



ADMINISTRATION FOR **CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

What You Need to Know If You Were Separated from Your Parent or Legal Guardian at the United States Border

Right now, you may be feeling upset, confused, sad, or some other emotion. You were separated from your parent or legal guardian and don't understand why. You are probably wondering what will happen next. Hopefully, this document will answer some of your questions.

Why was I separated from my parent or legal guardian?

You have not done anything wrong to cause this separation. The U.S. government can only separate you from your parent or legal guardian for very few reasons. Some of those reasons include:

- You or your parent or legal guardian needs to be in the hospital;
- Your parent or legal guardian may need to provide information in someone else's case;
- Your parent or legal guardian is not taking good care of you or may be harming you; or
- Your parent or legal guardian may have been involved in a crime.

What happens to me next?

You are currently with immigration officers who work at U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Because you were separated from your parent or legal guardian, CBP is going to send you to a different government agency to care for you. That agency is called the Office of Refugee Resettlement, also known as ORR. The staff at ORR are not immigration officers or police. ORR staff are people specially trained to work with children who arrive alone to a U.S. border or who are no longer with their parent or legal guardian (called unaccompanied children), and they will care for you until you leave ORR. You will travel to an ORR program by bus or airplane or maybe both.

What is an ORR program?

There are different types of ORR programs. Some of the programs are shelters, which are places where several children live in a dormitory. Other programs allow children to live in homes with families, which are known as foster families. Your stay at the ORR program is expected to be temporary – only lasting until you are returned to your parent or legal guardian or sent to live with an adult who you and your parent or legal guardian trust. If you are sent to live with a trusted adult, that person is called your sponsor.

What happens once I am at the ORR Program?

While staying temporarily at an ORR program, you will be able to:

- Speak with a lawyer about your immigration case
- Go to school
- Engage in sports, crafts, and other recreational activities
- Receive medical care and speak with a counselor
- Make regular phone calls to your parent or legal guardian, your sponsor, and others in your family

At the ORR program you will have your own bed, your own clothing, and regular opportunities to bathe with hygiene products (soap, shampoo, lotion, etc.). You will also receive at least three meals, snacks, and drinks every day. If you are at a shelter there will be other children there, so, you will also have a chance to make new friends. You will also be referred for the appointment of a child advocate and, within 10 business days of when you arrived at ORR, will receive a presentation on your rights (called a Know Your Rights or KYR) and the opportunity to discuss your legal case.

One very important job that ORR staff must perform is to help you return to your parent or legal guardian as soon as possible. If it is not possible to quickly return you to your parent or legal guardian, then ORR staff must work towards releasing you to

live with a trusted adult who is willing to provide you a safe place to live and to care for you. This trusted adult is known as your sponsor. They can be a family member or a family friend. If you know the name and contact information for someone who could be your sponsor, please let ORR staff know during one of the meetings that they will have with you after you arrive at the ORR program.

How will my parent or legal guardian know where I am?

The government is supposed to provide your parent or legal guardian with information about how to find you:

- The government is supposed to give your parent or legal guardian a document with information about ORR;
- Immigration officers should have told your parent or legal guardian that you are being sent to an ORR program;
- Immigration officers and ORR staff are supposed to help put you and your parent or legal guardian in contact, but your parent or legal guardian may not actually receive this information right away;
- Immigration officers are supposed to inform ORR of your parent or legal guardian's whereabouts and how ORR can reach them.

If your parent or legal guardian is not able to contact you right away, it is not their fault. If you wish to speak with your parent or legal guardian, please tell ORR staff and any lawyer or child advocate you meet that you were separated from a parent or legal guardian and you want to be in contact with them. While you are staying at an ORR program, you will be given opportunities to call your family members, sponsors, or other approved contacts every week. If the ORR program does not have the contact information for your parent or legal guardian immediately, ORR staff will keep asking for their information until ORR receives it. Once ORR has the contact information for your parent or legal guardian, ORR staff will help you call them as long as you want to speak with them.

Is there anything else that I need to know or that I can do?

Yes! Please let ORR know:

- If you traveled with a sister, brother, or other family member who is younger than 18
- If you have the name and telephone number of a family member or friend of the family in the U.S.
- If you are hurt, have any health problems, take any medication, or think you need to see a doctor
- If you were hurt by anyone before coming to ORR. No one is supposed to harm you or make you feel unsafe
- If you already have a lawyer

Also, ORR programs have telephones that already have numbers programmed to call people who can help you. You will learn more about these phones when you arrive at the ORR program. In the meantime, here are some telephone numbers that you can call if you need help:

- **To report child abuse: Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-422-4453)**
The appropriate child abuse hotline depends on where you are located in the United States. The Childhelp Hotline will help to connect you with the correct hotline based on your location.
- **If you are experiencing a mental health crisis: Suicide and Crisis Hotline (988)**
Available 24/7 in English and Spanish.
- **If you were the victim of a crime and would like help: National Center for Victims of Crime (1-855-484-2846)**
Available Monday through Friday, daytime hours in English and Spanish. Interpretation is available for other languages.
- **To report human trafficking or potential human trafficking: Office of Trafficking in Persons (1-888-373-7888)**
Available 24/7 in over 200 languages.
- **To make a complaint about your treatment while you were in the custody of immigration officials: Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of the Inspector General (1-800-323-8603)**
CBP Joint Intake Center (1-877-246-8253)
DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (1-866-644-8360)
- **If you don't know where else to turn: ORR's National Call Center and Sexual Abuse Hotline (1-800-203-7001)**
Available 24/7 in English and Spanish. Interpretation is available for other languages.