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| <b>Topic:</b>     | DHS OIG/GAO Family Reunification Database        |
| <b>Primary:</b>   | Rep. Hank Johnson (D-GA 4 <sup>th</sup> )        |
| <b>Committee:</b> | Judiciary (House)                                |
| <b>Hearing:</b>   | Oversight of the Department of Homeland Security |
| <b>Date:</b>      | December 20, 2018                                |

**Question:** Is the DHS OIG/GAO conclusion that DHS lacked a database containing information to reunify children with their parents true?

**Response:** U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) coordinates with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on a regular basis to consolidate information located in various information systems. While ICE and CBP are both Components within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), HHS is a separate, cabinet-level agency.

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 defines an unaccompanied alien child (UAC) as a child who has no lawful immigration status, has not attained 18 years of age, and with respect to whom there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States or no parent or legal guardian in the United States is available to provide care and physical custody. (Codified at 6 U.S.C. § 279(g)(2)). Consistent with this statute, minors who are accompanied by an adult relative who is not their parent or legal guardian, or who are separated from their parent or legal guardian, are processed as UAC and transferred to the care and custody of the HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act.

CBP's U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) is responsible for the majority of UAC referrals to ORR, while ICE also makes some referrals. As ORR is responsible for the care and custody of UAC, 6 U.S.C. § 279(a); 8 U.S.C. § 1232(b)(1), ORR maintains information on this population in its UAC Portal. However, USBP's record database is able to push referral information on UAC directly into the UAC Portal's referral page; ICE also has access to the UAC Portal referral page to directly enter UAC information into the system.

DHS and HHS have made a number of improvements to ensure more effective and efficient tracking of minors who become UAC after they are separated from a parent or guardian. In summer 2018, ORR added a checkbox to the UAC Portal's referral page to indicate whether a child has been separated from family. The referral page also has a "notes" section where USBP and ICE can type in the name and other information of the separated family member, including their alien number. Additionally, USBP and ICE can enter this information into the parent/relative information section of the referral.