

Monthly Report to Congress on Separated Children | December 2019



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

The Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) submits this report to Congress as described by three Congressional authorities: section 235 of Public Law 116-94 (Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020); section 236 of H.R. 6470 (Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2019), which was incorporated into the 2019 appropriations statute by Conference Report 115-952, to the extent ORR continues to obligate fiscal year 2019 appropriations during fiscal year 2020; and Senate Report 115-289, as incorporated into the reporting requirements for fiscal year 2020 by the Explanatory Statement to P.L. 116-94. Please find the language for each authority below:

P.L. 116-94 states:

Sec. 235. Not later than 14 days after the date of enactment of this Act, and monthly thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and make publicly available online, a report with respect to children who were separated from their parents or legal guardians by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (regardless of whether or not such separation was pursuant to an option selected by the children, parents, or guardians), subsequently classified as unaccompanied alien children, and transferred to the care and custody of ORR during the previous month. Each report shall contain the following information:

- (1) the number and ages of children so separated subsequent to apprehension at or between ports of entry, to be reported by sector where separation occurred; and*
- (2) the documented cause of separation, as reported by DHS when each child was referred.*

H.R. 6470 states:

Sec. 236. Beginning with April 2018, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a monthly report on, with respect to children who were separated from their parents or legal guardians by the Department of Homeland Security and subsequently classified as unaccompanied alien children and transferred to the custody of the HHS’ Office of Refugee Resettlement—

- (1) the number and ages of children so separated at or between ports of entry;*
- (2) the length of any such separation;*
- (3) the status of any efforts undertaken by the Secretary to reunify such children with a parent or legal guardian; and*
- (4) the number of any such reunifications, and whether the reunified families were placed in family detention.*

Senate Report 115-289 states:

In addition, the Committee directs HHS to include in its existing weekly updates additional information, including, for both all UACs and the children who were apprehended as part of a family unit, the number of children referred to HHS, the number currently in their care, the age and gender distribution of children, the average length of stay, the number of

preteen children in both shelter beds and ORR-run foster care programs, the number of children released to sponsors, and the category of sponsor. The weekly updates should also include historical monthly totals for all information provided, updated as it becomes available. The Committee directs HHS to make this monthly information available publicly on its website, and to provide weekly updates on its website of the number of children who have been reunited with separated family members.

This report includes the demographics of separated children as outlined in Senate Report 115-289. For reports on all UAC, see reports published on HHS’ Unaccompanied Alien Children website (<https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/unaccompanied-alien-children/index.html>).

Response to Section 235 of P.L. 116-94

DHS provides a weekly list of new separations to ORR. ORR also creates its own list of new separations, based on its data, and appends it the DHS list to form a combined list of new separations. ORR and DHS then conduct concurrent reviews of the combined list, and create a reconciled new separations master list that shows those separations confirmed by both DHS and ORR. In cases where there is no concurrence between ORR and DHS, or more information is needed to confirm a separation, the agencies work with their field staff to reconcile discrepancies until a final determination of separation/not separation is reached. The purpose of this reconciliation is to make sure that ORR has an accurate list of all children that DHS has separated and referred to ORR for care. As a result of the process, however, the data usually lags by three weeks.

The tables below reflect data for minors referred¹ to ORR during the month of December 2019.

Table 1 Children Separated by DHS by Cause of Separation and Age²

UAC Separations: Month of December 2019						
Reason for Separation	0-5	6-12	13-14	15-16	17	Grand Total
Health issue/hospitalization	1	2	1	0	0	4
Parent criminal history and immigration history	0	1	0	1	0	2
Referred for prosecution	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	1	3	1	2	0	7³

¹ ORR does not consistently receive apprehension date information from CBP and ICE when referring UACs to its ORR care. As a result, because it is a more reliable source of data, ORR used referral dates to generate the information provided in this report.

² Table 1 lists the categories of permissible reasons for separation used in the government’s reporting to plaintiffs in the *Ms. L.* litigation. See *Ms. L., et al., v. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, et al.*, No. 3:18-cv-00428 (S.D. Cal. 2018).

³ 7 is the confirmed number of separations for the entire month of December. Previous reporting only reflected partial list of separations for December because some separations may have not been confirmed at the time of reporting.

Table 2 Referring Sectors of Separated UACs by Age Group

UAC Separations: ⁴ Month of December 2019						
Referring Sector	0-5	6-12	13-14	15-16	17	Grand Total
El Paso (ELP)	0	2	1	0	0	3
Phoenix, AZ (PHO)	0	1	0	1	0	2
San Antonio (SNA)	0	0	0	1	0	1
San Diego (SND)	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	1	3	1	2	0	7⁵

Response to Section 236 of H.R. 6470

The information provided in this report on separated children is primarily based on HHS’ regular reporting to the court and to the plaintiffs in *Ms. L v. U.S. Immigration & Customs Enft* (“ICE”), 3:18-cv-00428 (S.D. Cal. 2018) (“*Ms. L.*”), as well as the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) reconciled list of all children DHS separated and referred to ORR for care.

On June 26, 2018, the *Ms. L.* court granted a preliminary injunction and certified a class of all adult parents who enter the United States at or between designated ports of entry who (1) have been, are, or will be detained in immigration custody by DHS, and (2) have a minor child who is or will be separated from them by DHS and detained in HHS custody, HHS foster care, or DHS custody, absent a determination that the parent is unfit or presents a danger to the child. As of this writing, the preliminary injunction remains in effect.

After the court issued the preliminary injunction, as part of an interagency effort, HHS identified 2,815⁶ minors in its custody on June 26, 2018, who were possible children of potential class member parents. HHS has also subsequently tracked and reported referrals of children separated from their parents and in HHS custody on or after June 26, 2018. These reports, and the underlying data used to generate them, served as the bases for the reporting below.⁷

⁴ In some cases, final determinations on separation status reported during weekly data reconciliation require further review. As a result, data on separations is subject to change.

⁵ See FN 10.

⁶ The government has periodically updated its count of the possible children of potential class members who were in ORR custody on June 26, 2018, based on newly available information. In January 2020, the government updated its count from 2,814 children to 2,815. *See* Joint Status Report, *Ms. L.* (S.D. Cal. Jan. 20, 2020), ECF No. 511.

⁷ Separately, on March 8, 2019, the *Ms. L.* court expanded the class to include parents who entered the United States on or after July 1, 2017. *See* Order Granting Plaintiffs’ Motion to Modify Class Definition, *Ms. L.* (S.D. Cal. Mar. 8, 2019), ECF No. 386. The government completed a Court-approved plan to identify all possible children of potential expanded class members on October 24, 2019, and provided the information to Plaintiffs. *See* Joint Status Report, *Ms. L.* (S.D. Cal. Nov. 6, 2019), ECF No. 495.

Monthly Reporting from April 2018 through December 31, 2019

1. The number and ages of children separated at or between ports of entry, as described in the Appropriations Act

The following table describes the number of referrals to the HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) of children DHS separated from their parents or legal guardians, from April 1, 2018, through December 31, 2019.

Count and ages of Minor separated from April 2018 through December 2019			
	4 and Under	5 and Above	Grand Total
2018			
Apr	13	96	109
May	22	1488	1510
Jun	29	962	991
Jul	1	10	11
Aug	4	18	22
Sep	4	25	29
Oct	7	30	37
Nov	10	41	51
Dec	11	55	66
2019			
Jan	5	41	46
Feb	10	62	72
Mar	20	104	124
Apr	31	124	155
May	22	108	130
Jun	30	163	193
Jul	12	83	95
Aug	9	39	48
Sep	2	23	25

Count and ages of Minor separated from April 2018 through December 2019			
Oct	3	18	21
Nov	2	9	11
Dec	1	6	7
Grand Total	248	3505	3753⁸

Note: Because information on cases of separation may not be immediately available at the time of a child's referral to ORR but instead uncovered during the duration of a child's stay in ORR care, monthly tabulations of separations may vary between updates to this report. For example, if a child was referred to ORR in February but was not confirmed to have been separated until May, the February total would increase by one between this and the previous version of the report.

2. The length of any such separation

The following table shows: (1) the average amount of time separated children have spent in ORR care before being released to a sponsor; and (2) the average amount of time in care for all separated children, including children that have not yet been released. Both figures are as of December 31, 2019.

Length of Care for Separated Minors Referred from April 2018 through December 2019	Average Length of Care
Average Length of Care for Minors Referred from April 2018 – December 2019 (for both discharged minors and those currently in ORR custody)	79
Average Length of Care for Minors Referred from April 2018 – December 2019, subsequently discharged	76

3. The status of any efforts undertaken by the Secretary to reunify such children with apparent or guardian

HHS regularly reports on the status of reunifications of separated children to the *Ms. L* court. Reunifications occur in accordance with interagency plans approved by Judge Dana Sabraw.⁹ The relevant plans accompany this report. In addition, the government outlined

⁸ The total number of separations reported is greater than the count of 2,815 children identified in *Ms. L*. because this count reflects a longer timeframe relative to the original *Ms. L*. class certification. 3,753 children is the count of all possible children of potential class members referred to ORR from 4/1/2018 through 12/31/2019

⁹ See HHS/DHS Unified Plan of Operations, *Ms. L*. (S.D. Cal. Jul. 15, 2018), ECF No. 109-1; see also Interagency Plan for Reunification of Separated Minors with Removed Parents, *Ms. L*. (S.D. Cal. Aug. 16, 2018), ECF No. 189.

procedures regarding release of separated children in the Joint Status Report filed on March 6, 2019,¹⁰ which also accompanies this report. To date, HHS has released 3,684, of the 3,753 separated children referred to ORR between April 1, 2018 and December 31, 2019.

4. The number of any such reunifications, and whether the reunified families were placed in family detention.

As stated below, through December 31, 2019, ORR discharged 3,684 children separated from their parents at the border, and referred to it from April 2018 through December 2019. ORR discharged 2,242 to their separated parent, and 1442 children under other appropriate circumstances, including discharges to sponsors where the parent was ineligible for reunification.

Separated Minors' Discharge Circumstances from April 1, 2018 through December 31, 2019	
Reunited with separated Parent	2242 ¹¹
Reunited (Other Appropriate Circumstances)	1442
Grand Total	3684

HHS is able to identify the parties to whom it released separated children; however, HHS respectfully defers to ICE with respect to providing the number of reunified families ultimately placed in family detention.

Response to Senate Report 115-289

The tables below reflect age and gender distribution data for minors referred¹² to ORR during the month of December 2019.

Total Number of Separations 04/01/2017 through 12/31/2019	3,753
Separations for the month of December	7

Gender	Number of UAC In-Care	% of UC In-Care
Male	5	71%
Female	2	29%
Total	7	100%

Age Category	Number of UAC In-Care	% of UC In-Care
0-5	1	14%

¹⁰ Joint Status Report, *Ms. L.* (S.D. Cal. March 6, 2019), ECF No. 382.

¹¹ The discharge type of some minors were re-categorized, which affected discharges to separated parents in November compared to December

¹² ORR does not consistently receive apprehension date information from CBP and ICE when referring UACs to its ORR care. As a result, because it is a more reliable source of data, ORR used referral dates to generate the information provided in this report.

Age Category	Number of UAC In-Care	% of UC In-Care
6-12	3	43%
13-14	1	14%
15-16	2	29%
17	0	0%
Total	7	100%

Demographic data for children DHS separated from their parents or legal guardians, and referred to ORR care from April 1, 2018, through December 31, 2019:

Total Number of Children DHS separated from their parents or legal guardians, and referred to ORR care from April 1, 2018, through December 31, 2019:	3,753
• Number of Children in Care as of December 31, 2019:	69
• Number of Discharged Children as of December 31, 2019:	3,684

Discharge Type of Separated Children as of December 31, 2019	
Reunited with Separated Parent (Discharged):	2,242
Discharged under Other Appropriate Circumstances ¹³ :	1,442
Total	3,684

Average Length of Care¹⁴ for children DHS separated from their parents or legal guardians, and referred to ORR care from April 1, 2018, through December, 2019

Average Length of Care (days for all Separated Children), as of December 31, 2019:	79
Average Length of Care for Separated Children (days for those still in care):	239
Average Length of Care for Separated Children (days for all those Discharged):	76

Age and gender distribution of children DHS separated from their parents or legal guardians, and referred to ORR care from April 1, 2018, through December 31, 2019

Age Category	Number of UAC	% of UAC
0-5	417	11%

¹³ “Other Appropriate Circumstances” include discharges to sponsors, which can occur in situations where a child’s separated parent is ineligible for or elects against reunification, and age outs.

¹⁴ Length of care reflects the total amount of time in ORR care, regardless of shelter placement. Length of stay is specific to the amount of time a child in ORR care is in a specific shelter.

Age Category	Number of UAC	% of UAC
6-12	1652	44%
13-14	502	13%
15-16	640	17%
17+	542	14%
Total	3753	100%

Gender	Number of UAC	% of UAC
Male	2382	63%
Female	1371	37%
Total	3753	100%

Age and gender distribution of children DHS separated from their parents or legal guardians, and referred to ORR care from April 1, 2018, through December 31, 2019 and who remain in care as of December 31, 2019

Age Category	Number of UAC In-Care	% of UAC In-Care
0-5	12	17%
6-12	25	36%
13-14	9	13%
15-16	19	28%
17+	4	6%
Total	69	100%

Gender	Number of UAC In-Care	% of UAC In-Care
Male	46	67%
Female	23	33%
Total	69	100%

For children DHS separated from their parents or legal guardians, and referred to ORR care from April 1, 2018, through December 31, 2019 and who remain in care as of December 31, 2019, the number of preteen children in both shelter beds and ORR-run foster care programs

Tender Age (0-12) Separated UAC in Care as of December 31, 2019 by Shelter Type	Number of UAC In-Care	% of UAC In-Care
Standard Shelter	10	27%
Transitional Foster Care	27	73%
Total	37	100%

For children DHS separated from their parents or legal guardians, and referred to ORR care from April 1, 2018, through December 31, 2019 and discharged to a sponsor as of December 31, 2019, the number of children released to sponsors, and the category of sponsor

Total Number of Children reunified with Individual Sponsor	
Sponsor Category¹⁵	Number of UAC
Category 1	2548
Category 2	734
Category 3	171
Total	3453

¹⁵ 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. Category 1 sponsors are parents or legal guardians; Category 2 sponsors are immediate relatives (adult siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, first cousins); Category 3 sponsors are distant relatives or unrelated adults.