

For Immediate Release
July 22, 2019

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FACT SHEET

Unaccompanied Alien Child Shelter at Carrizo Springs, Texas

On June 30, 2019 the first “Unaccompanied Alien Children” (UAC) arrived safely and were welcomed by staff at the temporary emergency influx shelter established at Carrizo Springs, Texas for minors crossing the border without their parents.

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

The Carrizo Springs shelter was formerly used as a lodging facility and may house up to 1,300 UAC while ORR works to find and unite each minor with a sponsor in the U.S.. Teens, males and females ages 13-17, are sheltered in hard sided structures that were recently renovated. Semi-permanent soft sided structures are being used for support operations.

BCFS Health and Human Services’ Emergency Management Division (EMD) – a nationally recognized, non-profit, emergency management and response organization – is operating all components of shelter operations at the facility.

Due to the crisis on the southern border, ORR has seen a dramatic increase in referrals of UAC from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) this Fiscal Year (FY) and continues to operate in emergency influx mode. As of June 2019 (FY19-YTD), DHS has referred over 58,500 UAC to ORR, an increase of over 57 percent from the same time period in FY 2018.

The number of referrals is unpredictable. It is likely this fiscal year ORR will care for the largest number of UAC in the program's history. 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. Continuing to operate in emergency influx mode will successfully accommodate fluctuations in immigration patterns at this time. Keeping the Carrizo Springs shelter open is a prudent step to ensure that ORR is able to meet its responsibility, by law, to provide shelter for UAC referred to its care by DHS.

As soon as children enter ORR care, they are put in contact with their parents, guardians or relatives and the process of finding a suitable sponsor begins. The vast majority of sponsors are a parent or a close family relative living in the United States. While ORR programs are looking for sponsors, children

are provided age-appropriate care and wraparound services in one of the 168 facilities and programs in 23 states funded by ORR.

As of July 22, there are approximately 10,000 UAC in ORR care. At the end of May 2019, the system-wide length of care in our shelters was 45 days, down from a recent high of 93 days in November 2018. ORR is working to further reduce length of care, to deal with capacity issues, in ways that do not jeopardize the safety or welfare of the children.

Similar to other temporary shelter locations funded by ORR, facility visits at Carrizo Springs are being offered and scheduled for elected officials, media and key stakeholders. ORR has a public information officer located at Carrizo Springs to interact with the media and community members.

Unaccompanied Alien Children at Carrizo Springs Temporary Shelter:

The task of assigning each child to the most appropriate shelter is complex and done with great care. All UAC placed at the Carrizo Springs influx shelter are in the custody of ORR. Care and services for the children are provided by BCFS Health and Human Services' Emergency Management Division (EMD).

Current capacity at the Carrizo Springs Shelter is 1124. Since opening on June 30, 2019, 354 children have been placed at the shelter and 217 children have been unified with a sponsor. The current number of children residing at the Carrizo Springs Shelter is 122, including 76 males and 46 females. The children are primarily from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

Direct care staff that are fluent in Spanish are on site. There is onsite 24/7 translation services for UAC who are non-Spanish speaking. Each dorm has 14 suites. Each suite has 3 bedrooms. Each bedroom has 2 bunkbeds. The average bedroom size is 168 square feet. Dorms are either male or female.

There is a daily schedule that includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, class room education and recreation. Each child has a schedule for case management, visits with mental health clinicians, and lawyers. Health care, mental health care and general child welfare services are available 24/7.

The facility is subject to all applicable federal regulations and ORR policies and procedures. All staff at Carrizo Springs have undergone FBI fingerprint background checks and a majority have completed Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) checks. Any outstanding CAN checks are being competed through Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). FBI fingerprint background checks are robust and provide relevant information sufficient to ensure child safety.

The Carrizo Springs shelter is a self-sufficient site and youth do not utilize local resources. The site is equipped with full EMS and Fire Service capabilities. UAC remain under staff supervision at all times. ORR works in close coordination with local officials on security and safety of the children and community.

ORR assumes full leasing responsibility for the facility during its use, including wear and tear on buildings and grounds.

Legal Services at Carrizo Springs:

All UAC receive a *Know Your Rights* presentation and an individual legal screening within 7-10 days of admission into ORR care. Legal services are provided to UAC at Carrizo Springs in the same way that all UAC in permanent shelters receive them (i.e., through ORR-funded legal service providers, or UACs' own attorneys, if they already have representation). All children that have arrived at Carrizo Springs received *Know Your Rights* at their previous placement. Children who have to attend immigration court while in ORR care have an attorney who will provide representation either as the UAC's attorney of record or as Friend of Court.

Educational Services at Carrizo Springs:

The UAC do not attend local public schools. All children at Carrizo Springs have received a General Assessment Test to evaluate their knowledge for proper academic placement while at the facility. The placement test focuses on three major fields: Spanish, English, and Mathematics. Teachers and teacher aids are supervised by a certified principal. Each classroom is led by a certified teacher and are required to be bilingual in English and Spanish, have a bachelor's degree and a clean criminal background check. At the Carrizo Springs temporary influx care shelter, classes are part of the daily structure.

Security of the unaccompanied alien children:

ORR provides security personnel to protect and safeguard the Carrizo Springs facility. On-site security is provided 24/7 by Texas Commissioned Peace Officers. Security personnel do not guard youth nor do they have any interaction with the youth.

Health of the unaccompanied alien children:

UAC receive an initial screening for visible and obvious health issues when they first arrive at U.S. Border Patrol facilities. Children must be considered "fit to travel" before they are moved from a border patrol station to an ORR-funded care provider.

UAC are medically screened and receive initial vaccinations within 48 hours of arriving at an ORR-funded care provider. The initial screening includes a general health assessment, including a mental health screening and a review of vaccination history. If a vaccination record is not located or a child is not up-to-date, the child receives all vaccinations recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Some health conditions may manifest while the UAC is residing in a shelter. If a health issue arises, the UAC will receive prompt attention and medical care will be provided.

About unaccompanied alien children:

Congress has defined a UAC as a child who (1) has no lawful immigration status in the United States; (2) has not attained 18 years of age; and, (3) 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 alien children prior to their referral to HHS custody. HHS does not provide care or custody for adult aliens or family units that include adults. Children referred to HHS by DHS for care and custody are already separated from a parent or legal guardian by definition. HHS is not involved in caring for UACs prior to referral.

Most UAC are referred to ORR by DHS. Some UAC may be referred to ORR because they were apprehended by immigration authorities while trying to cross the border. Others are referred after coming to the attention of DHS in the interior of the United States.

After referral, UAC remain in the care and custody of HHS until they are united with a suitable sponsor, usually a parent or close relative, while their immigration cases are adjudicated.

At this time, most UAC come primarily from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Donation guidelines:

Members of the public have expressed interest in donating or volunteering to help unaccompanied alien children. There are several voluntary, community, faith-based or international organizations assisting unaccompanied children. You can find resources and contacts in your state at the following online address: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/state-programs-annual-overview>.