



Unaccompanied Immigrant Youth: District Resources and Response

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Saturday, May 2, 2015

UC Overview

Children crossing the border without parents or legal guardians, are known as Unaccompanied Children (UC). Most come from Honduras (34%), Guatemala (32%), and El Salvador (29%). The children undertake this long, dangerous journey to escape violence, gangs, and traffickers in their home countries, seek economic opportunities, and/or to reunite with parents or other family members already living in the U.S.

The data below from FY2014 shows the profile of these youth:

Ages	Male	Female
75% are age 14 and over	66%	34%



The Federal Process for UC

- Step 1:** The US Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) apprehends the children at the border. Children from Mexico and Canada are sent back. Children from other countries are detained.
- Step 2:** Detained children go to CBP facilities for approximately 72 hours for processing and medical evaluation.
- Step 3:** CBP transfers the children to the care of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and they are placed in a shelter (usually operated by a nonprofit) for up to 45 days.
- Step 4:** DHHS initiates immigration proceedings. Children wait on average 578 days (1.5 years) for their hearings.



The Federal Process for UC, continued

- Step 5:** Children are released to a sponsor (e.g., parent or relative) pending a deportation hearing. The immigration status of the sponsor does not affect placement. Over 90% of children are placed with family. Where reunification with family is not possible, ORR may place children in federal foster care, group homes, or shelter facilities.
- Step 6:** After placement, about 5-10% of children receive post-release services for six months which includes case management to monitor wellbeing, placement, and adjustment to the home, assistance with school enrollment, transportation, free/reduced lunch, and securing pro-bono/low-cost legal services. In the District, post-release services are provided by Mary's Center under contract with ORR.



What We Know About UC in DC

UC entering the District may fall into one of four situations, each of which has unique needs:

1. Apprehended at the border, reunified with a sponsor
(375 in DC in FY 2014, 53 in FY 2015 as of February)
2. Apprehended at the border, not reunified with a sponsor
(0 known in DC to date)
3. Not apprehended at the border, reunified with family
(estimated to be 120 in DC in the 2013-2014 school year)
4. Not apprehended at the border, not reunified with family
(likely 0 in DC)



What We Know About UC in DC

ORR shares aggregated data but does not provide identifying information about youth placed in the District or their sponsors.

- According to ORR, 428 children have been apprehended and released into the care of sponsors here between October 2013 – February 2015.
- No children that were apprehended and had no identifiable sponsor were placed in the District.
- DCPS-Language Acquisition Division (LAD) data indicates that DCPS received a total of 358 students from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico from January through July of 2014.



What We Know About ELLs in DC

- About 15% of students in DC public schools are LCD
- About 50% were born in the United States
- The students represent over 130 countries
- Over 100 different home languages are spoken
- Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Amharic, and French are the top five languages represented in DC schools
- Spanish is the predominant home language (70%)
- Wards 1 and 4 have the highest percentage of LEP student residents, but all wards have some LEP students represented



Needs of UC

UC may have unique needs related to:

- Housing
- Education
- Health Care
- Mental and Medical Health/Wrap-around Services
- Legal Services



Housing

- Housing has not been an issue to date in the District because all UC apprehended at the border have been placed with sponsors.
- The District does not operate any congregate care facilities to house UC with no identifiable sponsor as in other jurisdictions.
- The federal government did not make any grant awards in DC to support the housing needs of UC with no sponsor.
- CFSA contracts with the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) to serve Latino/immigrant youth. In a case where a UC has no housing or should be removed from the home, LAYC can assist. Contact Aldo Hurtado – (202) 695-1284 | aldo@layc-dc.org



Education – Rights of Immigrant Children

- Under Federal law, DCPS and DC public charter schools are required to provide all children, regardless of immigration or ELL status, with equal access to public education at the elementary and secondary levels.
- It is important to ensure that student enrollment practices do not chill or discourage the participation, or lead to the exclusion, of students based on their, or their parent, guardian or primary caregiver, actual or perceived citizenship or immigration status.



Education – Enrollment Do's and Don'ts

- Schools may request proof that a child lives in the District, or within the neighborhood boundaries of a DCPS school.
- Schools may not deter a student from enrolling because:
 - The student, parent, guardian, or primary caregiver lacks a social security number.
 - The student lacks a birth certificate or has records indicating a foreign place of birth.
 - The student is being enrolled by someone other than a parent or legal guardian.



Education – UC Enrollment

- In order to avoid discouraging enrollment, an LEA may enroll any child who comes its way and ask for documentation later, after the child is enrolled.
- Because UC may be enrolled by someone other than a parent or guardian, the “other primary caregiver” box should be checked on the school enrollment form and Part B may need to be completed on the DC Residency Verification Form.
- The school year aligns with the calendar year in some countries and DC usually sees a small spike in enrollment of immigrant students in January and February.



Education – UC Enrollment

- **Scenario 1:** UC living in the District with a caretaker that is the official federal sponsor
 - ❑ Sponsor has legal document establishing temporary guardianship/custody. As long as sponsor has this legal document, the LEA should enroll student through the same enrollment procedure used for any District resident.
 - ❑ In this scenario, Part B does NOT have to be completed on the DC Residency Verification Form.



Education – UC Enrollment

- **Scenario 2:** UC living in the District with Caretaker (e.g., friend, aunt, older sibling) but has no legal document establishing guardianship/ custody.
 - ❑ LEAs cannot mandate adult caretakers or relatives with whom a child lives to establish legal guardianship as a condition for gaining access to the LEA's schools. LEAs may require reasonable assurance from the responsible adult caretaker that they accept responsibility for the child and that while exercising control, care and support over the child, they will provide him or her with a regular fixed nighttime abode. This may be done through the sworn affidavit.



Education – UC Enrollment

- **Scenario 3:** UC is without family or sponsor and seeks to enroll him or herself in school.
 - While this scenario is rare, the UC would be considered a homeless youth. LEAs should enroll through McKinney Vento process.



Health Care

The District offers comprehensive health insurance coverage for undocumented immigrant children through the **Immigrant Children's Program (ICP)**.

- Immigrant students with no universal health certificate, immunization record, or dental form when they enroll should be made aware of ICP in order to access health care.
- ICP provides coverage equal to that offered by Medicaid, including: doctor visits, immunizations, mental health services, dental, vision, and prescription drugs.
- The application is available in English and Spanish at: <http://dhs.dc.gov/node/117542>.



Mental Health and Wrap-Around Services

Many UC experienced trauma at home and/or on the journey to the US, and may experience additional trauma when reunified with family members in a new environment. Helpful resources to assist with family integration and adjustment, include:

- **DBH Access Helpline** 1 (888) 793-4357, staffed 24/7 by behavioral health professionals that can link callers to immediate help or ongoing care.
- ***211 Answers, Please!*** (202) 463-6211, staffed 24/7 and online at <http://answersplease.dc.gov/page/search-health-and-human-social-services>. Free service linking District residents to social services, including crisis intervention and referrals.



Legal Services

- Less than one-third of UC have access to legal counsel. UC often go unrepresented because they can't afford an attorney.
- Nine out of ten children received deportation orders when they appeared alone in court without representation. By contrast, 47 percent of children who had representation won their cases.
- Children and families that need legal assistance with immigration issues can be referred to:
 - ❑ Ayuda – (202) 297-4848
 - ❑ Catholic Charities Immigration Services – (202) 772-4352
 - ❑ Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) – (202) 328-9799



For More Information

- Aryan Bocquet (DME) – general UC questions
202-727-9306 | aryan.bocquet@dc.gov
- Rochelle Wilson (OSSE) – enrollment/primary caregiver questions
202-297-8158 | rochelle.wilson@dc.gov
- Elba Garcia (DCPS-LAD) – language assessment/support questions
202-671-0750 | elba.garcia@dc.gov
- Danielle Lewis (DHCF) – ICP health insurance questions
202-442-9052 | danielle.lewis@dc.gov

