



U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

DHS Secretary Mayorkas Announces Family Reunification Task Force Principles and Executive Director

Release Date: March 1, 2021

WASHINGTON—Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas announced today the principles of the Family Reunification Task Force and the appointment of the Task Force’s Executive Director, Michelle Brané.

“We are dedicating our resources throughout the Department of Homeland Security and the federal government, and bringing our full weight to bear, to reunite children who were cruelly separated from their parents,” said Secretary Mayorkas, who serves as the Chair of the Task Force. “It is our moral imperative to not only reunite the families, but to provide them with the relief, resources, and services they need to heal.”

Secretary Mayorkas announced that Michelle Brané will serve as the Task Force’s Executive Director. Most recently, she served as the senior director of the Migrant Rights and Justice program at the Women’s Refugee Commission. Prior to that, Michelle also held positions at Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, with human rights organizations in India, and as a human rights officer in Bosnia with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

“Michelle has dedicated her entire career to the protection and well-being of the vulnerable, and to ensuring that the dignity and human rights of every individual are respected,” continued Mayorkas. “I am proud that she has agreed to commit her talent to this most urgent work.”

Secretary Mayorkas outlined the Task Force’s principles to heal the families, to the fullest extent the law permits:

Family Reunification Task Force Statement of Principles

1. The Family Reunification Task Force (Task Force) will be defined by the relentless pursuit of bringing families back together.
2. The Task Force must balance the need for swift action with the need for comprehensive and stable support.
3. To the extent permissible under law, separated families should have the option of being reunified either in the United States or their country of origin.
4. The Task Force will partner with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector to leverage needed reunification and support services and receive recommendations throughout the reunification process.
5. Support to reunified families will be defined very broadly, to include transportation, healthcare (including trauma and mental health services), legal services, and career and educational services.
6. To the extent possible, the expenses of reunification and reunification-related support will be borne by government, NGOs, and the private sector – and never by the families.
7. Reunification efforts will be defined broadly. Additional family members of the children who were separated, such as siblings, will be considered for reunification where there is a compelling humanitarian interest in doing so.
8. To the extent permissible under law, the Task Force will identify opportunities for families to pursue legal immigration status that best ensures their safety and stability.
9. The Task Force will maintain clear communication with the public to explain the reunification process, report on progress, and educate on available resources to support reunited families.
10. The Task Force will identify and implement long-term reform efforts to ensure that family separations not based on the best interests of the child are not permitted to occur again.

On February 26, 2021, Secretary Mayorkas spoke with the Foreign Ministers of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, who committed to all work with the United States to support the Task Force's work to reunite the families. The Task Force will also work with NGOs and the private sector to achieve its mission.

Topics: [Civil Rights and Civil Liberties \(/topics/civil-rights-and-civil-liberties\)](/topics/civil-rights-and-civil-liberties), [Homeland Security Enterprise \(/topics/homeland-security-enterprise\)](/topics/homeland-security-enterprise), [International Engagement \(/topics/international\)](/topics/international), [Secretary of Homeland Security \(/topics/secretary-homeland-security\)](/topics/secretary-homeland-security).

Keywords: [Asylum \(/keywords/asylum-applications\)](/keywords/asylum-applications), [Family \(/keywords/family\)](/keywords/family), [Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\) \(/keywords/ice\)](/keywords/ice), [Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas \(/keywords/secretary-alejandra-mayorkas\)](/keywords/secretary-alejandra-mayorkas).

Last Published Date: March 1, 2021