompanied alien children who may require close supervision but do not need placement in a secure facility. Service provision is tailored to address an unaccompanied alien child's individual needs and to manage the behaviors that necessitated the child's placement into this more restrictive setting. The staff secure atmosphere reflects a more shelter, home-like setting rather than secure detention. Unlike many secure care providers, a staff secure care provider is not equipped internally with multiple locked pods or cell units; however, the staff secure provider may have a secure perimeter with a “no climb” fence.

**Standard ORR Facility** – ORR shelters that include shelter care, secure care, staff-secure, a residential treatment center, or long term foster care (does not include Influx Care Facilities or HPCs).

**Therapeutic Foster Care** – Therapeutic foster care is a foster family placement funded by ORR for unaccompanied alien children whose exceptional needs cannot be met in regular family foster care homes and consists of intensive supportive and clinical services in the homes of specially trained foster parents. Foster care programs work in collaboration with foster parents to provide interventions, treatment, protection, care, and nurturance to meet the medical, developmental, and/or psychiatric needs of unaccompanied alien children. The unaccompanied alien child typically attends public school and receives community based services.

**Transitional Foster Care** – ORR transitional foster care is synonymous with ORR short term foster care. Transitional foster care is an initial placement option for unaccompanied alien children under 13 years of age, sibling groups with one sibling under 13 years of age, pregnant/parenting teens, or unaccompanied alien children with special needs. Unaccompanied alien children are placed with foster families in the ORR network of care but may attend school and receive most service components at the care provider site.

**Transfer** – A change of placement of an unaccompanied alien child from one ORR care provider to another ORR care provider.

**Unaccompanied Alien Child (UAC)** – UAC is the term used and defined in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which created the Unaccompanied Alien Children's program at ORR. A UAC is a child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States; has not attained 18 years of age; and with respect to whom: 1) there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States; or 2) no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody.

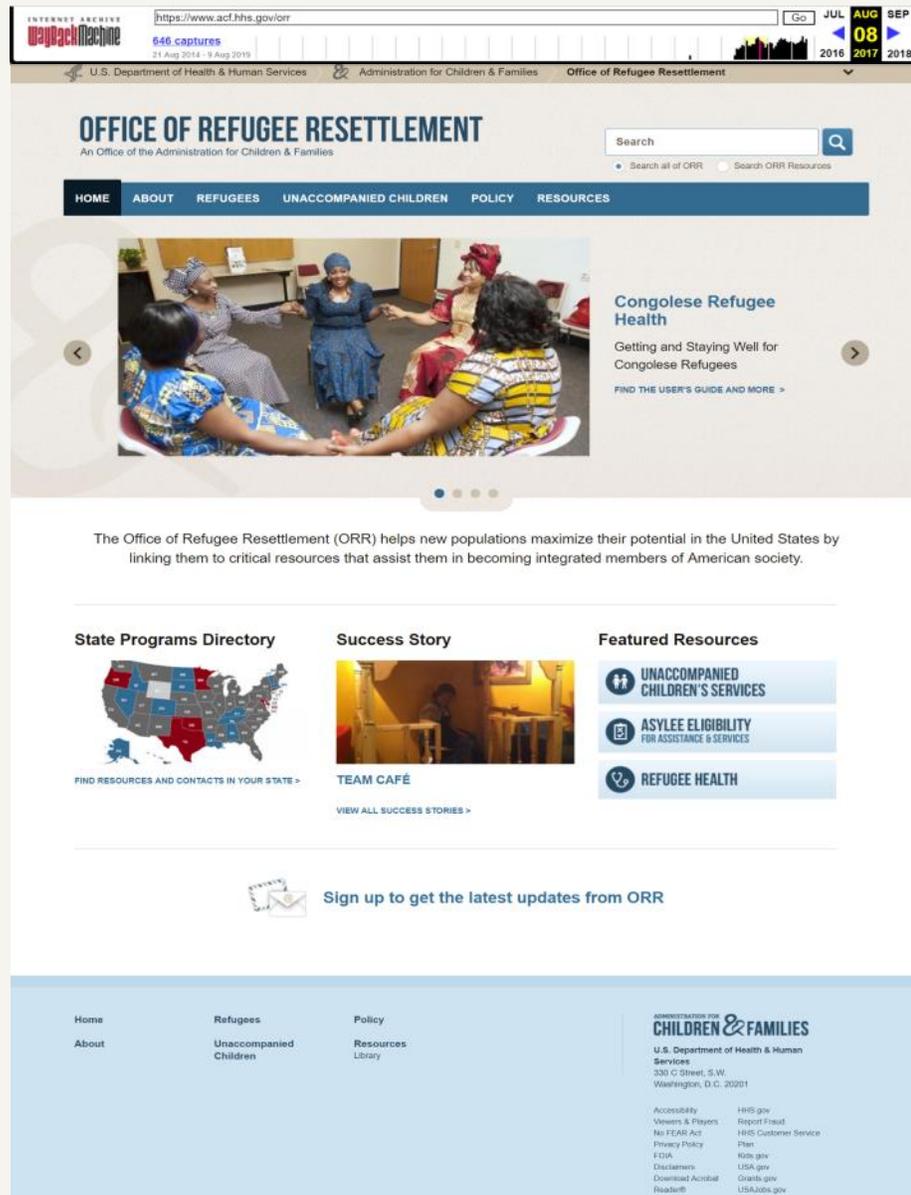
**Unaccompanied Alien Child** – An unaccompanied alien child is the term ORR uses to refer to a child that meets the definition in the Homeland Security Act of 2002 as a UAC.

**Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program (URM)** – The URM program is the ORR-funded foster care services program available pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1522(d) that establishes legal responsibility, under State law, to ensure that unaccompanied minor refugees and other eligible children (such as children granted asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, T or U status) receive the full range of assistance, care, and services that are available to all foster children in the State.

# Webpage 2: Home

- URL: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr>
- Changes occurred between [August 8, 2017](#) and [August 13, 2017](#).
- An archived version of the page from [April 29, 2017](#), collected at the request of the Department of Health and Human Services, is available on Archive-It.

**Screenshot 2.1:** A side-by-side comparison of the Office of Refugee Resettlement Homepage captured on [August 8, 2017](#) (left) and [August 13, 2017](#) (right) by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine. The capture shows the main menu and footer with the text “Unaccompanied Alien Children” before and after the term “alien” was added.



## Change Details

The following changes occurred between [August 8, 2017](#) and [August 13, 2017](#):

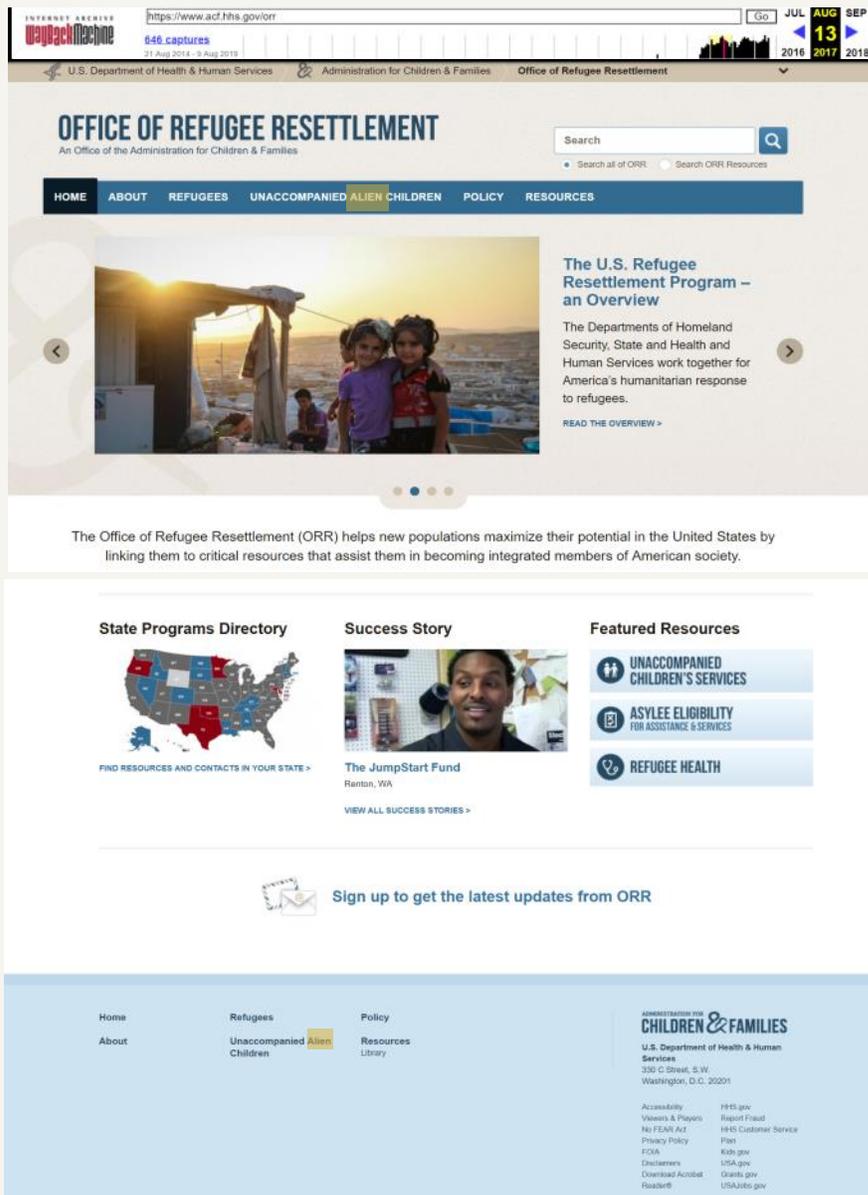
- Altered text in the main menu:**

**From:** “Unaccompanied Children”

**To:** “Unaccompanied Alien Children”
- Altered text in the footer:**

**From:** “Unaccompanied Children”

**To:** “Unaccompanied Alien Children”



# Webpage 3: Unaccompanied Alien Children

*Previously “Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services” and “Unaccompanied Children's Services”*

- URL: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/uacs>
- Changes occurred between [June 27, 2017](#) and December 1, 2018 (See IAMW capture from [January 8, 2019](#)).
- An archived version of the page from [April 30, 2017](#), collected at the request of the Department of Health and Human Services, is available on Archive-It.

## Change Details

The following changes occurred between [June 27, 2017](#) and [July 4, 2017](#):

1. **Altered** page title:

**From:**

“Unaccompanied Children's Services”

**To:**

“Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services”

2. **Altered** text to include the term “alien”:

**From:**

“On March 1, 2003, the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Section 462, transferred responsibilities for the care and placement of unaccompanied children from the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service to the Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).”

**To:**

“On March 1, 2003, the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Section 462, transferred responsibilities for the care and placement of unaccompanied alien children from the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service to the Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).”

3. **Altered** text to include the term “alien”:

**From:**

“Unaccompanied children apprehended by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration officials are transferred to the care and custody of ORR.”

**To:**

“Unaccompanied alien children apprehended by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration officials are transferred to the care and custody of ORR.”

4. **Altered** title of ORR Guide to include the term “alien”:

**From:** "ORR Policy Guide: Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied"

**To:** "ORR Policy Guide: Alien Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied"

5. **Altered** text description of ORR Guide to include the term "alien":

**From:** "Describes policies for the placement, timely release and care of unaccompanied children in ORR custody."

**To:** "Describes policies for the placement, timely release and care of unaccompanied alien children in ORR custody."

6. **Altered** text to include the term "alien":

**From:** "Key Documents for the Unaccompanied Children's Services Program"

**To:** "Key Documents for the Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services Program"

7. **Altered** text with link:

**From:** "[READ MORE ABOUT UCS](#)"

**To:** "[READ MORE ABOUT UACS](#)"

The following changes occurred between [August 7, 2017](#) and [August 11, 2017](#):

1. **Altered** page title to remove reference to "services":

**From:** "Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services"

**To:** "Unaccompanied Alien Children"

2. **Altered** text in the sidebar menu to remove reference to "services":

**From:** "[Unaccompanied Children's Services \(UCS\)](#)"

**To:** "[Unaccompanied Alien Children \(UAC\)](#)."

And

**From:** "[About UCS Program](#)"

**To:** "[About UAC Program](#)"

3. **Altered** text to remove reference to "services":

**From:**

[“Key Documents for the Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services Program”](#)

To:

[“Key Documents for the Unaccompanied Alien Children Program”](#)

The following changes occurred between [January 14, 2018](#) and [February 23, 2018](#):

1. **Altered** text to include reference to “UAC”:

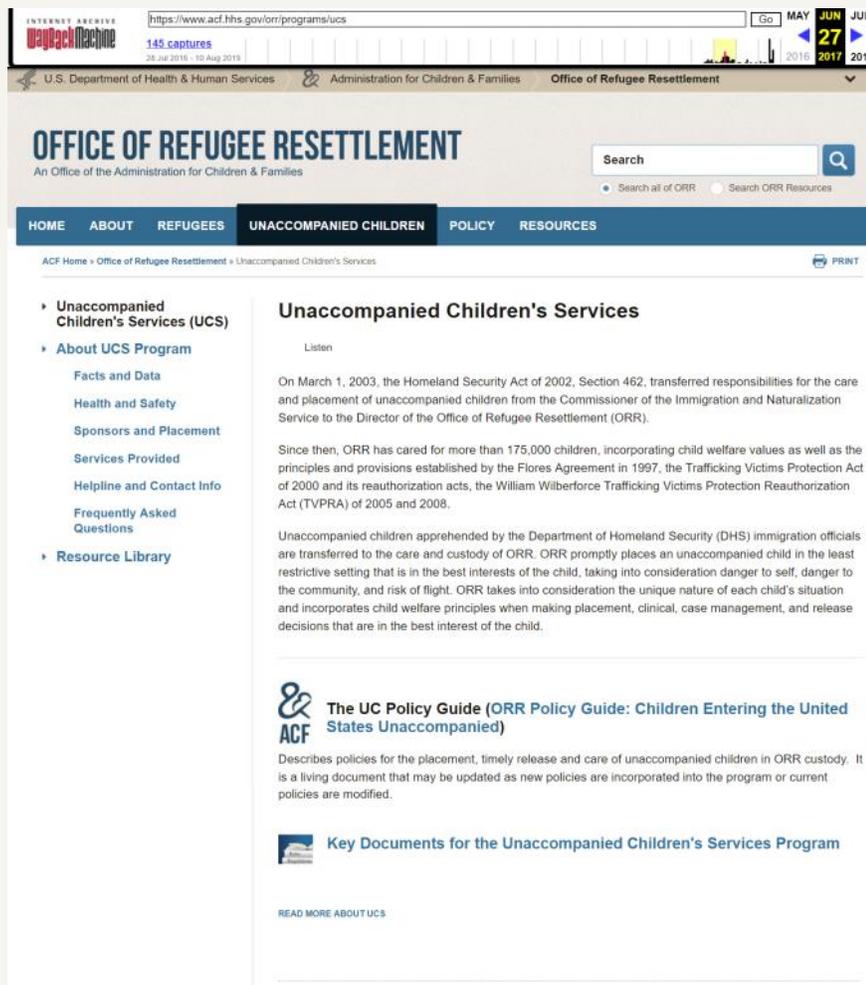
From:

“The UC Policy Guide ([ORR Policy Guide: Alien Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied](#))”

To:

“The UAC Policy Guide ([ORR Policy Guide: Alien Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied](#))”

**Screenshot 3.1:** Side-by-side comparison of the “Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services” page (previously titled “Unaccompanied Children's Services”) captured on [June 27, 2017](#) (left) and [July 4, 2017](#) (right) by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine. The capture shows the page before and after the term “alien” was introduced.



The following changes occurred between June 28, 2018 and July 4, 2018 (See closest IAWM captures from [June 21, 2018](#) and [August 7, 2018](#)):

1. **Added** link in sidebar menu to new page called “Gallery” at the URL <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/gallery>. (See [Webpage 9](#))

The following changes occurred between July 4, 2018 and July 7, 2018 (See closest IAWM captures from [June 21, 2018](#) and [August 7, 2018](#)):

1. **Added** text “Learn more about the UAC program.” and an external link to HHS.gov’s “Unaccompanied Alien Children Information” page (See [Webpage 11](#)).

The following changes occurred between [November 6, 2018](#) and December 1, 2018 (See closest IAWM capture from [January 8, 2019](#)):

1. **Added** link in sidebar menu to new page called “Unaccompanied Alien Children Information” at URL <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-information>. (See [Webpage 12](#)).

The screenshot shows the website for the Office of Refugee Resettlement, an office within the Administration for Children & Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. The page is titled "Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services". It features a navigation menu with options like HOME, ABOUT, REFUGEES, UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN, POLICY, and RESOURCES. A sidebar on the left lists various resources under "Unaccompanied Children's Services (UCS)", including "About UCS Program" (with sub-links for Facts and Data, Health and Safety, Sponsors and Placement, Services Provided, Helpline and Contact Info, and Frequently Asked Questions) and a "Resource Library". The main content area includes a "Listen" button and text detailing the program's history, starting from the Homeland Security Act of 2002. It also provides links to a "UC Policy Guide" and "Key Documents for the Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services Program".

## Webpage 4: Services Provided

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- URL: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/services-provided>
  - Changes occurred between [June 12, 2017](#) and [May 23, 2019](#).
  - Archived version of the page from [April 30, 2017](#) and [November 9, 2018](#), collected at the request of the Department of Health and Human Services, are available on [Archive-It](#).
- 

### Change Details

The following change occurred between [June 12, 2017](#) and [July 6, 2017](#):

1. **Altered** text to add the term “alien” into 8 references of “unaccompanied child” or “unaccompanied children.”

The following changes occurred between [March 26, 2019](#) and [May 23, 2019](#):

1. **Altered** text to add 13 references to “UAC” and remove 14 references to “child” or “children” (not in context of the terms “unaccompanied alien children” or “unaccompanied alien child”).

2. **Removed** text under the heading “Services Provided”:

“The Office of Refugee Resettlement is responsible for providing care to children referred by immigration authorities. Consistent with federal law, ORR places children in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child, taking into account potential flight risk and danger to self and others. The majority of the youth are cared for through a network of state-licensed ORR-funded care providers that provide:

- Access to Legal services
- Education
- Culture, language and religious observation
- Physical and mental health care
- Recreation”

3. **Altered** text under the heading “Access to Legal Services”:

**From:**

“The Department of Health and Human Services is required to arrange for legal representation for unaccompanied alien children to the greatest extent practicable under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, though the law specifically acknowledges that there is no obligation for the government to provide paid counsel.

All children receive the following legal information:

- the mandated “Know Your Rights” workshop
- pro bono legal service provider lists
- notifying the children of Special Immigrant Juvenile Status eligibility guidelines

ORR provides Know Your Rights presentations and legal screenings of unaccompanied alien children to determine potential eligibility for immigration relief. Information about legal services are also maintained and provided upon release. In addition, ORR supports pro bono representation and provides ORR-funded legal representation for children in its long-term foster care program, children released locally to their care provider facility, those seeking voluntary departure, and those imminently facing an order of removal or otherwise without reunification options.

ORR also funds direct representation or court appearance support for unaccompanied children. The contracts focus on providing post-release direct representation in the nine priority cities, children who are released from a shelter locally, and other children according to the solicitation and ORR requirements.

Children also have access to phones to contact family or legal services.”

**To:**

“All UAC receive the following legal information:

1. Mandated “Know Your Rights” workshop
2. Pro bono legal service provider lists
3. Notification of Special Immigrant Juvenile Status eligibility guidelines

Information about legal services are also maintained and provided upon release.

Under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, the Department of Health and Human Services is required to arrange for legal representation for unaccompanied alien children to the greatest extent practicable, but the law specifically acknowledges that HHS has no obligation to pay for counsel.

ORR provides funding for a legal services provider to give “Know Your Rights” presentation and a legal screening to all unaccompanied alien children (UAC) in ORR custody. A screening determines the UAC’s potential eligibility for immigration relief. The contractor provides direct representation for UAC in ORR short-term custody while they await reunification with a sponsor. Direct representation is also provided for UAC in ORR’s long-term care programs, UAC who are released locally in 9 designated cities, UAC seeking voluntary departure or a removal order and UAC who are without reunification options.”

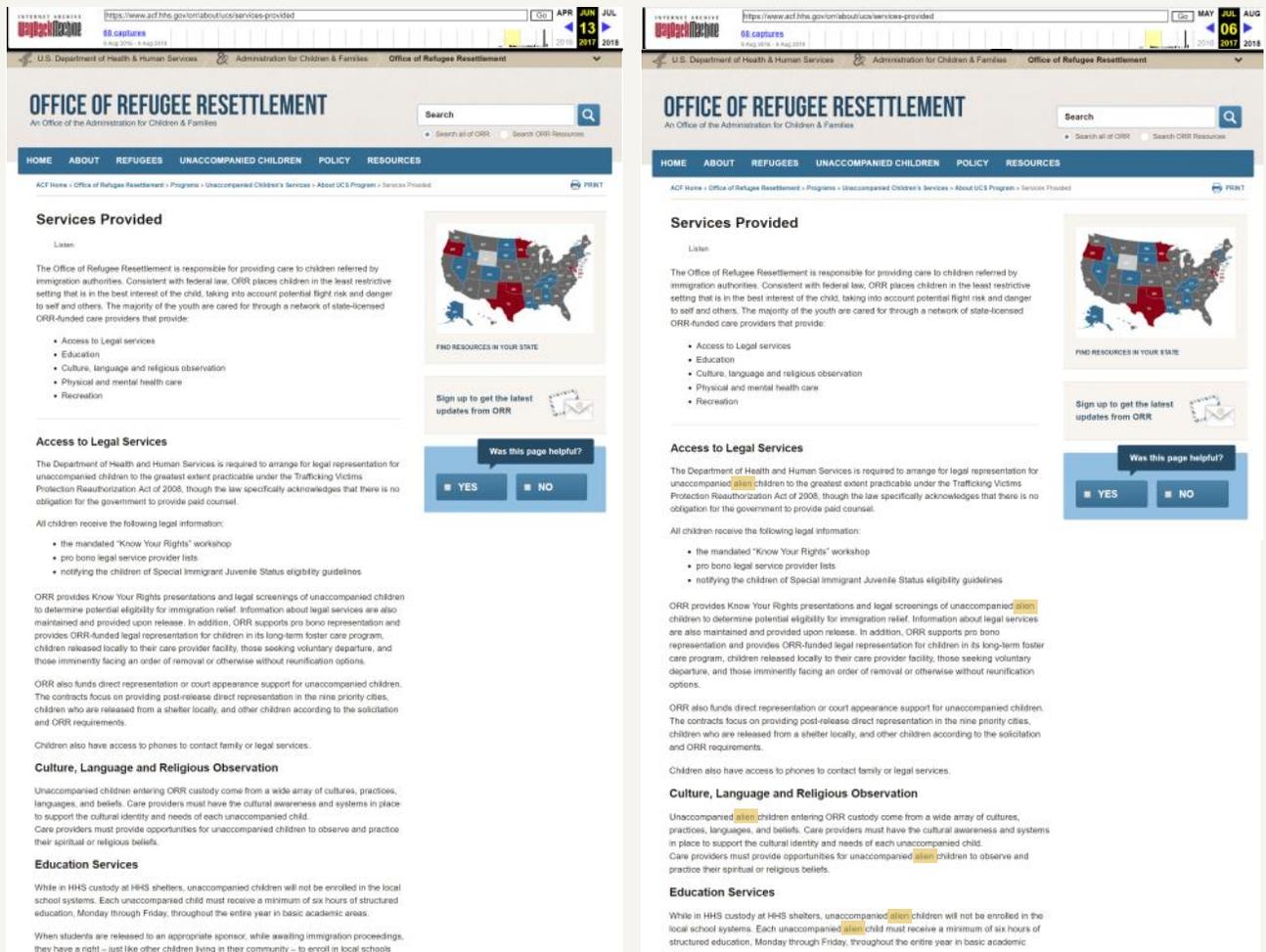
**4. Added text under the heading “Cultural, Language and Religious Observation”:**

“Additionally, care providers must make every effort possible to provide comprehensive services and literature in the native language of each unaccompanied alien child; provide on-site staff or interpreters as needed; and allow unaccompanied alien children to communicate in their preferred language when they choose.”

5. **Removed** a section with the heading “Physical and Mental Health Care”:

- The section contained the text “See the [Health and Safety](#) page for more information.”
  - The section linked to the still live “Health and Safety” page at the URL <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/health-and-safety>.
  - The page touches on topics including health screenings, mental health care, reportable infectious diseases, safety planning, mandatory reporting laws, privacy, post-release services, and the UAC Help Line.
- For more detail on these changes, see [Changes to Office of Refugee Resettlement Website Foreshadowed Policy Announcements](#) (June 13, 2019).

**Screenshot 4.1:** A side-by-side comparison of the “Services Provided” page captured on [June 12, 2017](#) (left) and [July 6, 2017](#) (right) by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine. The capture shows the addition of the term “alien.”



# Webpage 5: Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions

## Previously “Unaccompanied Children Frequently Asked Questions”

- URL: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/unaccompanied-children-frequently-asked-questions>.
  - The page was later moved to <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-frequently-asked-questions>
- Changes occurred between [May 14, 2017](#) and [May 30, 2019](#).
- Archived versions of the page, capturing some of the alterations documented here and collected at the request of the Department of Health and Human Services, are available on Archive-It at [https://wayback.archive-it.org/all/\\*https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/unaccompanied-children-frequently-asked-questions/](https://wayback.archive-it.org/all/*https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/unaccompanied-children-frequently-asked-questions/) and [https://wayback.archive-it.org/all/\\*https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-frequently-asked-questions/](https://wayback.archive-it.org/all/*https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-frequently-asked-questions/).

### Change Details

The following changes occurred between [May 14, 2017](#) and [July 13, 2017](#):

1. **Altered** the title of the page:
 

**From:**

“Unaccompanied Children Frequently Asked Questions”

**To:**

“Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions”
2. **Altered** text to add “alien” between “unaccompanied” and “children” in fifteen instances and to replace “UC” with “UAC” in two instances.

The following change occurred between [June 14, 2018](#) and [June 20, 2018](#):

1. **Altered** text to replace “35” with “57” in the sentence “Children spend fewer than 35 days on average at the shelters and do not integrate into the local community” and to update the annual appropriation (from “The FY16 appropriation for this program is \$948 million” to “The FY18 appropriation for this program is \$1.3 billion.”

**Note:** The July 5, 2018 through April 13, 2019 versions of the “Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions” page contain much of the same content as HHS.gov’s “[Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children](#)” page (Webpage 13). The HHS.gov page is dated July 8, 2018 but was first captured by the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine on [November 7, 2018](#). It is unclear whether the content on HHS.gov’s “Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children” page was the source for content on ORR’s “Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions” page, or vice versa.

The following changes occurred between [June 20, 2018](#) to [June 22, 2018](#) (according to our monitoring software; see the closest IAWM capture, from [July 17, 2018](#)):

1. **Altered** answer to question “Q: How can individuals or communities help?:

(i) Removed text “In response to this humanitarian effort,”

(ii) Altered text:

**From:**

Additional information and updates are available online at the resources listed below.

- [English](#)
- [Spanish](#)

Several refugee resettlement non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the U.S. are accepting monetary donations and, in some cases, experienced volunteers to assist incoming refugee families, although not specifically unaccompanied alien children, in support of the effort of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program at the State Department. Information, by state, for refugee resettlement NGOs can be found at the [State Department’s Refugee Processing Center \(RPC\) webpage](#) or the [HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement \(ORR\) webpage](#).”

**To:**

“You can find resources and contacts in your state at the following on-line address:

[www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/state-programs-annual-overview](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/state-programs-annual-overview)”

(iii) Added “alien” between “unaccompanied” and “children” twice.

The following changes occurred between [June 29, 2018](#) and [July 5, 2018](#) (See IAWM captures from [June 20, 2018](#) and [July 17, 2018](#)):

1. **Altered** introductory text:

**From:**

“ACF’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services operates shelters throughout the United States for children referred to ORR who enter the country without their parent. These shelters are consistently quiet and good neighbors in the communities where they are located.”

**To:**

“ACF’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provides funding and oversight to state licensed shelters throughout the United States for children referred to ORR, by the Department of Homeland Security, known as unaccompanied alien children (UAC). These include both children who enter the country without their parent or legal guardian and children who for other reasons have been separated from their parent or legal guardian.

In recent days, there has been a great deal of misinformation about the UAC program. This misinformation and the intentional perpetuation of it is a disservice to the hundreds of caseworkers and care providers who are deeply committed to the quality care and safe and speedy placement of UAC to appropriate sponsors. Below are answers to frequently asked questions from community members and media regarding the UAC program.”

2. **Added** text and images for the following questions and answers:

**“Q: Why is HHS caring for children separated from their parents?”**

A: When a child who has entered the country illegally and is not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, he or she is considered an unaccompanied alien child (UAC), and by law must be transferred to HHS’s Office of Refugee Resettlement for care and custody.

HHS is legally required to provide care for all children until they are released to a suitable sponsor, almost always a parent or close relative, while they await immigration proceedings. These children can also leave HHS care if they return to their home countries, achieve 18 years of age, or gain legal immigration status. The same procedure applies for children who have been separated from parents due to criminality or jeopardy, or when the parent is detained to await trial or convicted of a criminal offense and must serve time in federal custody.

**Q: Is there a system for keeping parents and children connected if they are separated for immigration proceedings?**

A.: Yes. When adults and minors are apprehended by immigration authorities, their information is entered into government databases through which their cases can be tracked.

HHS has an electronic portal through which we track every child in our care—currently, more than 11,800 minors.

All minors in HHS care are assigned case managers. In the circumstance of children whose parents are in federal custody, the minors’ case managers are in contact with the parents’ ICE case managers, ICE agents, and other federal law enforcement officials in order to verify their relationship and put the parents and children in communication. U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps and other resource staff have been deployed to DHS facilities to assist parents in communicating with their children.

HHS has long provided resources for parents, including those in DHS custody, to communicate with their children in HHS care. Parents or guardians attempting to determine if their child is in HHS care should contact the ORR National Call Center ([www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/orr-national-call-center](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/orr-national-call-center)) at 1-800-203-7001, or via email [information@ORRNCC.com](mailto:information@ORRNCC.com). Information will be collected and sent to the HHS-funded facility where the minor is located. The ORR National Call Center has numerous resources available for children, parents, guardians, and sponsors.

**Q: Is HHS confident that this large number of children and parents, dispersed across the country, can be connected and reunited?**

A: Yes. The UAC program has a wealth of experience in connecting the unaccompanied minors in its care to their parents and discharging them to parents, other family members, or other suitable sponsors since 2003, and has developed resources and systems for doing so. This has included communication and reunification with parents across the United States and around the world.

**Q: What are the procedures for children separated from their parents to communicate with each other?**

A: Within 24 hours of arrival, minors are given the opportunity to communicate with a verified parent, guardian, or relative living in or outside the United States. Every effort is made to ensure minors can communicate (via telephone or video) at least twice per week. This communication is paid for by HHS.

Safety precautions are in place to ensure that an adult wishing to communicate with a minor is a family member or potential sponsor. Attorneys representing minors have unlimited telephone access and the minor may speak to other appropriate stakeholders, such as their consulate, case coordinator, or child advocate.

**Q: Do children in HHS care have access to lawyers?**

A: Yes. HHS fulfills all requirements of the *Flores settlement agreement and informs all minors of their rights by providing a Legal Resources Guide, Know Your Rights presentations, and HHS-funded legal services.*

**Q: How can very young children or children who are non-verbal be reunified with their parents?**

A: This challenge is not new for ORR, which has worked since 2003 to discharge the unaccompanied alien children in its care to parents, other relatives, or other suitable sponsors. ORR has procedures and systems for identifying the parents of very young children and children who are non-verbal.

**Q: What kind of conditions do children in HHS-funded facilities experience?**

A: UAC shelters provide housing, nutrition, physical and mental healthcare, educational services, and recreational activities such as television and sports. They provide an environment on par with facilities in the child-welfare system that house American children.

The facilities are operated by nonprofit grantees that are certified by state authorities responsible for regulating such facilities housing children.

**Q: What kind of access have the media been given to the HHS-funded facilities?**

A: More than 50 separate media outlets have toured HHS-funded UAC

facilities. There are restrictions on what kind of media coverage is possible, due to the need for privacy regarding children in our care.

HHS is committed to transparency around our work with children, and has also made available still photos and video of facilities housing both boys and girls taken recently and dating back to 2016, demonstrating continuity of care across administrations



**Q: What kind of access have Members of Congress and local officials been given to the HHS-funded facilities?**

A: More than 70 members of Congress and more than 60 congressional staff members toured HHS-funded UAC facilities in June 2018. HHS is working with the relevant authorities in Congress to regularly schedule more tours, based on the availability of the facilities and prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of the children in our care.

**Q: Where are HHS-funded UAC facilities located? Are there any near me?**

A: HHS currently operates a network of more than 100 shelters in 17 states and has a proven track record of accountability and transparency for program operations, as well as being a good neighbor in the communities where shelters are located. HHS policy is to not publish or publicize the addresses of shelters to protect the privacy and security of the children and minimize disruption of the facilities.

**Q: Does HHS have the capacity to care for an increasing number of children?**

A: The UAC program has expanded and contracted over the years, driven by a variety of factors. It is designed to work in this way, and HHS has developed processes for bringing both permanent and semi-permanent UAC capacity online as needed.

HHS has a bed capacity framework with grant and contract mechanisms that allow for a sufficient base number of standard beds, with the ability to quickly add temporary beds, which provides the capability to accommodate changing flows.

HHS continues to update its bed capacity planning to account for the most recently available data, including information from interagency partners, to leverage available funds to be prepared for changing needs.

Given the numbers of unaccompanied alien children referred to its care since October 1, 2017, HHS has increased the number of shelter beds from approximately 6,500 to approximately 11,900 beds. In addition, HHS has re-established a temporary shelter for UAC in Homestead, Florida.”

**The following changes occurred between July 5, 2018 and July 8, 2018** (See IAWM for [June 20, 2018](#) and [July 17, 2018](#)):

1. **Altered** text including:
  - (i) Minor grammatical changes, such as replacing “wellbeing” with “well-being” and “Members of Congress” with “members of Congress” and defining acronyms.
  - (ii) In the answer to the question "Is there a system for keeping parents and children connected if they are separated for immigration proceedings?," the text "including both children separated from their parents and those who arrived alone." was added.

2. **Added** seven new questions and answers:

**“Q, Why are you using DNA swabs? Have you done so in the past?”**

A. Yes, in fact, DNA matching is often used in the ORR UAC program when documents are not available or unverifiable.

The court-imposed timeframe is not adequate to do the usual document-based verification process for most of the minors in our custody. While reunification with most parents is in the best interest of the child, proper and careful vetting for child safety is essential.

**Q. How are cheek swabs being performed?**

A. ORR grantees are swabbing the cheeks of the children in ORR custody, while DHS personnel or the field teams deployed by HHS are swabbing the cheeks of the purported parents in ICE custody. The cheek swabs are then sent to a third-party laboratory services provider to complete the DNA testing. The results are then transmitted electronically to the Incident Management Team at the SOC, which shares them with the grantees. HHS will use the results only for verifying parentage.

**Q. What happens to results after reunification?**

A. HHS is using DNA testing – a practice normally used by ORR when regular documentation is not available – to expedite verification of parentage and comply with the court’s artificial deadlines. A DNA test is done only when there is a specific purported parent-child relationship that needs to be validated. The DNA sample is only compared to the parent that is believed to be linked to the child. HHS has instructed the testing contractor to destroy both the DNA swabs and the results after verification is complete.

**Q. Who is the DNA contractor performing testing?**

A. We are not releasing the contractor information at this time. We have not consulted with the contractor to get that permission.

**Q. Has this been done before?**

A. Yes, it is done routinely in cases where verified documents are unavailable.

**Q. Why doesn’t HHS just quickly find family members, including parents, and immediately unify or re-unify?**

A. We are determined to do everything we can to ensure the safety of the children in our custody after they leave our care. To do so, we are working with other federal agencies to perform background checks on purported parents. HHS staff (Federal Field Specialists on the ground) together with dedicated staff at grantees’ shelters work hard to determine suitability and identity to help to improve the chances that the minor will be well-taken care of when they leave HHS care.

**Q. How does HHS go about confirming the identity of parents, and are there adults in the past year fraudulently claiming to be parents?**

A. Reunification with most parents is in the best interest of the child, but proper and careful vetting for child safety is essential. Historically, HHS provided the care of a child in our custody and then performed criminal background checks on a sponsor and other adults in their household, ensured appropriate living arrangements, and confirmed the sponsor’s ability to care for a child.

In light of the recent district court ruling, new efforts have had to be made to specifically determine whether a child was separated from a parent at the border and gather additional information about the purported parent.

In some circumstances, the purported parents were deemed unfit for care. For example, in vetting of parents for children under 5 years of age – which the court says must be completed so they can be reunited next week – two were identified in ICE criminal background

checks as having criminal histories that were inconsistent with child safety: the purported parents have a history of charges of child cruelty, rape, and kidnapping, based on information provided by ICE.”

**The following change occurred between July 8, 2018 and July 11, 2018** (See IAWM for [June 20, 2018](#) and [July 17, 2018](#)):

1. **Moved** to a new URL that includes “alien” in the address.
  - From:** <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/unaccompanied-children-frequently-asked-questions>
  - To:** <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-frequently-asked-questions>
  - The old URL redirects to the new URL.

**The following changes occurred between July 17, 2018 and July 21, 2018** (See IAWM for [August 8, 2018](#)):

1. **Altered** text in answer to “Does HHS have the capacity to care for an increasing number of children?”
  - From:** “Given the numbers of unaccompanied alien children referred to its care since Oct. 1, 2017, HHS has increased the number of shelter beds from about 6,500 to about 11,900 beds. In addition, HHS has re-established a temporary shelter for UAC in Homestead, Florida.”
  - To:** “Given the numbers of unaccompanied alien children referred to its care since Oct. 1, 2017, HHS has increased the number of shelter beds from about 6,500 to about 13,000 beds. To build this capacity HHS re-opened a temporary emergency influx shelter for UAC in Homestead, Florida and established a new temporary emergency influx shelter in Tornillo, Texas.”
2. **Removed** two questions and answers relating to DNA swabs, “Why are you using DNA swabs? Have you done so in the past?” and “Who is the DNA contractor performing testing?”
3. **Altered** question from “Has this been done before?” to “Has ORR used DNA tests before?” The answer was unchanged.
4. **Altered** text in answer to “How does HHS go about confirming the identity of parents, and are there adults in the past year fraudulently claiming to be parents?”
  - From:** “In some circumstances, the purported parents were deemed unfit for care. For example, in vetting of parents for children under 5 years of age – which the court says must be completed so they can be reunited next week – two were identified in ICE criminal background checks as having criminal histories that were inconsistent with child safety: the purported parents have a history of charges of child cruelty, rape, and kidnapping, based on information provided by ICE.”

**To:** “Some parents have been found unsuitable for reunification because of issues discovered during a criminal background check, including child cruelty, child smuggling, narcotics crimes, robbery convictions, and a warrant for murder.”

5. **Altered** text in answer to “Are communities safe with these kids in it? There are rumors that some kids are gang members.”

**From:** “Children served by the Office of Refugee Resettlement program do not integrate into the local community. They are not permitted to visit the local town or area attractions unless supervised by approved staff. Each staff member is required to maintain visibility on children at all times and know the exact location of each child.”

**To:** “ORR works in close coordination with local officials on security and safety of the children and the community. These children do not attend local schools while in ORR care. The impact of these shelters on the local community is minimal. Children spend 57 days on average at the shelters and do not integrate into the local community while in HHS custody. They remain under staff supervision at all times.”

6. **Altered** text in answer to “Are children who arrived as unaccompanied alien children ever enrolled in local schools?”

- (i) **Altered** the first sentence:

**From:** “While students are in HHS custody at HHS shelters, they will not be enrolled in the local school systems.”

**To:** “ORR works in close coordination with local officials on security and safety of the children and the community. These children do not attend local schools while in ORR care. The impact of these shelters on the local community is minimal. Children spend 57 days on average at the shelters and do not integrate into the local community while in HHS custody. They remain under staff supervision at all times.”

- (ii) **Replaced** the word “students” with “UAC.”

- (iii) **Removed** the sentence “Children in all other care settings receive education at an HHS facility.”

**The following changes occurred between July 21, 2018** (See IAWM for [July 17, 2018](#)) **and [August 8, 2018](#):**

1. **Added** a “Prevention of Sexual Abuse Q&As” section:

**“Prevention of Sexual Abuse Q&As**

**Q:** What are the reporting requirements for care providers when they learn of an allegation of sexual abuse in their facility?

**A:** ORR has a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of sexual abuse and sexual harassment in all of its care provider facilities. Care providers must report sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or inappropriate sexual behavior that occur in ORR care immediately, but no later than four hours after learning of the allegation. Care providers report this

information via a sexual abuse significant incident report (SIR). Care providers must follow state licensing requirements to report allegations of sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual behavior.

Care providers report allegations of sexual abuse to Child Protective Services (CPS), the state licensing agency, HHS/OIG, and the FBI. In the case of a sexual abuse allegation involving minors, CPS or state licensing may cross-report to local law enforcement. If an allegation involves an adult, the care provider must notify local law enforcement.

**Q: How does ORR respond to an allegation of sexual abuse?**

A: ORR reviews every report of sexual abuse submitted by care providers. When appropriate, ORR issues corrective actions or stops further placement of unaccompanied alien children (UAC) until the care provider addresses identified issues.

Additionally, ORR conducts monitoring activities of all care providers. ORR conducts desk monitoring and site visits routinely. ORR attempts to conduct a formal monitoring visit at least once a year. Most of ORR's care providers are state licensed and are therefore subject to monitoring by state licensing agencies.

**Q: Does ORR have policies that specifically address sexual abuse?**

A: Section 4 of the ORR Policy Guide implements ORR's Interim Final Rule (IFR). The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 contains a provision applying the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) to custodial facilities operated by HHS. The IFR adopts the national standards set forth in PREA to prevent, detect and respond to sexual abuse and sexual harassment in ORR care provider facilities. The IFR was published on Dec. 24, 2014, with an implementation date of June 24, 2015.

**Q: What if an allegation involves a staff member?**

A: If a sexual abuse allegation involves a staff member, the care provider is required by the IFR to suspend the staff member from all duties that would provide the staff member with access to unaccompanied alien children pending investigation.

After investigation by an oversight entity, a care provider facility must take disciplinary action up to and including termination for violating ORR's or the care provider's sexual abuse-related policies and procedures. Termination must be the presumptive disciplinary sanction for staff who engaged in sexual abuse or sexual harassment.

**Q: What does ORR do to avoid hiring staff who are at risk of committing sexual abuse?**

A: ORR requires all care providers to hire staff who meet minimum requirements and qualifications. All care providers must complete a pre-employment background check on all potential staff, contractors and volunteers to ensure they are suitable to work with minors in a residential setting.

Care providers are prohibited from hiring or using the services of any applicant, contractor or volunteer who has engaged in, attempted to engage in, or has been civilly or administratively adjudicated to have engaged in sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or any type of inappropriate sexual behavior.

**Q: What training do staff receive prior to working with youth in ORR care? Is it ongoing?**

A: Staff must complete a number of trainings pre-employment. These

trainings ensure that staff understand their obligations under ORR regulations and policies. Trainings include communicating with UAC, avoiding inappropriate relationships, reporting procedures, and sensitivity regarding trauma. Care providers must tailor trainings to the unique needs, attributes, and gender of the children at the individual care provider facility. Staff must complete refresher trainings every year or with any policy change. Additionally, ORR provides periodic trainings on topics related to preventing sexual abuse. ORR also conducts monthly calls to update care providers on issues.

**Q: How can children and youth in ORR care report allegations of sexual abuse?**

A: Children and youth in ORR care must have access and instructions on how to report sexual abuse, sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual behavior verbally and in writing to care provider staff, child protective services, the UAC Sexual Abuse Hotline, consular officials, and a local community service provider or national rape crisis hotline if a local provider is unavailable.

**Q: How can parents, sponsors or other stakeholders report an incident of sexual abuse in ORR care?**

A: Any child or third party, including family members, sponsors, legal service providers, or child advocates can report knowledge or suspicion of sexual abuse or sexual harassment at a care provider to the UAC Sexual Abuse Hotline.

The UAC Sexual Abuse Hotline is a toll-free number connected to live representatives, who are bilingual in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day/seven days a week. ORR will immediately notify the care provider, CPS, the state licensing agency, and/or the FBI and the OIG, as appropriate, of any allegations received directly from any child or third party. The care provider must immediately follow up to ensure all children and youth are safe and provided with appropriate services and that all required reports to ORR and outside entities are completed.

**Q: How often does sexual abuse occur in ORR care?**

A: Care providers report to the FBI any allegations of sexual abuse that are subject to federal reporting laws or could constitute violations of federal law. Sexual abuse is defined at 34 U.S.C. 20341 and in ORR regulations at 45 C.F.R. 411.6. Sexual abuse can include allegations such as touching of the buttocks or allegations of sexual assault, whether it was a minor-on-minor or staff-on-minor allegation. In FY 2017, care providers reported 264 allegations of sexual abuse to the FBI. Of those 264 allegations, 53 allegations involved an adult.”

**The following changes occurred between May 14, 2019 and May 18, 2019** (see IAMW captures from [April 13, 2019](#) and [May 30, 2019](#)):

**1. Removed**

- (i) Introductory text and the first sixteen questions, including links and images.
- (ii) The “Prevention of Sexual Abuse Q&As” section, which contained nine questions related to preventing, reporting, and prevalence of sexual abuse in the unaccompanied children program.
- These removals eliminated almost all of the content added between June 29, 2018 and August 8, 2018.

2. **Altered** text in seven questions (questions 17 - 23), including minor grammatical changes and:
  - (i) replaced “57” with “45” in the sentence “Children spend fewer than 57 days on average at the shelters and do not integrate into the local community.”
  - (ii) Replaced “child” or “children” (not in the context of the terms “unaccompanied alien children” or “unaccompanied alien child”) with “UAC” in eleven instances.
- For more detail on these changes, see [Changes to Office of Refugee Resettlement Website Foreshadowed Policy Announcements](#) (June 13, 2019).

**Screenshot 5.1:** The top portion of the “Unaccompanied Children Frequently Asked Questions” page as captured by the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine on [June 20, 2018](#). Highlights show content that was removed by [July 17, 2018](#).

The screenshot shows the top portion of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) website. At the top, there is a Wayback Machine header with the URL <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/unaccompanied-children-frequently-asked-questions> and a date selector for June 20, 2018. Below this is a navigation bar with the following text: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, and Office of Refugee Resettlement. The main header features the title "OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT" and a search bar. A secondary navigation bar includes links for HOME, ABOUT, REFUGEES, UNACCOMPANIED ALIEN CHILDREN, POLICY, and RESOURCES. The main content area is titled "Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions" and includes a "Was this page helpful?" poll with "YES" and "NO" buttons. The text below the poll describes the ORR's role in operating shelters for unaccompanied alien children and provides answers to frequently asked questions regarding the impact of shelters, health risks, and medical screening.

**OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT**  
An Office of the Administration for Children & Families

HOME ABOUT REFUGEES UNACCOMPANIED ALIEN CHILDREN POLICY RESOURCES

ACF Home » Office of Refugee Resettlement » Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions

## Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions

ACF's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services operates shelters throughout the United States for children referred to ORR who enter the country without their parent. These shelters are consistently quiet and good neighbors in the communities where they are located.

Below are some of the questions that community members and media have frequently asked.

**Q: How do ORR permanent shelters affect our community?**

A: The impact on the local community is minimal. Shelters are operated by non-profit organizations. About half of our shelters care for fewer than 50 unaccompanied alien children. These shelters are consistently quiet and good neighbors in the communities where they are located.

ORR pays for and provides all services for the children while they are in care at a shelter. This includes providing food, clothing, education, medical screening, and any needed medical care to the children. Children spend fewer than 57 days on average at the shelters and do not integrate into the local community. They remain under staff supervision at all times.

**Q: Do these children pose a health risk?**

A: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) believes that the children arriving at U.S. borders pose little risk of spreading infectious diseases to the general public.

Countries in Central America, where most of the unaccompanied alien children are from (Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras), have childhood vaccination programs, and most children have received some childhood vaccines. However, they may not have received a few vaccines, such as chickenpox, influenza, and pneumococcal vaccines. As a precaution, ORR is providing vaccinations to all children who do not have documentation of previous valid doses of vaccine.

Children receive an initial screening for visible and obvious health issues (for example, lice, rashes, diarrhea, and cough) when they first arrive at Customs and Border Protection (CBP) facilities. Onsite medical staff are available at CBP facilities to provide support, and referrals are made to a local emergency room for additional care, if needed. Children must be considered "fit to travel" before they are moved from the border patrol station to an ORR shelter.

Children receive additional, more thorough medical screening and vaccinations at ORR shelter facilities. If children are found to have certain communicable diseases, they are separated from other children and treated as needed. The cost of medical care for the children while they are in ORR custody is paid by the federal government.

**Screenshot 5.2:** The top portion of the “Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions” page as captured by the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine on [July 17, 2018](#). Highlights show content that had been added since [July 17, 2018](#).

INTERNET ARCHIVE Wayback Machine <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-frequently-asked-questions> Go JUN JUL 17 OCT 68 captures 17 Jul 2018 - 14 Aug 2019

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children & Families Office of Refugee Resettlement

# OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

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## Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions

Published: July 9, 2018

SHARE

ACF’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides funding and oversight to state-licensed shelters throughout the United States for children referred to ORR by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). These children are known as unaccompanied alien children (UAC). They include both children who enter the country without their parent or legal guardian and children who for other reasons have been separated from their parent or legal guardian.

In recent days, there has been a great deal of misinformation about the UAC program. This misinformation and the intentional perpetuation of it is a disservice to the hundreds of caseworkers and care providers who are deeply committed to the quality care and safe and speedy placement of the child with appropriate sponsors. Below are answers to frequently asked questions from community members and media regarding the UAC program.

**Q: Why is HHS caring for children separated from their parents?**

A: When a child who has entered the country illegally and is not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, he or she is considered an unaccompanied alien child, and by law must be transferred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement for care and custody.

HHS is legally required to provide care for all children until they are released to a suitable sponsor, almost always a parent or close relative, while they await immigration proceedings. These children can also leave HHS care if they return to their home countries, achieve 18 years of age, or gain legal immigration status. The same procedure applies for children who have been separated from parents due to criminality or jeopardy, or when the parent is detained to await trial or convicted of a criminal offense and must serve time in federal custody.

**Q: Is there a system for keeping parents and children connected if they are separated for immigration proceedings?**

A: Yes. When adults and minors are apprehended by immigration authorities, their information is entered into government databases by which their cases can be tracked.

HHS has an electronic portal through which we track every child in our care—currently, more than 11,800 minors, including both children separated from their parents and those who arrived alone.

All minors in HHS care are assigned case managers. In the circumstance of children whose parents are in federal custody, the case managers are in contact with the parents’ ICE case managers, ICE agents, and other federal law enforcement officials in order to verify their relationship and put the parents and children in communication. U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps officers and other resource staff have been deployed to DHS facilities to assist parents in communicating with their children.

HHS has long provided resources for parents, including those in DHS custody, to communicate with their children in HHS care. Parents or guardians attempting to determine if their child is in HHS care should contact the ORR National Call Center ([www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/orr-national-call-center](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/orr-national-call-center)) at 1-800-203-7001, or via email at [information@ORRNC.com](mailto:information@ORRNC.com). Personal information will be collected and sent to the HHS-funded facility where the minor is located. The ORR National Call Center has numerous resources available for children, parents, guardians, and sponsors.

**Q: Is HHS confident that this large number of children and parents, dispersed across the country, can be connected and reunited?**

A: Yes. The UAC program has a wealth of experience in connecting the unaccompanied minors in its care to their parents and discharging them to parents, other family members, or other suitable sponsors since 2003, and has developed resources and systems for doing so. This has included communication and reunification with parents across the United States and around the world.

# Webpage 6: ORR Fact Sheet on Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services

- URL: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/orr-fact-sheet-on-unaccompanied-alien-childrens-services>
- Changes occurred by [May 2, 2019](#).
- An archived version of the page from [June 1, 2019](#), collected at the request of the Federal Depository Library Program Web Archive, is available on Archive-It.

## Change Details

The following changes occurred by [May 2, 2019](#):

1. **Added** a page titled “ORR Fact Sheet on Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services” at the URL <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/orr-fact-sheet-on-unaccompanied-alien-childrens-services>.
  - The page contains sections about ORR’s Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services including Current Law, Program Foundation, Program Development, Program Services, and Program Responsibilities.
  - The page is dated March 28, 2019 but was first captured by the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine on [May 2, 2019](#).
  - The content is identical to the “Fact Sheet-December 2018” page, hosted in PDF format at the URL [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/unaccompanied\\_alien\\_children\\_program\\_fact\\_sheet\\_december\\_2018.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/unaccompanied_alien_children_program_fact_sheet_december_2018.pdf), save for an update to the average length of care (changed from an average of 60 days in FY 2018 to an average of 89 days in the first quarter of FY 2019).
    - The “Fact Sheet-December 2018” page is dated December 2018, but was first captured by the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine on [April 6, 2019](#).
  - The content for both pages is based the “ORR Unaccompanied Children Fact Sheet” page, dated January 2016 and first captured on IAWM on [March 28, 2016](#).
    - The January 2016 version of the “ORR Unaccompanied Children Fact Sheet” page was hosted at [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/orr\\_uc\\_updated\\_fact\\_sheet\\_1416.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/orr_uc_updated_fact_sheet_1416.pdf) (this URL is no longer live).
  - A [June 15, 2018](#) version of the “ORR Unaccompanied Children Fact Sheet” page is available at [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/orr\\_fact\\_sheet\\_on\\_unaccompanied\\_alien\\_childrens\\_services\\_0.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/orr_fact_sheet_on_unaccompanied_alien_childrens_services_0.pdf).

1. Content from the January 2016 version of the “ORR Unaccompanied Children Fact Sheet” page was altered in the June 15, 2018 version of the fact sheet:
  - (a) **Removed** introductory text about the proper treatment of and challenges faced by unaccompanied minors:
 

“The Division of Children’s Services (DCS) provides care and placement for children who come into the United States from other countries without an adult guardian. These children are referred to as unaccompanied alien children (UAC) in statutes. ...

Treating all children in its custody with dignity, respect and special concern for individual needs, DCS considers the best interests of the child in all placement decisions. DCS strives to provide the highest quality of care tailored to each unaccompanied child in order to maximize opportunities for success both while in care and when discharged from the program.

The age of these individuals, their separation from parents and relatives, and the hazardous journey they take make unaccompanied children especially vulnerable to human trafficking, exploitation and abuse. Unaccompanied children have multiple, inter-related reasons for undertaking the difficult journey of traveling to the United States, which may include rejoining family already in the United States, escaping violent communities or abusive family relationships in their home country, or finding work to support their families in the home country. Unaccompanied children generally leave their home countries to join family already in the United States, escape abuse, persecution or exploitation in the home country, or to seek employment or educational opportunities in the United States.”
  - (b) **Removed** the text “towards a child welfare-based-model of care for children and” from the sentence:
 

“Under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Congress transferred the care and custody of these children to HHS from the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to move towards a child welfare-based-model of care for children and away from the adult detention model.”
  - (c) **Altered** the “Children served” section, renaming it “Program Development,” and changing the order of sentences.
  - (d) **Altered** text in the “Program Development” section to replace the word “Children” with “UAC” and remove the words “for placement” in the sentence:
 

“Children are referred to ORR for placement by another federal agency, usually the Department of Homeland Security.”

- (e) **Added** statistics on the number of referrals to ORR for FY2016 and 2017 and added the sentence “These numbers continue to be unpredictable.”
- (f) **Altered** text and updated statistics relating to length of stay:

**From:**

“The average length of stay in the program in FY 2015 was 34 days. Of the children served, the overwhelming are released to sponsors who are family members.”

**To:**

”Currently, the average length of stay for UAC in the program is approximately 57 days. The overwhelming majority of UAC are released to suitable sponsors who are family members within the United States (U.S.) to await immigration hearings.”

- (g) **Added** the following sentence:

“Today, HHS operates a network of just over 100 shelters in 17 states and has a proven track record of accountability and transparency for program operations, as well as being a good neighbor in the communities where shelters are located.”

- 2. Content from the June 15, 2018 version of the “ORR Unaccompanied Children Fact Sheet” page was altered in the “Fact Sheet-December 2018” page and the “ORR Fact Sheet on Unaccompanied Alien Children’s Services” page (dated March 28, 2019) :

- (a) **Altered** text:

**From:**

“HHS plays no role in the apprehension or initial detention of unaccompanied alien children (UAC) prior to their referral to HHS custody.”

**To:**

“HHS plays no role in the apprehension or initial detention of UAC prior to their referral to HHS custody and HHS is not a party to the child’s immigration proceedings.”

- (b) **Altered** the “Program Development” section to include statistics for FY2018 and replace “These numbers continue to be unpredictable.” with “Because of the large fluctuations in arrival numbers throughout the year, ORR maintains a mix of “standard” beds that are available year-round, and “temporary” beds that can be added or reduced as needed. This bed management strategy provides the ability to accommodate changing flows.”

- (c) **Added** three paragraphs to the “Program Development” section:

“All potential sponsors for UAC are required to undergo background checks and complete a sponsor assessment process that identifies risk factors and other potential safety concerns. As a part of the release process, all potential sponsors must undergo a criminal public records check and a sex offender registry check. ORR also conducts background checks on adult household members and individuals identified in a potential sponsor’s care plan. In addition ORR policy requires that all proposed UAC sponsors be fingerprinted to enhance the safety checks on potential sponsors and UAC home. The fingerprints are cross-checked with the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) national criminal history and state repository records and also includes a search of DHS arrest records. HHS will no longer require household members to submit to fingerprint background checks effective December 18, 2018. ORR will continue to do public records checks on all adult household members to ensure child safety

In some instances ORR also requires a home study before releasing a child. Home studies are mandatory for certain cases identified in law, including for: a child who is a victim of trafficking; a child with a disability; where the child has been a victim of physical or sexual abuse under circumstances that indicate that the child’s health or welfare has been significantly harmed or threatened; and where the child’s sponsor clearly presents a risk of abuse, maltreatment, exploitation or trafficking, to the child based on all available objective evidence. Additionally, per ORR policy, a home study is required for any child to a non-relative sponsor who is seeking to sponsor multiple children, or has previously sponsored or sought to sponsor a child and is seeking to sponsor additional children. ORR requires a home study for children who are 12 years and under before releasing to a non-relative sponsor.

Since the beginning of the program, ORR has notified Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) 24 hours before and 24 hours after the release of all UAC. The notification includes the name of the sponsor and their current address.”

- (d) **Altered** the description of services provided by ORR-funded care to add a reference to “while in ORR custody” and remove reference of “socialization”:

**From:**

“Program Services - Consistent with federal law, ORR places children in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child,

taking into account potential flight risk and danger to self and others. State-licensed ORR-funded facility services includes:

- Classroom education
- Mental and medical health services
- Case management
- Socialization and recreation
- Family reunification services that facilitate safe and timely release to family members or other sponsors that can care for them. We conduct home studies prior to release if safety is in question, and fund follow-up services for at-risk children after their release.”

**To:**

“Program Services - Program Services - Consistent with federal law, ORR places children while in ORR custody in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child, taking into account potential flight risk and danger to self and others. State-licensed ORR-funded facility services includes:

- Classroom education
- Mental and medical health services
- Case management
- Recreation
- Family reunification services that facilitate safe and timely release to family members or other sponsors who can care for them. We conduct home studies prior to release if safety is in question, and fund follow-up services for at-risk children after their release.”

- (e) **Altered** text in the “Program Responsibilities” section:
- (i) Removed “along with granting specific consent for state court jurisdiction over children” from the sentence “Developing procedures for age determinations and conducting these determinations along with granting specific consent for state court jurisdiction over children.”
  - (ii) Added “pro bono” before “legal representation” in the sentence “Ensuring, to the greatest extent practicable, that all UAC in custody have access to legal representation or counsel.”

**Screenshot 6.1:** A side-by-side comparison of the “ORR Unaccompanied Children Fact Sheet” page as captured by the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine on [March 28, 2016](#) (below left) and [June 19, 2018](#) (below right); the “Fact Sheet-December 2018” page as captured on [April 6, 2019](#) (right); and the ““ORR Fact Sheet on Unaccompanied Alien Children’s Services” page as captured on [May 2, 2019](#) (far right).

FACT SHEET

SUBJECT: U.S. Department of Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement, Unaccompanied Children’s Program

The Division of Children’s Services (DCS) provides care and placement for children who come into the United States from other countries without an adult guardian. These children are referred to as **unaccompanied alien children (UAC)** in statutes. This program is in the Office of Refugee Resettlement, in the Administration for Children and Families, an operational division of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Treating all children in its custody with dignity, respect and special concern for individual needs, DCS considers the best interests of the child in all placement decisions. DCS strives to provide the highest quality of care tailored to each unaccompanied child in order to maximize opportunities for success both while in care and when discharged from the program.

The age of these individuals, their separation from parents and relatives, and the hazardous journey they take make unaccompanied children especially vulnerable to human trafficking, exploitation and abuse. Unaccompanied children have multiple, inter-related reasons for undertaking the difficult journey of traveling to the United States, which may include rejoining family already in the United States, escaping violent communities or abusive family relationships in their home country, or finding work to support their families in the home country. Unaccompanied children generally leave their home countries to join family already in the United States, escape abuse, persecution or exploitation in the home country, or to seek employment or educational opportunities in the United States.

**Background**

**Legal basis for work with unaccompanied children**  
By law, HHS must provide for the custody and care of UAC, defined as a child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States; has not attained 18 years of age; and, with respect to whom, there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States, or no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody. See 6 U.S.C. § 279(g)(2).

Under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Congress transferred the care and custody of these children to HHS from the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to move towards a child welfare-based-model of care for children and away from the adult detention model. In the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, which expanded and redefined HHS’s statutory responsibilities, Congress directed that each child must “be promptly placed in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child.” See 8 U.S.C. § 1232(b)(2).

**Children served**  
For its first nine years at ORR, an average of 7,000 and 8,000 children were served annually in this program. Since Fiscal Year 2012 (October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012), this number has jumped dramatically, with a total of 13,625 children referred to ORR by the end of FY 2012. Since FY2012, the program has received 24,668 UC referrals from DHS in FY 2013, 57,496 referrals in FY 2014 and 33, 726 referrals in FY2015.

The children come primarily from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. In FY 2015, approximately three-quarters of all children referred were over 14 years of age, and two-thirds were boys. In FY 2015, origin of youth in this program was as follows: Honduras (17%); Guatemala (45%); El Salvador (29%); Mexico (6%), and Other Countries (3%).

Children are referred to ORR for placement by another federal agency, usually the Department of Homeland Security. Most children are placed into care because they were apprehended by immigration authorities while trying to cross the border; others are referred after coming to the attention of immigration authorities at some point after crossing the border. The average length of stay in the program in FY 2015 was 34 days. Of the children served, the overwhelming are released to sponsors who are family members.

**Services provided**  
Within HHS, the Office of Refugee Resettlement within the Administration on Children and Families is responsible for providing care to children referred by immigration authorities. Consistent with federal law, ORR/DUCS places children in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child, taking into account potential flight risk and danger to self and others. The majority of the youth are cared for through a network of state-licensed ORR-funded care providers that provide:

- Classroom education
- Mental and medical health services
- Case management
- Socialization and recreation
- Family reunification services that facilitate safe and timely release to family members or other sponsors that can care for them. We conduct home studies prior to release if safety is in question, and fund follow-up services for at-risk children after their release.

ORR’s Division of Children’s Services also assumes the following responsibilities:

- Making and implementing placement decisions for the unaccompanied children
- Ensuring that the interests of the child are considered in decisions related to the care and custody of unaccompanied children
- Providing home assessments for certain categories of unaccompanied children at risk
- Conducting follow-up services for certain categories of children
- Overseeing the infrastructure and personnel of ORR-funded care provider facilities
- Conducting on-site monitoring visits of ORR-funded care provider facilities and ensuring compliance with ORR national care standards
- Collecting, analyzing, and reporting statistical information on unaccompanied children
- Providing training to federal, state, and local officials who have substantive contact with unaccompanied children
- Developing procedures for age determinations and conducting these determinations along with granting specific consent for state court jurisdiction over children
- Cooperating with the Department of Justice’s Executive Office for Immigration Review to ensure that sponsors receive legal orientation presentations
- Ensuring, to the greatest extent practicable, that all unaccompanied children in custody have access to legal representation or counsel
- Releasing unaccompanied children to qualified sponsors and family members who are determined to be capable of providing for the child’s physical and mental well-being

Updated: January 2016

FACT SHEET

SUBJECT: Unaccompanied Alien Children Program

The Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) Program is managed by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Administration for Children and Families, an operational division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

**Current Law -**

By law, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has custody of and must provide care for each unaccompanied alien child, defined as a child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States, has not attained 18 years of age; and, with respect to whom, there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States, or no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody. See 6 U.S.C. § 279(g)(2). HHS plays no role in the apprehension or initial detention of unaccompanied alien children (UAC) prior to their referral to HHS custody.

**Program Foundation -**

Under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Congress transferred the care and custody of these children to ORR from the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to move away from the adult detention model. In the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, which expanded and redefined HHS’s statutory responsibilities, Congress directed that each child must “be promptly placed in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child.” See 8 U.S.C. § 1232(b)(2).

**Program Development -**

UAC are referred to ORR by another federal agency, usually the Department of Homeland Security. Most children are placed into ORR care because they were apprehended by immigration authorities while trying to cross the border; others are referred after coming to the attention of immigration authorities at some point after crossing the border.

For its first nine years at ORR, fewer than 8000 children were served annually in this program. Since Fiscal Year 2012 (October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012), this number has jumped dramatically, with a total of 13,625 children referred to ORR by the end of FY 2012. The program received 24,668 UAC referrals from DHS in FY 2013, 57,496 referrals in FY 2014, 33,726 referrals in FY 2015, 59,170 in FY 2016, and 40,810 in FY 2017. These numbers continue to be unpredictable.

In FY 2017, approximately half of all children referred were over 14 years of age, and over two-thirds were boys. In FY 2017, countries of origin of youth in this program were approximately as follows: Guatemala (45%); El Salvador (27%); Honduras (23%); and other (3%).

Today, HHS operates a network of just over 100 shelters in 17 states and has a proven track record of accountability and transparency for program operations, as well as being a good neighbor in the communities where shelters are located. Currently, the average length of stay for UAC in the program is approximately 57 days. The overwhelming majority of UAC are released to suitable sponsors who are family members within the United States (U.S.) to await immigration hearings.

**Program Services -**

Consistent with federal law, ORR places children in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child, taking into account potential flight risk and danger to self and others. State-licensed ORR-funded facility services includes:

- Classroom education
- Mental and medical health services
- Case management
- Socialization and recreation
- Family reunification services that facilitate safe and timely release to family members or other sponsors that can care for them. We conduct home studies prior to release if safety is in question, and fund follow-up services for at-risk children after their release.

**Program Responsibilities -**

- Making and implementing placement decisions for the UAC
- Ensuring that the interests of the child are considered in decisions related to the care and custody of UAC
- Providing home assessments for certain categories of children
- Conducting follow-up services for certain categories of children
- Overseeing the infrastructure and personnel of ORR-funded care provider facilities
- Conducting on-site monitoring visits of ORR-funded care provider facilities and ensuring compliance with ORR national care standards
- Collecting, analyzing, and reporting statistical information on UAC
- Providing training to federal, state, and local officials who have substantive contact with UAC
- Developing procedures for age determinations and conducting these determinations along with granting specific consent for state court jurisdiction over children
- Cooperating with the Department of Justice’s Executive Office for Immigration Review to ensure that sponsors receive legal orientation presentations
- Ensuring, to the greatest extent practicable, that all UAC in custody have access to legal representation or counsel
- Releasing UAC to qualified sponsors and family members who are determined to be capable of providing for the child’s physical and mental well-being

Updated: June 15, 2018

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/immigration-fact-sheet-on-unaccompanied-alien-children-program\_fact\_sheet\_december\_2018

06 APR 2019



FACT SHEET – December 2018

SUBJECT: Unaccompanied Alien Children Program

The Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) Program is managed by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Administration for Children and Families, an operational division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

**Current Law -**

By law, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has custody and must provide care for each UAC, defined as a child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States; is not attained 18 years of age; and, with respect to whom, there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States, or no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody. See 6 U.S.C. § 279(g)(2).

**Program Foundation -**

Under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Congress transferred the care and custody of these children to ORR from the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to move away from the adult detention model. In the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, which expanded and redefined HHS's statutory responsibilities, Congress directed that each child must "be promptly placed in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child." See 8 U.S.C. § 1232(b)(2).

**Program Development -**

UAC are referred to ORR by another federal agency, usually the Department of Homeland Security. Most children are placed into ORR care because they were apprehended by immigration authorities while trying to cross the border; others are referred after coming to the attention of immigration authorities at some point after crossing the border. HHS plays no role in the apprehension or initial detention of UAC prior to their referral to HHS custody and HHS is not a party to the child's immigration proceedings.

ORR has provided care for and found suitable sponsors for over 250,000 UAC. For its first nine years at ORR, fewer than 8000 children were served annually in this program. Since Fiscal Year 2012 (October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012), this number has jumped dramatically, with a total of 13,625 children referred to ORR by the end of FY 2012. The program received 24,668 UAC referrals from DHS in FY 2013, 57,496 referrals in FY 2014, 33,726 referrals in FY 2015, 59,170 in FY 2016, and 40,810 in FY 2017. In FY 2018 49,100 UAC were referred. Because of the large fluctuations in arrival numbers throughout the year, ORR maintains a mix of "standard" beds that are available year-round, and "temporary" beds that can be added or reduced as needed. This bed management strategy provides the ability to accommodate changing flows.

In FY 2018, approximately 73 percent of all children referred were over 14 years of age, and over 71 percent were boys. In FY 2018, countries of origin of youth in this program were approximately as follows: Guatemala (54%); El Salvador (12%); Honduras (26%); and other (8%).

Today, HHS operates a network of just over 100 shelters in 17 states and has a proven track record of accountability and transparency for program operations, as well as being a good neighbor in the communities where shelters are located. In FY 2018 the overall average length of care for UAC in the program was 60 days. The overwhelming majority of UAC are released to suitable sponsors who are family members within the United States (U.S.) to await immigration hearings.

All potential sponsors for UAC are required to undergo background checks and complete a sponsor assessment process that identifies risk factors and other potential safety concerns. As a part of the release process, all potential sponsors must undergo a criminal public records check and a sex offender registry check. ORR also conducts background checks on adult household members and individuals identified in a potential sponsor's care plan. In addition ORR policy requires that all proposed UAC sponsors be fingerprinted to enhance the safety checks on potential sponsors and UAC home. The fingerprints are cross-checked with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) national criminal history and state repository records and also includes a search of DHS arrest records. HHS will no longer require household members to submit to fingerprint background checks effective December 18, 2018. ORR will continue to do public records checks on all adult household members to ensure child safety.

In some instances ORR also requires a home study before releasing a child. Home studies are mandatory for certain cases identified in law, including for: a child who is a victim of trafficking; a child with a disability; where the child has been a victim of physical or sexual abuse under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare has been significantly harmed or threatened; and where the child's sponsor clearly presents a risk of abuse, maltreatment, exploitation or trafficking, to the child based on all available objective evidence. Additionally, per ORR policy, a home study is required for any child to a non-relative sponsor who is seeking to sponsor multiple children, or has previously sponsored or sought to sponsor a child and is seeking to sponsor additional children. ORR requires a home study for children who are 12 years and under before releasing to a non-relative sponsor.

Since the beginning of the program, ORR has notified Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) 24 hours before and 24 hours after the release of all UAC. The notification includes the name of the sponsor and their current address.

**Program Services -**

Consistent with federal law, ORR places children while in ORR custody in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child, taking into account potential flight risk and danger to self and others. State-licensed ORR-funded facility services include:

- Classroom education
- Mental and medical health services
- Case management
- Recreation

Family reunification services that facilitate safe and timely release to family members or other sponsors who can care for them. We conduct home studies prior to release if safety is in question, and fund follow-up services for at-risk children after their release.

**Program Responsibilities -**

- Making and implementing placement decisions for the UAC
- Ensuring that the interests of the child are considered in decisions related to the care and custody of UAC
- Providing home assessments for certain categories of children
- Conducting follow-up services for certain categories of children
- Overseeing the infrastructure and personnel of ORR-funded care provider facilities
- Conducting on-site monitoring visits of ORR-funded care provider facilities and ensuring compliance with ORR national care standards
- Collecting, analyzing, and reporting statistical information on UAC
- Providing training to federal, state, and local officials who have substantive contact with UAC
- Developing procedures for age determinations and conducting these determinations
- Cooperating with the Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review to ensure that sponsors receive legal orientation presentations
- Ensuring, to the greatest extent practicable, that all UAC in custody have access to pro bono legal representation or counsel
- Releasing UAC to qualified sponsors and family members who are determined to be capable of providing for the child's physical and mental well-being

Updated: December 2018

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/immigration-fact-sheet-on-unaccompanied-alien-children-services

03 APR 2019

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ORR Fact Sheet on Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services

Published: March 28, 2019

SHARE

March 2019

The Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) Program is managed by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Administration for Children and Families, an operational division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

**Current Law -**

By law, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has custody and must provide care for each UAC, defined as a child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States; is not attained 18 years of age; and, with respect to whom, there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States, or no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody. See 6 U.S.C. § 279(g)(2).

**Program Foundation -**

Under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Congress transferred the care and custody of these children to ORR from the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to move away from the adult detention model. In the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, which expanded and redefined HHS's statutory responsibilities, Congress directed that each child must "be promptly placed in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child." See 8 U.S.C. § 1232(b)(2).

**Program Development -**

UAC are referred to ORR by another federal agency, usually the Department of Homeland Security. Most children are placed into ORR care because they were apprehended by immigration authorities while trying to cross the border; others are referred after coming to the attention of immigration authorities at some point after crossing the border. HHS plays no role in the apprehension or initial detention of UAC prior to their referral to HHS custody and HHS is not a party to the child's immigration proceedings.

ORR has provided care for and found suitable sponsors for over 340,000 UAC. For its first nine years at ORR, fewer than 8000 children were served annually in this program. Since Fiscal Year 2012 (October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012), this number has jumped dramatically, with a total of 13,625 children referred to ORR by the end of FY 2012. The program received 24,668 UAC referrals from DHS in FY 2013, 57,496 referrals in FY 2014, 33,726 referrals in FY 2015, 59,170 in FY 2016, and 40,810 in FY 2017. In FY 2018 49,100 UAC were referred. Because of the large fluctuations in arrival numbers throughout the year, ORR maintains a mix of "standard" beds that are available year-round, and "temporary" beds that can be added or reduced as needed. This bed management strategy provides the ability to accommodate changing flows.

In FY 2018, approximately 73 percent of all children referred were over 14 years of age, and over 71 percent were boys. In FY 2018, countries of origin of youth in this program were approximately as follows: Guatemala (54%); El Salvador (12%); Honduras (26%); and other (8%).

Today, HHS operates a network of just over 100 shelters in 17 states and has a proven track record of accountability and transparency for program operations, as well as being a good neighbor in the communities where shelters are located. In FY 2018 the overall average length of care for UAC in the program was 60 days. The overwhelming majority of UAC are released to suitable sponsors who are family members within the United States (U.S.) to await immigration hearings.

All potential sponsors for UAC are required to undergo background checks and complete a sponsor assessment process that identifies risk factors and other potential safety concerns. As a part of the release process, all potential sponsors must undergo a criminal public records check and a sex offender registry check. ORR also conducts background checks on adult household members and individuals identified in a potential sponsor's care plan. In addition ORR policy requires that all proposed UAC sponsors be fingerprinted to enhance the safety checks on potential sponsors and UAC home. The fingerprints are cross-checked with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) national criminal history and state repository records and also includes a search of DHS arrest records. As of December 18, 2018 HHS no longer requires household members to submit to fingerprint background checks. ORR will continue to do public records checks on all adult household members to ensure child safety.

In some instances ORR also requires a home study before releasing a child. Home studies are mandatory for certain cases identified in law, including for: a child who is a victim of trafficking; a child with a disability; where the child has been a victim of physical or sexual abuse under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare has been significantly harmed or threatened; and where the child's sponsor clearly presents a risk of abuse, maltreatment, exploitation or trafficking, to the child based on all available objective evidence. Additionally, per ORR policy, a home study is required for any child to a non-relative sponsor who is seeking to sponsor multiple children, or has previously sponsored or sought to sponsor a child and is seeking to sponsor additional children. ORR requires a home study for children who are 12 years and under before releasing to a non-relative sponsor.

Since the beginning of the program, ORR has notified Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) 24 hours before and 24 hours after the release of all UAC. The notification includes the name of the sponsor and their current address.

**Program Services -**

Consistent with federal law, ORR places children while in ORR custody in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child, taking into account potential flight risk and danger to self and others. State-licensed ORR-funded facility services include:

- Classroom education
- Mental and medical health services
- Case management
- Recreation
- Family reunification services that facilitate safe and timely release to family members or other sponsors who can care for them. We conduct home studies prior to release if safety is in question, and fund follow-up services for at-risk children after their release.

**Program Responsibilities -**

- Making and implementing placement decisions for the UAC
- Ensuring that the interests of the child are considered in decisions related to the care and custody of UAC
- Providing home assessments for certain categories of children
- Conducting follow-up services for certain categories of children
- Overseeing the infrastructure and personnel of ORR-funded care provider facilities
- Conducting on-site monitoring visits of ORR-funded care provider facilities and ensuring compliance with ORR national care standards
- Collecting, analyzing, and reporting statistical information on UAC
- Providing training to federal, state, and local officials who have substantive contact with UAC
- Developing procedures for age determinations and conducting these determinations
- Cooperating with the Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review to ensure that sponsors receive legal orientation presentations
- Ensuring, to the greatest extent practicable, that all UAC in custody have access to pro bono legal representation or counsel
- Releasing UAC to qualified sponsors and family members who are determined to be capable of providing for the child's physical and mental well-being

Updated: March 2019

Last Revised: March 28, 2019

## Webpage 7: About the Program

*Previously “About Unaccompanied Children's Services”  
and “About Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services”*

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- URL: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/ucs/about>
  - Changes occurred between [June 12, 2017](#) and [June 4, 2019](#).
  - An archived version of the page from [April 30, 2017](#), collected at the request of the Department of Health and Human Services, is available on Archive-It.
- 

### Change Details

The following changes occurred between [June 12, 2017](#) and [July 31, 2017](#):

1. **Altered** page title:  
**From:** “About Unaccompanied Children's Services”  
**To:** “About Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services”
2. **Altered** text to include “alien”:  
18 references to “unaccompanied child” or “unaccompanied children” were replaced with references to “unaccompanied alien child” or “unaccompanied alien children.”

The following changes occurred between [April 13, 2019](#) and [June 4, 2019](#):

1. **Altered** page title:  
**From:** “About Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services”  
**To:** “About the Program”
2. **Altered** text to reword paragraphs and change order, keeping the content substantively the same.
3. **Added** text in the opening paragraph defining “unaccompanied alien child”:  
“By definition, an unaccompanied alien child (UAC):
  - Has no lawful immigration status in the United States
  - Is under 18 years of age
  - Has no parent or legal guardian in the United States or no parent or legal guardian in the United States is available to provide care and physical custody”

4. **Added** text:

“ORR promptly places an UAC in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interests of the child, taking into consideration danger to self, danger to the community, and risk of flight. ORR looks at each child’s unique situation and incorporates child welfare principles when making placement, clinical, case management, and release decisions that are in the best interest of the child.”

5. **Added** text:

“Since 2003, ORR has cared for more than 175,000 children.”

6. **Added** links to “[Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Guide to Terms](#)” for definitions of:

- shelter facility
- group home
- Therapeutic
- Staff-secure
- secure care facility
- residential treatment center

7. **Removed** text:

“In addition to the legal access project, ORR announced a program expansion to support the need for legal services for unaccompanied children after their release from the custody of ORR, by awarding additional funds to two existing grantees to hire attorneys to provide legal representation to approximately 2,600 unaccompanied children.”

8. **Added** section titled “History of the UAC Program” with the text:

“History of the UAC Program

On March 1, 2003, the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Section 462, transferred responsibilities for the care and placement of unaccompanied alien children (UAC) from the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service to the Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

Since then, ORR has cared for more than 175,000 children, incorporating child welfare values as well as the principles and provisions established by the Flores Agreement in 1997, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and its reauthorization acts, the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2005 and 2008.”

**Screenshot 7.1:** A side-by-side comparison of the “About Unaccompanied Alien Children’s Services” page as captured by the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine on [June 12, 2017](#) (left) and [July 31, 2017](#) (right). Highlights indicate changes made during that period.

Wayback Machine 134 captures 9 Aug 2016 - 17 Aug 2018

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children & Families Office of Refugee Resettlement

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Unaccompanied Children's Services (UCS)

About UCS Program

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- Health and Safety
- Sponsors and Placement
- Services Provided
- Helpline and Contact Info
- Frequently Asked Questions

Resource Library

### About Unaccompanied Children's Services

#### Background

**See also:** [ORR Fact Sheet on Unaccompanied Children's Services](#)

Unaccompanied children apprehended by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration officials are transferred to the care and custody of ORR. The age of these individuals, their separation from parents and relatives, and the hazardous journey they take make unaccompanied children especially vulnerable to human trafficking, exploitation and abuse. Unaccompanied children have multiple, inter-related reasons for undertaking the difficult journey of traveling to the United States, which may include rejoining family already in the United States, escaping violent communities or abusive family relationships in their home country, or finding work to support their families in the home country.

The majority of unaccompanied children are cared for through a network of state licensed ORR-funded care providers, most of which are located close to areas where immigration officials apprehend large numbers of aliens. These care provider facilities are state licensed and must meet ORR requirements to ensure a high level of quality of care. They provide a continuum of care for children, including foster care, group homes, shelter, staff secure, secure, and residential treatment centers. The care providers operate under cooperative agreements and contracts, and provide children with classroom education, health care, socialization/recreation, vocational training, mental health services, family reunification, access to legal services, and case management.

#### Responsibilities

ORR assumes the following responsibilities while caring for unaccompanied children entering the United States:

- Making and implementing placement decisions for the unaccompanied children
- Ensuring that the interests of the child are considered in decisions related to the care and custody of unaccompanied children
- Providing home assessments for certain categories of unaccompanied children at risk
- Conducting follow-up services for certain categories of children
- Overseeing the infrastructure and personnel of ORR-funded care provider facilities
- Conducting on-site monitoring visits of ORR-funded care provider facilities and ensuring compliance with ORR national care standards
- Collecting, analyzing, and reporting statistical information on unaccompanied children
- Providing training to federal, state, and local officials who have substantive contact with unaccompanied children
- Developing procedures for age determinations and conducting these determinations along with DHS
- Granting specific consent for state court jurisdiction over children
- Cooperating with the Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review to ensure that sponsors of unaccompanied children receive legal orientation presentations
- Ensuring, to the greatest extent practicable, that all unaccompanied children in custody have access to legal representation or counsel
- Releasing unaccompanied children to qualified sponsors and family members who are determined to be capable of providing for the child's physical and mental well-being

In order to help unaccompanied children access legal representation to the greatest extent possible and practicable, ORR coordinates a legal access project. The legal access project provides children with presentations on their rights, conducts individualized legal screenings, and builds pro bono legal representation capacity. Many unaccompanied children meet conditions that make them eligible for legal relief to remain in the United States including, but not limited to asylum; special visas for children who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by the parents or guardian; special visas for victims of severe forms of trafficking and other types of crime; or adjustment of status for those who have a legal resident or citizen family member.

In addition to the legal access project, ORR announced a program expansion to support the need for legal services for unaccompanied children after their release from the custody of ORR, by awarding additional funds to two existing grantees to hire attorneys to provide legal representation to approximately 2,600 unaccompanied children.

#### Contact Information

Office of Refugee Resettlement  
Administration for Children and Families  
901 D Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20447  
Phone: 202.401.9246  
Fax: 202.401.1022

Last Reviewed: September 10, 2015

INTERNET ARCHIVE Wayback Machine <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/ucs/about> 134 captures 1 Aug 2016 - 12 Aug 2019 JUN AUG 01 SEP 2016 2017 2018

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children & Families Office of Refugee Resettlement

## OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

An Office of the Administration for Children & Families

Search    Search all of ORR  Search ORR Resources

HOME ABOUT REFUGEES UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN POLICY RESOURCES

ACF Home > Office of Refugee Resettlement > Programs > Unaccompanied Children's Services > About UCS Program

- Unaccompanied Children's Services (UCS)
- About UCS Program
  - Facts and Data
  - Health and Safety
  - Sponsors and Placement
  - Services Provided
  - Helpline and Contact Info
  - Frequently Asked Questions
- Resource Library

### About Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services

#### Background

**See also:** [ORR Fact Sheet on Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services](#)

Unaccompanied alien children apprehended by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration officials are transferred to the care and custody of ORR. The age of these individuals, their separation from parents and relatives, and the hazardous journey they take make unaccompanied alien children especially vulnerable to human trafficking, exploitation and abuse. Unaccompanied alien children have multiple, inter-related reasons for undertaking the difficult journey of traveling to the United States, which may include rejoining family already in the United States, escaping violent communities or abusive family relationships in their home country, or finding work to support their families in the home country.

The majority of unaccompanied alien children are cared for through a network of state licensed ORR-funded care providers, most of which are located close to areas where immigration officials apprehend large numbers of aliens. These care provider facilities are state licensed and must meet ORR requirements to ensure a high level of quality of care. They provide a continuum of care for children, including foster care, group homes, shelter, staff secure, secure, and residential treatment centers. The care providers operate under cooperative agreements and contracts, and provide children with classroom education, health care, socialization/recreation, vocational training, mental health services, family reunification, access to legal services, and case management.

#### Responsibilities

ORR assumes the following responsibilities while caring for unaccompanied alien children entering the United States:

- Making and implementing placement decisions for the unaccompanied alien children
- Ensuring that the interests of the child are considered in decisions related to the care and custody of unaccompanied alien children
- Providing home assessments for certain categories of unaccompanied alien children at risk
- Conducting follow-up services for certain categories of children
- Overseeing the infrastructure and personnel of ORR-funded care provider facilities
- Conducting on-site monitoring visits of ORR-funded care provider facilities and ensuring compliance with ORR national care standards
- Collecting, analyzing, and reporting statistical information on unaccompanied alien children
- Providing training to federal, state, and local officials who have substantive contact with unaccompanied alien children
- Developing procedures for age determinations and conducting these determinations along with DHS
- Granting specific consent for state court jurisdiction over children
- Cooperating with the Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review to ensure that sponsors of unaccompanied alien children receive legal orientation presentations
- Ensuring, to the greatest extent practicable, that all unaccompanied alien children in custody have access to legal representation or counsel
- Releasing unaccompanied children to qualified sponsors and family members who are determined to be capable of providing for the child's physical and mental well-being

In order to help unaccompanied alien children access legal representation to the greatest extent possible and practicable, ORR coordinates a legal access project. The legal access project provides children with presentations on their rights, conducts individualized legal screenings, and builds pro bono legal representation capacity. Many unaccompanied alien children meet conditions that make them eligible for legal relief to remain in the United States including, but not limited to asylum; special visas for children who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by the parents or guardian; special visas for victims of severe forms of trafficking and other types of crime; or adjustment of status for those who have a legal resident or citizen family member.

In addition to the legal access project, ORR announced a program expansion to support the need for legal services for unaccompanied alien children after their release from the custody of ORR, by awarding additional funds to two existing grantees to hire attorneys to provide legal representation to approximately 2,600 unaccompanied alien children.

#### Contact Information

Office of Refugee Resettlement  
Administration for Children and Families  
901 D Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20447  
Phone: 202.401.9246  
Fax: 202.401.1022

Last Reviewed: June 29, 2017

# Webpage 8: Unaccompanied Children Resources

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- URL: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/unaccompanied-children>
  - Changes occurred between [January 14, 2019](#) and February 1, 2019 (See IAMW capture from [June 10, 2019](#)).
  - An archived version of the page from [November 9, 2018](#), collected at the request of the Department of Health and Human Services, is available on Archive-It.
- 

## Change Details

The following change occurred between [January 14, 2019](#) and February 1, 2019 (See IAMW capture from [June 10, 2019](#)):

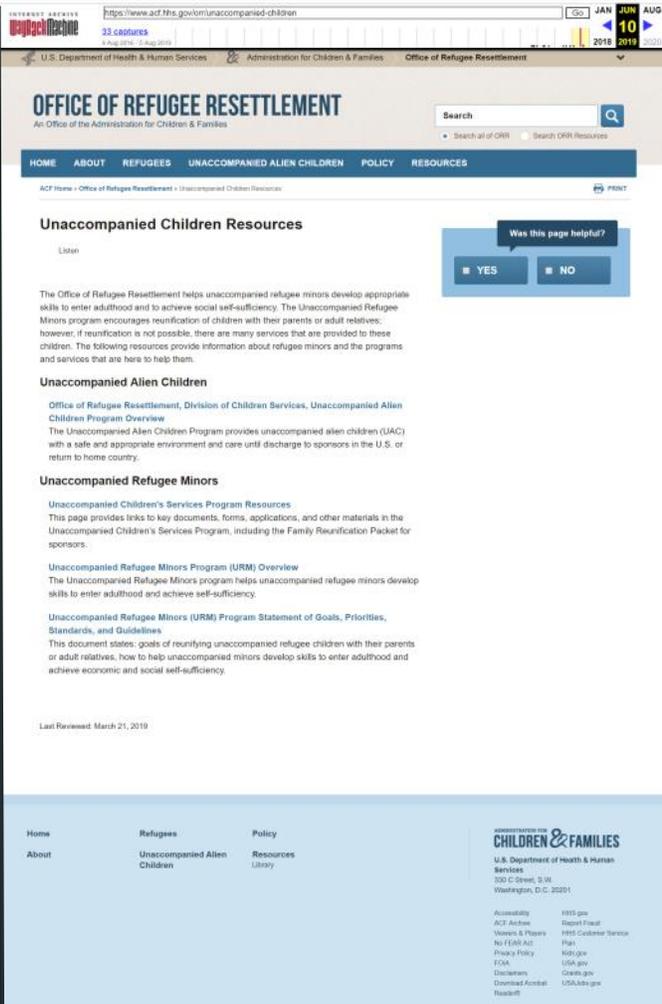
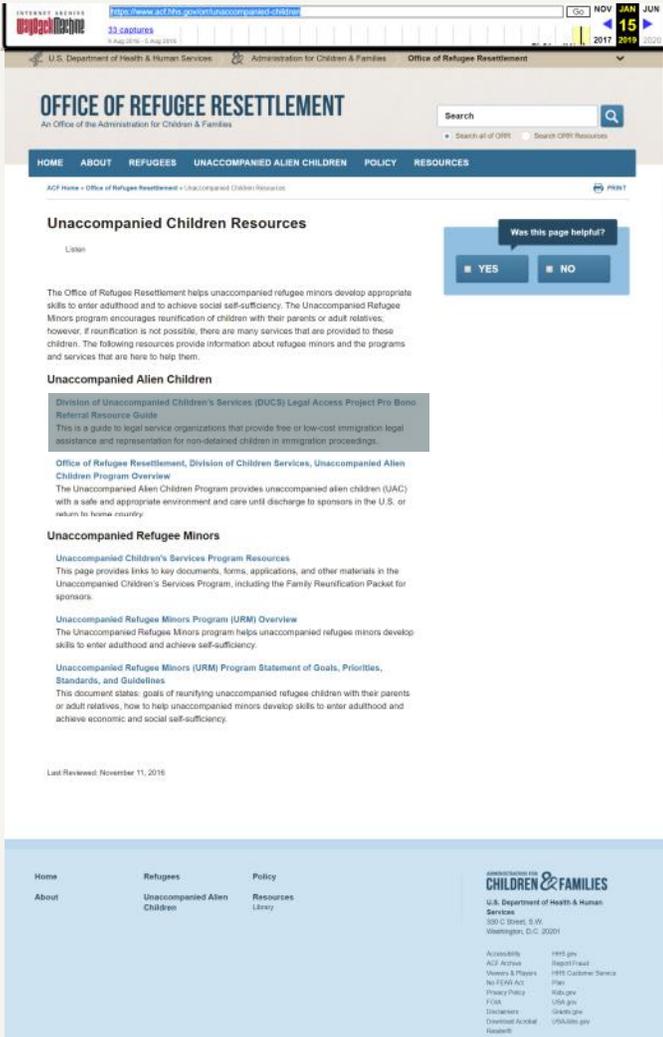
1. **Removed text:**

[“Division of Unaccompanied Children’s Services \(DUCS\) Legal Access Project Pro Bono Referral Resource Guide](#)

This is a guide to legal service organizations that provide free or low-cost immigration legal assistance and representation for non-detained children in immigration proceedings.”

- The guide (from 2013) is still available, but at a new URL: <https://www.vera.org/publications/unaccompanied-children-pro-bono-directory>. It may have been superseded by the National Immigration Legal Services Directory <https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory/>.
- The only remaining link in the “Unaccompanied Alien Children” section is to the “About the Program” page, at the URL <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/ucs/about>.

**Screenshot 8.1:** A side-by-side comparison of the “Unaccompanied Children Resources” page captured on [January 14, 2019](#) (left) and [June 10, 2019](#) (right) by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine.



## Webpage 9: Gallery

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- URL: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/gallery>
  - Changes occurred before [August 8, 2018](#).
  - An archived version of the page from [November 9, 2018](#), collected at the request of the Department of Health and Human Services, is available on Archive-It.
- 

### Change Details

The following change occurred before [August 8, 2018](#):

1. **Added** a new page titled “Gallery.”
  - The page includes links to seven Flickr image galleries and eight YouTube videos, each depicting positive scenes from an ORR-funded care facility.
    - (i) Flickr galleries:
      - [Dobbs Ferry, NY \(June 25, 2018\)](#)
      - [McAllen, TX \(June 21, 2018\)](#)
      - [Tornillo, TX \(June 21, 2018\)](#)
      - [Brownsville, TX \(June 13, 2018\)](#)
      - [Bristow, VA \(June 20, 2018\)](#)
      - [Homestead, FL \(June 20, 2018\)](#)
      - [San Diego, CA \(June 15, 2018\)](#)
    - (ii) YouTube videos:
      - [Dobbs Ferry, NY \(June 25, 2018\)](#)
      - [Tornillo, TX \(June 21, 2018\)](#)
      - [Bristow, VA \(June 20, 2018\)](#)
      - [Homestead, FL \(June 20, 2018\)](#)
      - [San Diego, CA \(June 15, 2018\)](#)
      - [Brownsville, TX \(June 13, 2018\)](#)
      - [Homestead, FL \(June 17, 2016\)](#)

**Screenshot 9.1:** The “Gallery” page as captured on [August 8, 2018](#) by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine.

The screenshot shows the 'Gallery' page of the Office of Refugee Resettlement. At the top, there is a Wayback Machine header with the URL 'https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/gallery' and a date selector for August 8, 2018. Below the header is a navigation bar for the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, and Office of Refugee Resettlement. The main content area features a search bar and a navigation menu with links to Home, About, Refugees, Unaccompanied Alien Children, Policy, and Resources. A left sidebar lists various program details under 'Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC)'. The main content area is titled 'Gallery' and includes sections for 'Listen', 'Stills' (with a list of photo locations and dates), and 'Footage' (with a list of video locations and dates). A footer section contains additional navigation links and contact information for the Administration for Children & Families.

INTERNET ARCHIVE Wayback Machine | <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/gallery> | Go | JUL | **AUG 08** | NOV | 6 captures | 8 Aug 2016 - 1 Aug 2019 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services & Administration for Children & Families Office of Refugee Resettlement

## OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

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ACF Home > Office of Refugee Resettlement > Gallery [ ] PRINT

- Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC)
  - About UAC Program
    - Facts and Data
    - Gallery
    - Health and Safety
    - Sponsors and Placement
    - Services Provided
    - Helpline and Contact Info
    - Frequently Asked Questions
  - Resource Library

### Gallery

Listen

#### Stills

- Dobbs Ferry, NY (June 25, 2018)
- McAllen, TX (June 21, 2018)
- Tornillo, TX (June 21, 2018)
- Brownsville, TX (June 13, 2018)
- Bristow, VA (June 20, 2018)
- Homestead, FL (June 20, 2018)
- San Diego, CA (June 15, 2018)

#### Footage

- Dobbs Ferry, NY (June 25, 2018)
- Tornillo, TX (June 21, 2018)
- Bristow, VA (June 20, 2018)
- Homestead, FL (June 20, 2018)
- San Diego, CA (June 15, 2018)
- Brownsville, TX (June 13, 2018)
- Homestead, FL (June 17, 2016)
- Phoenix, AZ (May 24, 2016)

Last Reviewed: July 3, 2018

Home About Refugees Policy  
 About Unaccompanied Alien Children Resources Library

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES  
 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
 330 C Street, S.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20201

Accessibility HHS.gov  
 ACF Archive Report Fraud  
 Viewers & Players HHS Customer Service  
 No FEAR Act Plan  
 Privacy Policy Kids.gov  
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 Disclaimers Grants.gov  
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# Webpage 10: Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Involving Unaccompanied Children

- 
- URL: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/standards-to-prevent-uac-sexual-abuse>
  - Changes occurred by [July 3, 2019](#).
  - An archived version of the page from [July 3, 2019](#), collected at the request of the Federal Depository Library Program Web Archive, is available on Archive-It.
- 

## Change Details

The following change occurred before [July 3, 2019](#):

1. **Added** a new page titled “Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Involving Unaccompanied Children.”
  - The page includes information about the Interim Final Rule, which “sets forth standards to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual abuse and sexual harassment in ORR care provider facilities that house unaccompanied children.”
  - The page was first captured by the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine on [July 3, 2019](#).
  - The content, however, appears to be earlier in its origins, as it references a [regulations.gov comment period](#) that [concluded in February 2015](#).

**Screenshot 10.1:** The top portion of the “Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Involving Unaccompanied Children” page as captured on [July 3, 2019](#) by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine.

The screenshot shows the top portion of a webpage from the Office of Refugee Resettlement. At the top, there is a Wayback Machine header with the URL <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/standards-to-prevent-uac-sexual-abuse> and a date of July 3, 2019. Below this is a navigation bar with the following text: "U.S. Department of Health & Human Services", "Administration for Children & Families", and "Office of Refugee Resettlement". The main header area features the "OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT" logo and a search bar. A secondary navigation bar includes links for "HOME", "ABOUT", "REFUGEES", "UNACCOMPANIED ALIEN CHILDREN", "POLICY", and "RESOURCES". The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: "ACF Home > Office of Refugee Resettlement > Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Involving Unaccompanied Children". The title of the page is "Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Involving Unaccompanied Children". Below the title is a "Listen" button and a "Was this page helpful?" feedback widget with "YES" and "NO" buttons. The main section is titled "Interim Final Rule: Overview". Under the "Background" heading, the text states: "The Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR) Interim Final Rule (IFR) sets forth standards to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual abuse and sexual harassment in ORR care provider facilities that house unaccompanied children (UCs) in accordance with section 1101(c) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. 113-4 (VAWA 2013). VAWA 2013 directs the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to adopt national standards for the detection, prevention, reduction, and punishment of rape and sexual assault in facilities that maintain custody of UCs. The standards apply to all ORR care provider facilities housing UCs except secure care provider facilities and individual foster care homes. ORR requires its secure care provider facilities to follow the Department of Justice's Final Rule to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Prison Rape. For foster care provider facilities, individual family homes are not subject to this IFR, but the care provider facility where a UC may receive education and other services during the day are subject to this rule. All individual foster care homes as well as all ORR care provider facilities are also subject to state licensing standards." A second paragraph states: "The standards achieve three objectives: preventing, detecting, and responding to both sexual abuse and sexual harassment in ORR care provider facilities. ORR care provider facilities are required to follow standards separated into the eleven categories used by the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission (NPREC) to discuss and evaluate prison rape prevention and elimination recommendations. The eleven categories include: prevention planning, responsive planning, training and education, assessment for risk of sexual victimization and abusiveness, reporting, official response following a UC report, ORR incident monitoring and evaluation, interventions and discipline, medical and mental health care, data collection and review, and audits and corrective actions." A final paragraph concludes: "We hope you find this overview helpful, but we intend this only to provide summary information on some of the IFR's key points. For complete context and understanding, we encourage everyone to read the entire IFR. You can submit comments about the IFR to <http://www.regulations.gov/> during the public comment period."

# Webpage 11: Unaccompanied Alien Children Information

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- URL: <https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/unaccompanied-alien-children/index.html>
  - Changes occurred between July 1, 2018 and [August 7, 2019](#).
  - No known public archive of this page exists.
- 

## Change Details

The following change occurred before [July 4, 2018](#):

1. **Added** a new page titled “Unaccompanied Alien Children Information” on the HHS website.
  - The page featured information regarding the role of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in dealing with unaccompanied children, and included FAQs, contact information, a photo gallery, a section titled “Additional Resources,” and other information.
  - The bottom of the page states, “Content created by Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA). Content last reviewed on July 3, 2018.”
  - Between July 1, 2018 and July 8, 2018 (according to WIP’s monitoring software), a link for the “Unaccompanied Alien Children Information” page was added to HHS’s “Social Services” program page within a panel in the body content and within a dropdown menu in the sidebar, suggesting the “Unaccompanied Alien Children Information” page was added between July 1, 2018 and July 4, 2018.

The following changes occurred between [July 4, 2018](#) and [September 27, 2018](#):

1. **Added** “Latest News” section with the following links and text:
  - [Allegations of Abuse and Neglect Fact Sheet - PDF](#) - August 8
  - [The Trump Administration Plan for Reunifying Children](#) - July 18
  - [HHS Statement on Maximizing Child Welfare and Meeting Court Orders](#) - July 16
  - [HHS Issues Statement on Ms. L, et al., Status Report Regarding Plan for Compliance for Remaining Class Members](#) - July 13
  - [Trump Administration Completes Reunification for Eligible Children Under Age 5](#) - July 12
  - [The Administration Is Following the Court Order to Reunify Families in a Responsible Manner](#) - July 10
  - [HHS Is Executing On Its Mission With Care And Compassion](#) - July 6

- [Zero-Tolerance Prosecution and Family Reunification](#) - June 23
    - This link was previously listed at the bottom of the page under the “Additional Resources” section on the July 4, 2018 version of the page.
  - [Statement by HHS Deputy Secretary Hargan on Unaccompanied Alien Children Facilities](#) - June 17
2. **Added** “Fact Sheets” section with the following links and text:
    - [Allegations of Abuse and Neglect Fact Sheet - PDF](#)
    - [The Tri-Department Plan for Stage II of Family Reunification - PDF](#)
    - [Joint Status Report Regarding Reunification - PDF](#)
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children Program Fact Sheet - PDF](#)
      - This link was previously listed at the bottom of the page under the “Additional Resources” section on the July 4, 2018 version of the page.
  3. **Altered** text by making minor grammar alterations including changing “state licensed” to “state-licensed” and changing “these” to “they.”
  4. **Altered** the “UAC Contact Info” section:
    - (i) Renamed the section to “UAC Contact Information.”
    - (ii) Removed the text “This information is collected by the call center and sent to the shelter.”
  5. **Altered** “UC” to “UAC” in one instance.
  6. **Altered** “UAC” to “children” in one instance.

**The following changes occurred between [October 12, 2018](#) and [December 3, 2018](#):**

1. **Altered** the “Latest News” section:
  - (i) Removed a link and text for:
    - [Allegations of Abuse and Neglect Fact Sheet - PDF](#) - August 8
      - This fact sheet is still listed on the page under the “Fact Sheets” section.
  - (ii) Added links and text for:
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children Program Fact Sheet - PDF](#) - November 30
      - This fact sheet was previously listed under the “Fact Sheet” section on the October 12, 2018 version of the page. However, on the December 4, 2018 version, the fact sheet was moved to the top list and a date (November 30) was added, indicating that the fact sheet had been updated.

- [Unaccompanied Alien Children Sheltered at Tornillo LPOE Fact Sheet - PDF](#) - November 16

2. **Added** 25 photos to the “Photo Gallery.”

The following changes occurred between [December 3, 2018](#) and [April 8, 2019](#):

1. **Altered** the “Fact Sheets” section:

(i) Moved the section to the top of the page. Previously the section was listed under the “Latest News” section.

(ii) Added links and text for:

- [Unaccompanied Alien Children sheltered at Homestead Job Corps Site - PDF](#) - April 1\*
- [Unaccompanied Alien Children Program Fact Sheet - PDF](#) - March 22\*

(i) This fact sheet was previously listed under the “Fact Sheet” section on the December 4, 2018 version of the page. However, on the April 8, 2019 version, the date of the fact sheet was altered, indicating that the fact sheet had been updated.

(iii) Added the text:

“\*People using assistive technology may not be able to fully access information in these files. For assistance, please contact Lydia Holt at [media@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:media@acf.hhs.gov) (202) 401-9215.

(iv) Removed a link and text for:

- [Unaccompanied Alien Children Sheltered at Tornillo LPOE Fact Sheet - PDF](#) - November 16

The following changes occurred between [April 8, 2019](#) and [May 19, 2019](#):

1. **Altered** “Fact Sheets” section:

(i) Altered the dates for two of the fact sheets, indicating that the fact sheets had been updated.

- [Unaccompanied Alien Children sheltered at Homestead Job Corps Site - PDF](#) - May 10
  - Previously, the date listed was “April 1.”
- [Unaccompanied Alien Children Program Fact Sheet - PDF](#) - May 9
  - Previously, the date listed was “March 22.”

(ii) Removed the text:

“\*People using assistive technology may not be able to fully access information in these files. For assistance, please contact Lydia Holt at [media@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:media@acf.hhs.gov) (202) 401-9215.”

The following changes occurred between [May 19, 2019](#) and [June 18, 2019](#):

1. **Altered** the “Latest News” section:
  - (i) Moved the section to the top of the page.
  - (ii) Added link and text for:
 

**“HHS and DHS Urge Congress to Address Humanitarian Crisis at the Southern Border**  
 Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and Department of Homeland Security Acting Secretary Kevin McAleenan sent a letter to members of Congress urging them to address the humanitarian crisis at the southern border of the United States - June 12  
[Read the full letter - PDF](#) \*”
  - (iii) Removed the links and text for:
    - [The Trump Administration Plan for Reunifying Children](#) - July 18
    - [HHS Statement on Maximizing Child Welfare and Meeting Court Orders](#) - July 16
    - [HHS Issues Statement on Ms. L, et al., Status Report Regarding Plan for Compliance for Remaining Class Members](#) - July 13
    - [Trump Administration Completes Reunification for Eligible Children Under Age 5](#) - July 12
    - [The Administration Is Following the Court Order to Reunify Families in a Responsible Manner](#) - July 10
    - [HHS Is Executing On Its Mission With Care And Compassion](#) - July 6
    - [Zero-Tolerance Prosecution and Family Reunification](#) - June 23
    - [Statement by HHS Deputy Secretary Hargan on Unaccompanied Alien Children Facilities](#) - June 17
  - (iv) Added text:
 

“\* People using assistive technology may not be able to fully access information in this file. For assistance, contact [digital@hhs.gov](mailto:digital@hhs.gov).”
2. **Altered** the “Fact Sheets” section:
  - (i) Added links and text for:
    - [Latest UAC Data - FY2019](#)
    - [Latest UAC Data - FY2018](#)
    - [General Statistics by Fiscal Year](#)
  - (ii) Removed links and text for:
    - [The Tri-Department Plan for Stage II of Family Reunification - PDF](#)
    - [Joint Status Report Regarding Reunification - PDF](#)

The following change occurred between [June 18, 2019](#) and [June 21, 2019](#):

1. **Altered** “Fact Sheets” section:
  - (i) Altered the dates for two of the fact sheets, indicating that the fact sheets had been updated.
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children sheltered at Homestead Job Corps Site - PDF](#) - June 19\*
      - (i) Previously, the date listed was May 10.
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children Program Fact Sheet - PDF](#) - June 19\*
      - (i) Previously, the date listed was May 9.
  - (ii) Added text:
 

“\*People using assistive technology may not be able to fully access information in these files. For assistance, please contact Lydia Holt at [media@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:media@acf.hhs.gov) (202) 401-9215.”

The following changes occurred between [June 21, 2019](#) and [July 11, 2019](#):

1. **Altered** the “Latest News” section:
  - (i) Removed a link and text for:
 

**“HHS and DHS Urge Congress to Address Humanitarian Crisis at the Southern Border**  
 Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and Department of Homeland Security Acting Secretary Kevin McAleenan sent a letter to members of Congress urging them to address the humanitarian crisis at the southern border of the United States - June 12  
[Read the full letter - PDF](#) \*”
  - (ii) Added a link and text for:
 

[HHS Secretary Statement on Congress’s Restoration of Funding to Support Humanitarian Care for Children](#) - July 1
  - (iii) Removed text:
 

“\* People using assistive technology may not be able to fully access information in this file. For assistance, contact [digital@hhs.gov](mailto:digital@hhs.gov).”
2. **Altered** the “Fact Sheets” section:
  - (i) Altered the date listed, indicating that the fact sheet had been updated:
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children sheltered at Homestead Job Corps Site](#) - June 26
      - Previously, the date listed was “June 19.”
  - (ii) Removed the date listed for:
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children Program Fact Sheet](#)
  - (iii) Added links and text for:
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children sheltered at Carrizo Springs Site](#) - July 8
    - [Myth Vs Fact: Homestead Emergency Care Shelter](#) - June 28

The following change occurred between [July 17, 2019](#) and [July 18, 2019](#):

1. **Altered** the “Fact Sheets” section:
  - (i) Altered the date listed, indicating that the fact sheet had been updated:
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children sheltered at Homestead Job Corps Site](#) - July 17
      - Previously, the date listed was “June 2.”

The following changes occurred between [July 18, 2019](#) and [August 5, 2019](#):

1. **Altered** the “Latest News” section:
  - Added a link and text for:
    - [Carrizo Springs Temporary Influx Facility Update](#) - July 30
2. **Altered** the “Fact Sheets” section:
  - (i) Altered the dates for two fact sheets, indicating that the fact sheets had been updated.
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children Program Fact Sheet](#) - July 22
      - The July 18, 2019 version of the page did not list a date for this fact sheet.
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children sheltered at Homestead Job Corps Site](#) - July 22
      - Previously, the date listed was “July 17.”
  - (ii) Removed a link and text for:
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children sheltered at Carrizo Springs Site](#) - July 8
  - (ii) Added a link and text for:
    - [Section 408 Report to Congress on Separated Children](#)

The following changes occurred between [August 5, 2019](#) and [August 7, 2019](#)

1. **Altered** the “Fact Sheets” section:
  - (a) Altered the dates for two fact sheets, indicating that the fact sheets had been updated.
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children Program Fact Sheet](#) - August 6
      - Previously, the date listed was “July 22.”
    - [Unaccompanied Alien Children sheltered at Homestead Job Corps Site](#) - August 6
      - Previously, the date listed was “July 22.”

**Screenshot 11.1:** The top portion of the “Unaccompanied Alien Children Information” page as captured on [October 12, 2018](#) by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine.


[15 captures](#)  
4 Jul 2018 - 7 Aug 2019

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Unaccompanied Alien Children

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children

Self-Sufficiency Series

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Prevention & Wellness +

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## Unaccompanied Alien Children Information

### Latest News

- [Allegations of Abuse and Neglect Fact Sheet - PDF](#) - August 8
- [The Trump Administration Plan for Reunifying Children](#) - July 18
- [HHS Statement on Maximizing Child Welfare and Meeting Court Orders](#) - July 16
- [HHS Issues Statement on Ms. L., et al., Status Report Regarding Plan for Compliance for Remaining Class Members](#) - July 13
- [Trump Administration Completes Reunification for Eligible Children Under Age 5](#) - July 12
- [The Administration Is Following the Court Order to Reunify Families in a Responsible Manner](#) - July 10
- [HHS Is Executing On Its Mission With Care And Compassion](#) - July 6
- [Zero-Tolerance Prosecution and Family Reunification](#) - June 23
- [Statement by HHS Deputy Secretary Hargan on Unaccompanied Alien Children Facilities](#) - June 17

### Fact Sheets

- [Allegations of Abuse and Neglect Fact Sheet - PDF](#)
- [The Tri-Department Plan for Stage II of Family Reunification - PDF](#)
- [Joint Status Report Regarding Reunification - PDF](#)
- [Unaccompanied Alien Children Program Fact Sheet - PDF](#)

### Frequently Asked Questions

ACF's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides funding and oversight to state-licensed shelters throughout the United States for children referred to ORR by the Department of Homeland Security. The children are known as unaccompanied alien children (UAC). They include both children who enter the country without their parent or legal guardian and children who, for other reasons, have been separated from their parent or legal guardian.

In recent days, there has been a great deal of misinformation about the UAC program. This misinformation and the intentional perpetuation of it is a disservice to the hundreds of caseworkers and care providers who are deeply committed to the quality care and safe and speedy placement of the children with appropriate sponsors. Please read [ORR's frequently asked questions](#) from community members and media regarding the UAC program.

### UAC Contact Information

ORR Helpline for Unaccompanied Alien Children or Sponsors

# Webpage 12: Unaccompanied Alien Children Information

- URL: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-information>
- Changes occurred before [January 11, 2019](#).
- An archived version of the page from [January 15, 2019](#), collected at the request of the Federal Depository Library Program Web Archive, is available on Archive-It.

## Change Details

The following change occurred before [January 11, 2019](#):

1. **Added** a new page titled “Unaccompanied Alien Children Information.”
  - (i) The page, dated November 29, 2018, is syndicated from an HHS.gov page ([Webpage 11](#)), created by the HHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs.
    - The HHS.gov page is hosted at <https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/unaccompanied-alien-children/index.html>.
    - The HHS.gov page was first captured by IAWM on [July 4, 2018](#).
  - (ii) The page, when first captured by IAWM on [January 11, 2019](#), included this syndicated content:
    - (1) Links to fact sheets and recent news releases.
    - (2) A link to [an FAQ hosted on HHS.gov](#) titled “Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children.”
      - The link is preceded by the text:
 

“In recent days, there has been a great deal of misinformation about the UAC program. This misinformation and the intentional perpetuation of it is a disservice to the hundreds of caseworkers and care providers who are deeply committed to the quality care and safe and speedy placement of the children with appropriate sponsors.”
    - (3) Contact and other information for the ORR National Call Center/UAC Contact Information, a section titled “Other helpful information,” information on requesting a case file, and media and program contact information.
    - (4) The unlinked text “Photo Gallery.”
      - The [HHS.gov version of the page](#) includes a working photo gallery depicting positive scenes from an ORR-funded care facilities.
    - (5) A link to a [YouTube video of a tour](#) of an ORR-funded facility in Dobbs Ferry, NY

**Screenshot 12.1:** The top portion of the “Unaccompanied Alien Children Information” page as captured on [January 11, 2019](#) by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine.

INTERNET ARCHIVE waybackmachine <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-information> Go DEC JAN JUL 11 2018 2019 2020 4 captures 11 Jan 2019 - 1 Aug 2019

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children & Families Office of Refugee Resettlement

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### Unaccompanied Alien Children Information

Published: November 29, 2018

Categories: Unaccompanied Children's Services  
Topics: Refugees, Resettlement

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#### Fact Sheets

- Unaccompanied Alien Children sheltered at Homestead Job Corps Site - December 26
- Unaccompanied Alien Children Sheltered at Tornillo LPOE Fact Sheet - December 26
- Unaccompanied Alien Children Program Fact Sheet - December 20
- Allegations of Abuse and Neglect Fact Sheet
- The Tri-Department Plan for Stage II of Family Reunification
- Joint Status Report Regarding Reunification

#### Latest News

- The Trump Administration Plan for Reunifying Children - July 18
- HHS Statement on Maximizing Child Welfare and Meeting Court Orders - July 16
- HHS Issues Statement on Ms. L., et al., Status Report Regarding Plan for Compliance for Remaining Class Members - July 13
- Trump Administration Completes Reunification for Eligible Children Under Age 5 - July 12
- The Administration Is Following the Court Order to Reunify Families in a Responsible Manner - July 10
- HHS Is Executing On Its Mission With Care And Compassion - July 6
- Zero-Tolerance Prosecution and Family Reunification - June 23
- Statement by HHS Deputy Secretary Hargan on Unaccompanied Alien Children Facilities - June 17

#### Frequently Asked Questions

ACF's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides funding and oversight to state-licensed shelters throughout the United States for children referred to ORR by the Department of Homeland Security. The children are known as unaccompanied alien children (UAC). They include both children who enter the country without their parent or legal guardian and children who, for other reasons, have been separated from their parent or legal guardian.

In recent days, there has been a great deal of misinformation about the UAC program. This misinformation and the intentional perpetuation of it is a disservice to the hundreds of caseworkers and care providers who are deeply committed to the quality care and safe and speedy placement of the children with appropriate sponsors. Please read [ORR's frequently asked questions](#) from community members and media regarding the UAC program.

#### UAC Contact Information

**ORR Helpline for Unaccompanied Alien Children or Sponsors**  
800.203.7001 | [information@ORRNCC.com](mailto:information@ORRNCC.com)

ORR National Call Center phone number 1-800-203-7001 or email [information@ORRNCC.com](mailto:information@ORRNCC.com)

Was this page helpful?

# Webpage 13: Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children

---

- URL: <https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/unaccompanied-alien-children/faqs/index.html>
  - As of [August 8, 2019](#), no changes have occurred to this page since it was first captured by IAWM on [November 7, 2018](#).
  - No known public archive of this page exists.
- 

## Change Details

The following change occurred by [November 7, 2018](#):

1. **Added** a new page titled “Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children” to HHS’ website.
  - The content featured on this page is similar to content found on ORR’s “Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions” page ([Webpage 5](#)).
  - Between July 1, 2018 and July 8, 2018 (according to our monitoring software), a link for the “Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children” page was added to the HHS’s “Social Services” program page within a dropdown menu in the sidebar, suggesting the page was added between July 1, 2018 and July 8, 2018.
  - As of [August 8, 2019](#), no changes have been made to the page since it was first captured by IAWM on [November 7, 2018](#).

*\*Note: This page contains much of the same content as the July 5, 2018 through April 13, 2019 versions of ORR’s “Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions” page ([Webpage 5](#)). It is unclear whether HHS.gov’s “Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children” page or ORR’s Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions” page is the original source of the content on the pages.\**

**Screenshot 12.1:** The top portion of the “Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children” page as captured on [November 7, 2018](#) by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine.

INTERNET ARCHIVE waybackmachine <https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/unaccompanied-alien-children/faqs/index.html> Go OCT NOV JAN 07 2017 2018 2019 10 captures 7 Nov 2018 - 8 Aug 2019

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## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Unaccompanied Alien Children

ACF's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides funding and oversight to state-licensed shelters throughout the United States for children referred to ORR, by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). These children are known as unaccompanied alien children (UAC). They include both children who enter the country without their parent or legal guardian and children who for other reasons have been separated from their parent or legal guardian.

In recent days, there has been a great deal of misinformation about the UAC program. This misinformation and the intentional perpetuation of it is a disservice to the hundreds of caseworkers and care providers who are deeply committed to the quality care and safe and speedy placement of the children with appropriate sponsors. Below are answers to frequently asked questions from community members and media regarding the UAC program.

**Q: Why is HHS caring for children separated from their parents?**

**A:** When a child who has entered the country illegally and is not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, he or she is considered an unaccompanied alien child, and by law must be transferred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement for care and custody.

HHS is legally required to provide care for all children until they are released to a suitable sponsor, almost always a parent or close relative, while they await immigration proceedings. These children can also leave HHS care if they return to their home countries, achieve 18 years of age, or gain legal immigration status. The same procedure applies for children who have been separated from parents due to criminality or jeopardy, or when the parent is detained to await trial or convicted of a criminal offense and must serve time in federal custody.

**Q: Is there a system for keeping parents and children connected if they are separated for immigration proceedings?**

**A:** Yes. When adults and minors are apprehended by immigration authorities, their information is entered into government databases by which their cases can be tracked.

HHS has an electronic portal through which we track every child in our care - currently, more than 11,800 minors, including both children separated from their parents and those who arrived alone.

All minors in HHS care are assigned case managers. In the circumstance of children whose parents are in federal custody, the case managers are in contact with the parents' ICE case managers, ICE agents, and other federal law enforcement officials in order to verify their relationship and put the parents and children in communication. U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps officers and other resource staff have been deployed to DHS facilities to assist parents in communicating with their children.

HHS has long provided resources for parents, including those in DHS custody, to communicate with their children in HHS care. Parents or guardians attempting to determine if their child is in HHS care should contact the [ORR National Call Center](#) at 1-800-203-7001, or via email at

# Table 1: Selected Additions of the Term “Alien” to ORR Webpages

Index	Page Title	URL	# of Additions of term “alien” since inauguration	Time range of change (with IAWM links)
1	Home ( <a href="#">Webpage 2</a> )	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr</a>	2 (in main menu and footer)	<a href="#">August 8, 2017</a> - <a href="#">August 13, 2017</a>
2	Unaccompanied Alien Children (Previously “Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services” and “Unaccompanied Children's Services”) ( <a href="#">Webpage 3</a> )	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/ucs">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/ucs</a>	6 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">June 27, 2017</a> - <a href="#">July 4, 2017</a>
3	About the Program (Previously “About Unaccompanied Children's Services” and “About Unaccompanied Alien Children's Services”) ( <a href="#">Webpage 7</a> )	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/ucs/about">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/ucs/about</a>	18 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">June 12, 2017</a> - <a href="#">July 31, 2017</a>
4	Health and Safety	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/health-and-safety">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/health-and-safety</a>	6 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">June 12, 2017</a> - <a href="#">July 31, 2017</a>
5	Services Provided ( <a href="#">Webpage 4</a> )	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/services-provided">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/services-provided</a>	8 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">June 12, 2017</a> - <a href="#">July 6, 2017</a>
6	Sponsors and Placement	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/sponsors">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/sponsors</a>	4 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">June 27, 2017</a> - <a href="#">August 1, 2017</a>
7	Requests for UAC Case File Information	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/requests-for-uac-case-file-information">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/requests-for-uac-case-file-information</a>	33 (excluding menu and footer changes)*	<a href="#">October 21, 2017</a> - <a href="#">June 24, 2018</a>
8	Unaccompanied Alien Children Released to Sponsors by County	<a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/unaccompanied-children-released-to-sponsors-by-county">http://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/unaccompanied-children-released-to-sponsors-by-county</a> moved to <a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-released-to-sponsors-by-county">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-released-to-sponsors-by-county</a>	5 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">June 28, 2017</a> - <a href="#">July 2, 2017</a>
9	Unaccompanied Alien Children Frequently Asked Questions	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/unaccompanied-children-frequently-asked-questions">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/unaccompanied-children-frequently-asked-questions</a> moved to <a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-frequently-asked-questions">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-frequently-asked-questions</a>	15 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">June 12, 2017</a> - <a href="#">July 13, 2017</a>
10	Unaccompanied Alien Children Program (Previously “Unaccompanied Children Program”)	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-childrens-services">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-childrens-services</a>	11 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">December 7, 2017</a> - <a href="#">May 17, 2018</a>
11	Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Guide to Terms ( <a href="#">Webpage 1</a> )	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-guide-to-terms">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-guide-to-terms</a>	56 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">May 31, 2017</a> - <a href="#">August 1, 2017</a>

\* Additions were of the term “UAC”

# Table 1: Selected Additions of the Term “Alien” to ORR Webpages (Cont.)

Index	Page Title	URL	# of Additions of term “alien” since inauguration	Time range of change (with IAWM links)
12	Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied</a>	8 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">June 13, 2017</a> - <a href="#">July 31, 2017</a>
13	Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Introduction	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-0">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-0</a>	7 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">June 1, 2017</a> - <a href="#">August 8, 2018</a>
14	Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Section 1	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-1">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-1</a>	118 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">May 31, 2017</a> - <a href="#">August 1, 2017</a>
15	Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Section 2	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-2">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-2</a>	100 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">June 7, 2017</a> - <a href="#">July 13, 2017</a>
16	Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Section 3	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-3">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-3</a>	159 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">May 31, 2017</a> - <a href="#">July 5, 2017</a>
17	Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Section 4	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-4">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-4</a>	25 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">May 4, 2017</a> - <a href="#">October 30, 2017</a>
18	Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Section 5	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-5">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-5</a>	40 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">June 13, 2017</a> - <a href="#">November 25, 2017</a>
19	Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Section 6	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-6">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-6</a>	4 (excluding menu and footer changes)	<a href="#">May 26, 2017</a> - <a href="#">June 24, 2018</a>

# Methodology

This report focuses on changes made to content relating to unaccompanied children on the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) website, hosted at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr>, since January 20, 2017. The changes were identified using two different methods: web monitoring and text analysis.

## Web Monitoring

Many of the changes documented in this report were discovered as part of the Web Integrity Project's routine monitoring. WIP uses software that automatically crawls close to 30,000 federal government webpages every 3 to 7 days and captures the HTML code of a page each time it detects a change. A team of analysts reviews the HTML renders of each changed webpage one-by-one, in meticulous detail, making decisions about whether the change is substantial enough for further vetting. At the web monitoring team's weekly meeting, changes are discussed and decisions made about whether to further vet and fully document the change. Any documented change reviewed by at least three analysts before it is published in any technical documentation or report.

For more information on WIP's web monitoring process, see analyst Aaron Lemelin's "[The Web Integrity Project's monitoring processes reveal an increasing disparity in Spanish-language HIV/AIDs content.](#)"

Since the Web Integrity Project began regularly monitoring the ORR website in March 2018, we have reviewed thousands of changes to the website. Many of these

changes were routine or minor — updates to source code, RSS feeds, and statistics, or the addition of a news release; a small proportion of the changes required further vetting; and an even smaller proportion are reported here.

This report is not exhaustive of all significant or meaningful changes on the ORR website since January 20, 2017. We chose to limit our analysis to content relating to unaccompanied children for several reasons, including the controversial nature of the unaccompanied children program in recent years, the clustering of website changes on pages related to the program, and practical concerns about the length of the report.

Other reports emerging out of our monitoring of the ORR website include:

- [Changes to Office of Refugee Resettlement Website Foreshadowed Policy Announcements](#) (June 13, 2019)
- [Removal of HHS's Office of Refugee Resettlement Staff Directory Webpage](#) (August 14, 2018)

## Text Analysis

On page 6, we provide results of a term analysis WIP conducted of 262 pages within the <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr> file path. We identified 276 URLs by crawling the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine for URLs that both existed (and were captured by the Wayback Machine) before January 20, 2017 and continued to exist in August 2019. In order to ensure an apples-to-apples



comparison, pages that have been added since January 20, 2017 and pages that have been removed since were not included in the analysis. Additionally, non-English webpages were excluded from the analysis.

To analyze the text from our set of web pages, we created a program adapted from the [Environmental Data and Governance Initiative's \(EDGI\) CTRL-F scripts](#). Using an API developed by EDGI, we first archived each webpage at the moment of analysis, and then accessed historical "snapshots" of each URL through the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. Since not all URLs are systematically archived, we chose the latest available snapshot between President Obama's second inauguration up to the day before President Trump's inauguration as the "pre" snapshot. For the "post" snapshot we chose the most recent snapshot between President Trump's inauguration and the date the program was run. We adopted this approach as this analysis aims to report on observed trends from the start of this administration to the present day.

To assess changes in language, we used a list of eight terms:

- UAC
- alien
- child
- children
- unaccompanied child
- unaccompanied children
- unaccompanied alien child
- unaccompanied alien children

We counted the number of times each of the foregoing terms appeared on each web page using a custom program. To do this, we used a custom program, written in Python, which builds on EDGI's CTRL-F scripts. This program returns the most recent "viable" Wayback Machine snapshot within the two provided timeframes (pre- and post-inauguration).

Our program stores a "snapshot object" with attributes for the "pre" and "post" states of the URL. One of these attributes is the "visible text" of the web page (ie. the text that a user can see while navigating the web page). We excluded anything outside the main body of the text of the webpage, including footers, navigation menus, and headers using variations of their HTML tags.

Our program counts the number of instances in which each of the eight terms appeared in the visible text of the page. Each term is counted exactly as it appears; and so the term "child," for example, is counted separately from the term "children," or any other variation.

Finally, our program outputs counts for only "complete" snapshots, ie. snapshots that have both "pre" and "post" attributes. In our analysis, ten URLs had incomplete snapshots. So, in total, we had 262 URLs with which to estimate the magnitude and direction of the changes from the beginning of President Trump's administration until the present day.



Unofficial WIP spokesdog, Eugene, encourages you to visit the Web Integrity Project's website: <https://sunlightfoundation.com/web-integrity-project/>





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