



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

February 24, 2022

Dominic Mancini, Acting Administrator
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget

Dear Acting Administrator Mancini,

The Department of State requests Office of Management and Budget (OMB) emergency processing, pursuant to 5 C.F.R. 1320.13, of the renewal of the DS-7699, Affidavit of Relationship for Minors Who are Nationals of El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras (OMB Control Number 1405-0217).

After this Control Number was allowed to expire during the previous Administration, the Department sought, and OIRA granted, emergency approval of the DS-7699 on August 11, 2021. This was in response to President Biden's policy mandate in Executive Order 14010, "Creating a Comprehensive Regional Framework to Address the Causes of Migration, to Manage Migration Throughout North and Central America, and to Provide Safe and Orderly Processing of Asylum Seekers at the United States Border." In that Executive Order, the President specifically directed the Departments of State and Homeland Security (DHS) to promptly review mechanisms to better identify and process individuals from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras who are eligible for refugee resettlement in the United States. As part of this directive, State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), in coordination with the National Security Council, Domestic Policy Council, and DHS, reinstated the Central American Minors (CAM) program under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), first re-opening cases that were not completed before the CAM Program was terminated in January 2018.

Days after OIRA granted emergency authorization on August 11, PRM staff resources were redirected to focus on the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Afghanistan as the Taliban quickly seized control of the country. During the weekend of August 14, Interagency Afghanistan Task Forces were set up, and by August 16 all staff from PRM's Office of Refugee Admissions who had previously supported the drafting and clearances of the DS-7699 were detailed from their regular duties to support evacuation efforts, staff bases, etc. – some for months.

Currently the DS-7699 can only be filed through a U.S.-based refugee resettlement agency (RA). Since the form became available for emergency use, however, RAs have been largely unable to process applications as they focus their resources to support Operation Allies Welcome, established at the direction of President Biden on August 29 as a combined effort across the federal government to support vulnerable Afghans, including those who worked alongside U.S. efforts for two decades, as they safely resettle in the United States. The Department continues to

hear from resettlement agencies of high numbers of interested CAM applicants who cannot get appointments due to the volume of Afghan processing. Despite these high levels of interest, only around 150 applications were able to be filed after the form was authorized.

As PRM is now able to turn back to this issue, and, in order to address the application intake capacity deficit, the Department issued a 30-day Notice of Funding Opportunity, which closed on February 11, for proposals from U.S.-based NGOs to support increased application intake. These proposals are currently under review and PRM hopes to make one or more awards in the next month that will be able to focus solely on the CAM program and associated application intake. However, the emergency approval for the DS-7699 will expire at the end of this month at a time when it is arguably more necessary than it was when originally approved for emergency use.

The Department realizes that this Control Number was renewed on an emergency basis last fall. When the Department asked for the emergency approval, it did not anticipate that PRM resources would shortly be consumed by the evacuation of tens of thousands of Afghans to domestic military installations and eventual onward resettlement. Once this large-scale humanitarian crisis began, there was no ability to either draft and file a 60-day notice, nor to adequately make use of the form that had just received the emergency approval. As more resources have gone back to this issue, PRM has drafted a package for a 60-day notice. Therefore, if emergency approval is provided again, the Department has a 60-day package ready to go and is able to publish a 60-day notice within 30 days of the approval.

U.S. government policy is that there be a safe method of migration into the United States for potential migrant children seeking protection and family reunification. The sole purpose of the DS-7699 is for the qualifying U.S.-based parent or legal guardian to provide biographical information about children overseas who intend to seek access to the USRAP, as well as other eligible family members or caregivers, for verification by the U.S. government. This form also assists DHS's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to verify parent-child relationships during refugee case adjudication. This form is necessary for implementation of this vital program to provide a safe, legal alternative to dangerous irregular migration.

PRM coordinates within State, as well as with DHS' United States Citizenship and Immigration Services in carrying out administration of the USRAP. A critical part of State's responsibility is determining which individuals, from among millions of refugees worldwide, will have access to U.S. resettlement consideration.

The Department has therefore determined that:

1. This collection is needed prior to the expiration of time periods normally associated with a routine submission for review under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act; the Department is asking for an emergency approval effective February 27. The Department will publish a 60-day *Federal Register* notice within 30 days of such approval;

2. This collection is essential to the mission of the Department of State; and
3. The use of normal clearance procedures will prevent the Department from obtaining this information and severely impact its ability to respond to the mandate to provide protection and family reunification to children (and other eligible family members or caregivers) from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras who are attempting to join parents lawfully present in the United States according to the timeline set by the White House.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marta Youth", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marta Youth
Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary,
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
Department of State.