



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on June 4, 2021

## Governor Abbott's Disaster Declaration Closes Shelters for Illegal Migrant Children

Texas Governor Greg Abbott moved to block federal housing for child migrants in the Lone Star State by ordering child-care regulators to pull licenses for the facilities that house minors detained after crossing the border illegally.

Abbott [issued](#) a disaster declaration on Tuesday "in response to the border crisis, providing more resources and strategies to combat the ongoing influx of unlawful immigrants," ordering the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to take all necessary steps to discontinue state licensure of any child-care facility under a contract with the federal government that shelters or detains unlawful immigrants. The move will affect 4,223 unaccompanied children who are being held in state-licensed facilities or child-placement agencies, the *Dallas Morning News* [reported](#).



AP Images

There are also 52 state-licensed residential operations and child-placement agencies in Texas that have contracts with the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement.

In his executive order, Abbott linked recent increases in immigration to the state's ongoing foster-care capacity crisis and argued that "The unabated influx of individuals resulting from federal government policies threatens to negatively impact state-licensed residential facilities, including those that serve Texas children in foster care."

He accused the federal government of "commandeering" state resources for their open-borders agenda. "There are several counties in Texas, more than a dozen counties in Texas, that requested a gubernatorial disaster declaration for the border," Abbott said. "I declared their disaster declaration."

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said it would not be shutting down any facilities holding child migrants in Texas, despite an order from Governor Abbott to pull licenses from such facilities.

"HHS's top priority is the health and safety of the children in our care. We are assessing the Texas directive concerning licensed facilities providing care to unaccompanied children and do not intend to close any facilities as a result of the order," HHS spokesperson Sarah Lovenheim [said](#).

However, a spokeswoman for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission later [stated](#) that "HHSC is reviewing the Governor's disaster proclamation and determining next steps as we plan for fully implementing the Governor's direction." The state agency released a notice to the 52 agencies



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partnering with the federal government, stating that “by August 30, 2021, you must wind down any operations at your child-care facility that provide care under a federal contract to individuals who are not lawfully present in the United States.”

As [reported](#) by the *New York Post*, Representative Henry Cuellar (D-Texas), who was among a bipartisan group of lawmakers who toured the border on Wednesday and urged the Biden administration to address the surge of migrants, was asked during an appearance on Fox News about the viral video of [a five-year-old boy](#) who had been abandoned by smugglers at the border in Texas.

“What we’re seeing at the border is only a snapshot of what happens to these people. Imagine the hundreds of miles that they go without any U.S. interventions like we have here at the border,” Cuellar said.

Commenting on the heartbreaking video of the smuggled and then abandoned child, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki [said](#) the administration is working on programs such as the Central American Minors (CAM) Refugee program that allows kids who are eligible to apply for refugee status within their country.

The CAM program was established in 2014 by the Obama administration to provide children from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras who have parents or relatives with legal status in the United States with a way to apply for protective status in the United States from within their country. The program was terminated by the Trump administration in 2017, but was [restored](#) on March 10, 2021 by the Biden administration as a “safe, legal, and orderly alternative” to kids traveling to the U.S. southern border on their own or with smugglers.

Biden is also [allocating](#) \$4 billion “to address the underlying causes of migration in the region, conditioned on their ability to reduce the endemic corruption, violence, and poverty that causes people to flee their home countries.”

While trying to address migration “push factors” in the region, the Biden administration is [enhancing](#) “pull factors” into the United States. As a result, a staggering number of migrant children is drawn to the U.S. southern border. [According](#) to the Center for Immigration study, in [April](#), Border Patrol agents apprehended almost 17,000 unaccompanied alien children (UACs) who had entered illegally at the southwest border. Those apprehensions came on top of more than 18,700 UAC apprehensions in March, and 9,270 in February.

The Biden administration still seems to be in denial as to why so many children are entering illegally, and is blaming exclusively external factors, such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic — not law, policy, and the president’s rhetoric, which are much more likely sources.



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