



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 2, 2015

## Immigration Services Promotes Central American Minors Refugee/Parole Program

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), working in coordination with the U.S. State Department (DOS), conducted a teleconference on March 31 to provide information about its Central American Minors (CAM) Refugee/Parole Program.

USCIS's invitation to the teleconference explained that the CAM program began accepting applications from "qualifying parents" in the United States for their children on December 1, 2014.



The invitation defined "qualifying parents" as those who are legally present in the United States. Such parents are eligible to file for their qualifying children, who must be unmarried, under the age of 21, and residing in El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras. Additionally, parents of such qualifying children may also qualify if they are the legal spouse of a qualifying parent.

Central American Minors who emigrated illegally to the United States have been referred to most often in the media and even by government agencies as unaccompanied alien children (UAC). However the definition of an UAC provided by the Congressional Research Service to members of Congress in 2007 is "Unaccompanied alien children (UAC) are aliens under the age of 18 who come to the United States without authorization or overstay their visa, and are without a parent or legal guardian."

Though a heavy influx of illegal immigrants crossing our southern border has gone on for years, starting last spring, the flow increased to a flood. Furthermore, two things distinguished last year's onslaught from earlier illegal immigration waves.

First, Hondurans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans made up about 75 percent of illegals caught in South Texas, whereas previously most people who crossed the border illegally originated in Mexico. Second, large numbers of these illegal migrants were unaccompanied children (UAC). A Reuters article on May 29, 2014 cited Obama administration estimates that 60,000 children unaccompanied by parents or relatives would pour into the United States during 2014, up from about 6,000 in 2011.

The situation was deemed so urgent by the Obama administration that on June 2, the White House issued a presidential memorandum directing the secretary of Homeland Security to establish an interagency "Unified Coordination Group." The group was created, stated President Obama, in "Response to the Influx of Unaccompanied Alien Children Across the Southwest Border."

A June 12, 2014, report in the *New York Post* noted that in fiscal year 2009, border patrol agents apprehended 3,304 children from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, but that number had reached 50,000 by mid-2014 and was expected to increase dramatically.

The sharp increase in the number of illegal migrants coming over the border — especially the number of children traveling without their parents — overwhelmed the Border Patrol's detention centers in South Texas, prompting officials to ship the children to converted warehouses and military bases as far



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away as California.

Thousands of these UAC were relocated to communities across the nation, where they were placed in temporary sponsors' homes and sent to local schools. This, understandably, has placed a burden on these school systems.

Last July, Governor Bill Haslam of Tennessee sent a letter to President Obama complaining that 760 unaccompanied children had been released by the Office of Refugee Resettlement to sponsors in Tennessee without his administration's knowledge. Haslam pointed out to the president, "This influx of immigrant children could have a significant impact on state and local governments."

That same month, five other governors signed a letter to the president expressing similar concerns. Governors Robert Bentley of Alabama, Scott Walker of Wisconsin, Sam Brownback of Kansas, Pat McCrory of North Carolina, Tom Corbett of Pennsylvania, and Gary Herbert of Utah wrote, "We are concerned that there will be significant numbers who will end up using public schools, social services and health systems largely funded by the states."

Following a summit meeting of three Central American presidents held last November 14, Vice President Biden announced that the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) would establish a refugee resettlement program to enable minors to seek refugee and parole status in the United States. And so, the Central American Minors (CAM) Refugee/Parole Program was born.

Writing for the Brookings Institution last November 20, Diana Villiers Negroponete — a member of the internationalist Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) — said that the "refugee resettlement program to enable minors to seek refugee and parole status in the United States is most welcome."

Negroponete wrote:

The U.S. government could have relied upon the declining number of unaccompanied minors arriving from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to avoid any obligation to address the underlying problems. Instead, following Biden's remarks, the State Department announced straightforward procedures that offer procedural and safe passage into the United States either as a refugee or with parole status. Instead of risking their lives through a treacherous journey to reach the U.S. southern border, unmarried minors under 21-years-old can now be processed in their own countries.

There is more to the program than that however, and a well-connected Brookings/ CFR internationalist like Negroponete knows where all the players are. She continues:

In the three Central American countries, the UN's International Organization for Migration will manage the process by contacting each child and inviting them to a pre-screening interview. The published purpose is to prepare the child for a refugee interview with a DHS official, but we must assume that it is also intended to weed out minors who fail to meet the basic requirements.

Note the role of the UN in facilitating this program. As if the United States is not facing enough of a burden in accommodating the thousands of unaccompanied minors who have crossed our borders, the UN will find more and send them on their way.

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