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Central American Minors (CAM) Program: Frequently Asked Questions

BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION

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Q: What is the Central American Minors (CAM) Refugee and Parole Program?

The CAM Refugee and Parole program was established in 2014 to provide certain children in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras the opportunity to be considered for refugee resettlement in the United States. Individuals who were determined to be ineligible for refugee status were then considered by USCIS for parole into the United States. In August 2017, USCIS announced the termination of the CAM Parole program. In November 2017, the Department of State stopped accepting new applications for the CAM Refugee program, and USCIS ceased interviewing CAM refugee cases in January 2018. More information on the history and eligibility requirements of the program is available **at this link**.

Q: I heard that CAM Refugee and Parole Program is going to reopen, is that true?

Yes. As part of his recent **Executive Order on Creating a Comprehensive Regional Framework to Address the Causes of Migration**, President Biden directed the Departments of State and Homeland Security to review mechanisms to identify and process individuals in the Northern Triangle who may be eligible for refugee resettlement to the United States. As part of this review, the Departments are reopening the CAM Refugee and Parole Program to provide a legal means of family reunification for qualified individuals.

Q: How will the program reopen?

There will be two phases to the reopening. Because there were pending applications and cases that were closed when CAM was terminated in January 2018, in the first phase these previously filed applications and pending cases will be re-opened if the petitioner still qualifies for CAM and both the petitioner and qualifying member are still interested in the program. The second phase will allow the submission of new applications.

Q: I submitted an application in 2016/2017 for my child and received a letter indicating that my case had been closed. Can my case be reopened?

If you submitted a DS-7699, Affidavit of Relationship, at a resettlement agency in the United States and your case was closed before your child received a refugee interview, you may be eligible to reopen your case.

Q: How will I know if I am eligible to reopen the case?

During Phase One, the U.S.-based resettlement agencies that accepted the original applications will contact those families in the United States whose cases can be re-opened to begin the process of reopening the case. If the contact information you previously provided to the resettlement agency at the time of application has changed, you should provide the resettlement agency with your updated contact information.

Q: What if the resettlement agency where I filed my application has since closed, or I don't know how to contact that agency?

If that resettlement agency office has closed, your case has been transferred to another office of the agency which will contact you.

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Q: When will these phases begin?

The Department has already begun Phase One and is working to identify cases and will provide additional information beginning in March 2021. The second phase for new applications will begin in summer 2021. More details will follow on this page.

Q: Once my case is reopened, what happens next?

After your case is reopened, the Department will relay your original application form to the Resettlement Support Center (RSC) Latin America, staffed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with offices in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. The RSC will contact your qualifying child and/or family member(s) for further processing. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials will interview eligible family members to determine who will be admitted as a refugee into the United States. Those granted refugee status will undergo a medical exam, security checks, and cultural orientation, and the RSC will assist with travel arrangements to the city where the qualifying parent in the U.S. resides. Cases that are denied refugee status will be considered for parole. Those who receive parole authorization must coordinate their travel arrangements with IOM and will be responsible for the costs of the medical exam and travel.

Q: How long does the application process take?

The CAM refugee resettlement process can take 6-12 months on average. However, due to the challenges of the COVID-19 global pandemic, processing times may exceed that range.

Q: I am now a U.S. Citizen, can I still reopen my case?

No. If you became a naturalized U.S. citizen after you submitted an Affidavit of Relationship for CAM, you may now petition for certain relatives by submitting an I-130 petition to USCIS. More information is available [here](#).

Q: My own asylum application was approved, can I still reopen my case?

No. If you were granted asylum in the last two years you are eligible to apply for your spouse and unmarried children to come to the United States through the **Form I-730, Refugee/Asylee**

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Relative Petition. If you were granted asylum and have adjusted to Lawful Permanent Resident status (LPR, or “green card”) you may reopen your case, but as an LPR you may have additional options to petition for an **immigrant visa** for your child.

Q: My child is already in the United States, can he/she be processed for refugee status here?

No, refugee status determinations are made outside of the United States. All of the processing for CAM, including interviews, occurs outside of the United States.

Q: How does the government decide if my child qualifies as a refugee?

Under United States law, an individual may be considered for admission to the United States as a refugee if he or she:

- ◆ Is located outside of the United States
- ◆ Is of special humanitarian concern to the United States
- ◆ Demonstrates that he or she was persecuted or fears persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group
- ◆ Is not firmly resettled in another country; and
- ◆ Is admissible to the United States

A refugee does not include anyone who ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the persecution of any person on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

For the legal definition of refugee, see section **101(a)(42)** of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

Eligibility for refugee status is determined on a case-by-case basis through an interview with a specially trained DHS officer.

Q: What happens if the officer determines my child is not a refugee?

Applicants who receive access to the program but are found ineligible for refugee status will be considered by USCIS on a case-by-case basis for parole into the United States.

Q: What happens if my child is conditionally approved for parole?

Applicants conditionally approved for parole must undergo a medical exam, conducted at their expense, and scheduled by IOM. They must also coordinate travel arrangements, at their expense, with IOM.

Q: What is the difference between refugee status and parole?

Refugees may remain in the United States indefinitely. After one year they must adjust to Lawful Permanent Resident status and may eventually apply for United States citizenship if they choose.

Parole allows an individual, who may be inadmissible or otherwise ineligible for a visa, refugee, or other immigration status, to come to and temporarily stay in the United States for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit. Parole allows an individual to be lawfully present in the United States temporarily and to apply for work authorization. Although a parolee is lawfully present in the United States for the time period authorized, parole is by nature temporary and does not confer or lead to legal immigration status in the United States. Parole is authorized for a specified duration of time. An individual may request an additional period of parole (also referred to as "re-parole") in the future.

Prior to travel to the United States, refugees are eligible for a travel loan, but parolees must pay for their own flight to the United States. In addition, those granted refugee status will receive resettlement assistance once in the United States. Parolees are generally not eligible for resettlement assistance in the United States.

Q: What are the immigration benefits of refugee and parole?

Refugees must apply for adjustment of status to Lawful Permanent Resident status after one year and may apply for citizenship after five years. Parole is temporary and does not confer any immigration status or a pathway to a permanent status. Parolees under this program will generally be authorized parole for a period of two years after which they may apply for re-

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parole.

DNA Testing Requirement and Costs

Q: Who will be required to provide DNA to gain access to the CAM Program?

The State Department requires DNA testing between the qualifying parent in the United States and each of his or her biological children listed in the DS-7699, Affidavit of Relationship. DNA relationship testing will also be required for all family members gaining access to the CAM program via a qualifying child.

DNA relationship testing will occur to verify the relationships between the qualifying parent in the United States and his/her biological children, both the minor and unmarried qualifying child and the married and/or age 21 or older children. DNA relationship testing will also occur to verify the relationship between the biological in-country parent and the qualifying child, if the parent is not legally married to the qualifying parent in the United States. DNA relationship testing will also occur to verify the relationship between the caregiver and either the qualifying parent in the United States or in-country parent if the relationship can be verified through DNA (i.e. biological grandparent of the qualifying child).

Q: Why is DNA testing required for access to this program?

In order to ensure that the CAM Program reunites families, DNA testing is required to verify that relationships stated on the DS-7699 Affidavit of Relationship form are genuine, biological ones.

Q: Is DNA testing required for adoptive children?

Legally adopted children can be claimed on the DS-7699 Affidavit of Relationship, and DNA testing is not required.

Parents should indicate on the Form-7699 Affidavit of Relationship whether the child is an adopted child. Parents should explain the relationship with any non-biological children in detail in the comments area. For adopted children, the parent should explain when the child was legally adopted, provide legal documentation of the adoption, and indicate how long the child lived with the parent.

Q: Who pays for the cost of DNA testing?

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The qualifying parent in the U.S. who submitted the DS-7699 must pay the cost of DNA testing for each of his/her claimed biological relationships. The Department of State will reimburse the costs of the tests if all of the claimed biological relationships are supported by DNA evidence. Reimbursement will only be made for the costs of the initial DNA testing required by Department of State for access to the CAM Program. The cost of DNA testing conducted to support a Request for Review of a USCIS denial will not be reimbursed by the U.S. Government, even if all relationships are supported by the DNA results.

Q: Will the qualifying parent be reimbursed if the DNA tests for all claimed biological relationships are positive, but the case is later denied by USCIS (DHS)?

Yes.

Q: What if a qualifying parent cannot afford DNA kits for the entire family? Can they submit a few at a time? Can the lab forward kits separately?

All DNA testing kits must be purchased at the same time and every applicant required to provide a DNA sample should be ready to be DNA tested at the same time. You will be notified to begin DNA testing via a letter from the Resettlement Agency where you completed your application.

Q: Will DNA be required for all qualifying parents and children or will it be random?

DNA testing will be required for all qualifying parent's claimed biological children.

Q: Will DNA testing be required only for certain nationalities?

No, the DNA testing requirement applies to all nationalities applying to the CAM Program.

Q: Which labs in the U.S. and overseas are authorized to perform the DNA testing?

Any accredited AABB lab. This list can be found on the AABB website:
<http://www.aabb.org/SA/FACILITIES/Pages/RTTestAccrFac.aspx>

Q: How long will DNA test results be valid?

Indefinitely.

Q: Who will be notified of DNA results?

The qualifying parent will receive the DNA results directly from the lab. A copy of the results will also be sent to the State Department for further processing of the case.

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