

Glossary of Important U.S. Immigration Terms

Asylum Seeker: Someone who is seeking international protection from dangers in his/her home country but whose claim for refugee status hasn't been determined legally. They must apply for protection in the country of destination, meaning they must arrive at or cross a border in order to apply. ([IRC](#))

Border Patrol: The mobile, uniformed law enforcement arm of U.S. Customs and Border Protection responsible for securing U.S. borders between ports of entry. ([CBP](#))

Child: Every human being below the age of 18 years unless, majority is attained earlier. ([UNHCR](#))

Customs and Border Protection (CBP): A branch of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that is charged with keeping terrorists and their weapons out of the U.S. while facilitating lawful international travel and trade. ([CBP](#))

Deportation: The removal from a country of an undocumented person who is in the United States illegally. The Trump administration has increased its immigration arrests, and many of these removals threaten a range of fundamental human rights. ([HRW](#))

Family Separation Policy: Enacted following the implementation of the Zero-Tolerance Policy, this policy left children separated from their parents. Separation tore apart hundreds of families before it was stopped in June 2018, often leading to the deportation of parents without their children. ([HRW](#))

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE): A branch of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security whose mission is to protect the U.S. from the cross-border crime and illegal immigration that threaten national security and public safety through smart immigration enforcement, preventing terrorism and combating the illegal movement of people and goods. ([ICE](#))

Immigration Detention Center: Facility where migrants are detained after their apprehension until their deportation or removal from detention. These facilities are dangerous places to live and lack adequate medical care. ([HRW](#))

Migrant: Someone who is moving from place to place (within his/her country or across borders), usually for economic reasons such as seasonal work. They are not forced to leave their native countries because of persecution or violence, but rather are seeking better opportunities. ([IRC](#))

Mixed Migration: Involves migrants and refugees, moving between locations. These movements generally take place without proper documentation and are often facilitated by smugglers or traffickers. ([UNHCR](#))

Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Shelters: A network of over 100 facilities funded by the ORR, which provide housing, food, medical care, mental health services, educational services, and recreational activities for unaccompanied alien children. ([HHS](#))

Refugee: Someone who has been forced to flee his/her home because of war, violence, or persecution, often without warning. They are unable to return home unless and until conditions in their native lands are safe for them again. Refugees granted asylum are given protection under international laws and conventions. ([IRC](#))

Separated Child: A child who has been separated from a parent or guardian by immigration authorities after being apprehended as a family unit at the border. ([HHS](#))

Unaccompanied Alien Child: A child who has no lawful immigration status in the U.S. and does not have a parent or legal guardian in the country available to provide care and physical custody. ([HHS](#))

Zero-Tolerance Policy: Passed in April 2018, the policy implements zero-tolerance for attempts by an individual who is not a US citizen to enter the country at an improper time or place. Under this policy, when a child and parent were apprehended together by immigration authorities, the Department of Homeland Security separated the family, until separation was halted in June 2018. ([HHS](#))