

# How You Can Help Reunite Children and Families Across the Border

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the [strategic insights](#) group, a nonprofit, mission-driven consulting firm in Los Angeles, developed this guide for all who want to help reunite children and their families along border states.

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## Background facts

- There is no law that requires family separation along the U.S. borders.<sup>1</sup>
- The U.S. courts do not require family separation.<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly 2,322 children, ages 12 and younger, have been separated from their parents and detained in cells. This number represents only 20% of immigrant children currently held by the U.S. government.<sup>3</sup>
- The Office of Refugee Resettlement, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is overseeing the detention centers.<sup>4</sup>
- A federal judge in CA temporarily ordered the White House to cease the separation of families along the U.S. border and reunite all families already separated by July 26, 2018.<sup>5</sup>

## Challenges

Unfortunately, the July 26 deadline to reunite all families is not realistic. the [strategic insights](#) group was in McAllen, TX—focal town for family reunifications—from June 27 to July 2, seeking answers and a pathway forward. Here are just a few of the challenges that we encountered:

1. Lack of attorneys and paralegals. Attorneys are needed for children and for parents. In some cases, there is 1 attorney for 20 families. That means that during court hearings, the attorney gets about 3-minutes per family.
2. Weak reunification system. For the children who were forcibly taken from their parents, they were asked to provide their name and DOB at the detention center. If they provided the wrong DOB—by mistake—the detention center cannot release the child.
3. Missing parents. Most parents have either been deported, fled or placed in detention centers. Locating them will take time.
4. Deficient coordinating strategy. There is little to no coordination among the federal detention centers, youth centers and nonprofit community organizations working tirelessly to reunite families.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aclu.org/blog/immigrants-rights/immigrants-rights-and-detention/fact-checking-family-separation?redirect=blog/fact-checking-family-separation>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/kids-health/many-children-detained-under-zero-tolerance-border-policy-are-under-n885371>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2018/06/19/621065383/what-we-know-family-separation-and-zero-tolerance-at-the-border>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/26/us/politics/family-separations-congress-states.html>

## How you can help remotely:

1. *Give.* There are several organizations working with boots on the ground in various capacities along the border states.
  - a. LUPE | La Unión del Pueblo Entero | Supports members of low-income communities to be self-empowered and to advocate for issues that impact their lives. LUPE was founded by César Chávez and has been working in the border communities for decades. With nearly 50 staff members, they have intimate knowledge and capacity to help reunify families.  
<https://lupenet.org/> | <https://www.facebook.com/LUPERgv/>
  - b. ACLU TX | American Civil Liberties Union | Works to defend the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to all people by the Constitution  
<https://www.aclutx.org/>
  - c. Las Americas | Provides legal needs for low-income immigrants  
<http://las-americas.org/> | <https://www.facebook.com/lasamericasIAC/>
2. *Call.* You can call your Representative in Congress at **(202) 224-3121** and urge them to help reunify families. State your zip code and use this message:

*Hi, my name is [YOUR NAME] and my zip code is [YOUR ZIP]. I'm asking the Representative reunify children and their parents immediately. This is a national crisis that needs to be fixed. These separations do not comply with our American values. These children must be reunited. Thank you.*
3. *Circulate.* Share the Background facts and Challenges from above on your social media and in conversations with your friends.
4. *Vote.* It goes without saying that voting in November 2018 will matter in getting the right local, state and federal people in office who care about human rights. You may already be committed to voting, but can you commit to ask 3 of your friends to do so as well?

## How you can help in Texas:

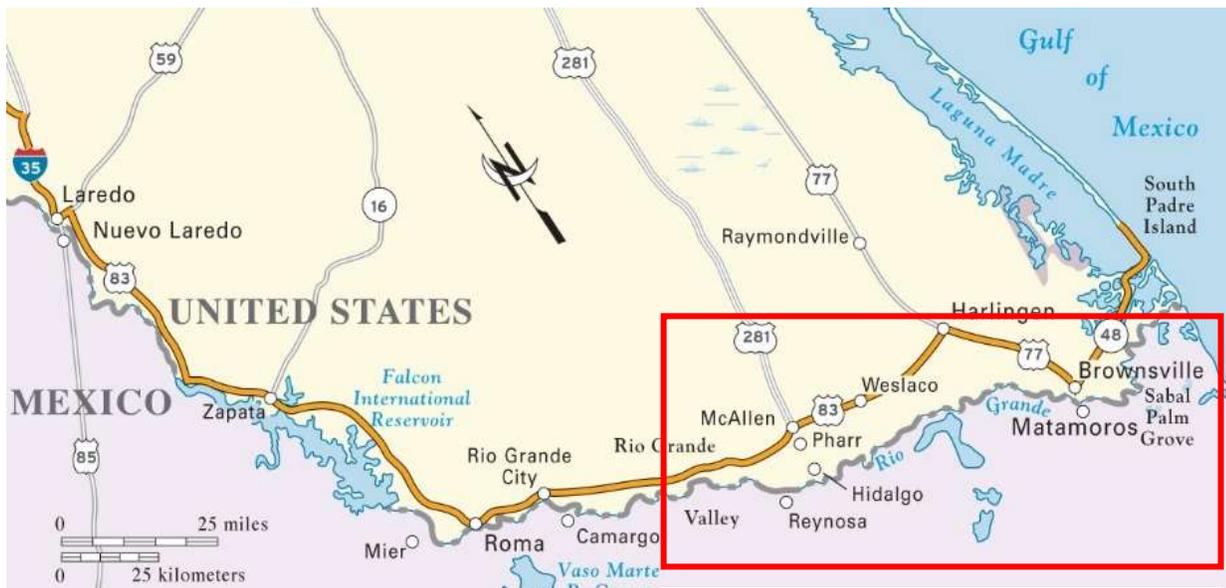
1. *Advocate.* If you are an attorney or paralegal, you are highly needed. In addition to the organizations seeking donations above, the following legal aid groups have volunteer sign up forms on their respective site:
  - a. Texas Civils Rights Project <https://texascivilrightsproject.org/keepfamilies-together-volunteer/>
  - b. Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid  
<http://www.trla.org/support/volunteer-form-irn>

## What not to do:

People want to help, and rightly so. The challenge, however, is that front-line workers and community organizations across Texas are already overwhelmed. Please be mindful of the following:

1. Don't show up to border states unless you are already affiliated with an organization that has requested your support.
2. Don't call organizations in Texas. They are overwhelmed and backlogged. In fact, many families who are looking for their children cannot get through by phone.

## Map of Texas border:



McAllen, TX, a 3.4-hr drive directly south from San Antonio, is one of the main cities dealing with this crisis as it is nearest 2 ports of entry into the U.S., Hidalgo and Brownsville.

We believe that the separation of children and their families, along with the current immigration practices and policies, are Un-American. We are better than this. And we thank you for your time, commitment and energy. Let's get these families reunited!