



U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

# Migrant Protection Protocols

## *DHS Begins to Process Individuals in MPP Into the United States to Complete their Immigration Proceedings*

On February 11, 2021, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced a plan (<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/02/11/dhs-announces-process-address-individuals-mexico-active-mpp-cases>) to process into the United States certain individuals who had been returned to Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) and have pending cases before the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR). Beginning on February 19, 2021, DHS started phase one of its effort to restore safe and orderly processing at the Southwest Border.

## What is MPP and what changed? (#)

The Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) were initiated in 2019. Under this program, certain individuals who arrived at the Southwest Border were returned to Mexico pursuant to Section 235(b)(2)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) to await removal proceedings under Section 240 of the INA. DHS suspended new enrollment into the program on January 21, 2021.

As outlined in the President's executive actions, the United States is committed to reforming our immigration system, addressing the root causes of migration, and ensuring safe, orderly, and humane processing at our border. Addressing individuals in MPP with on-going removal proceedings is an initial step in achieving these goals. DHS is collaborating with the Departments of State and Justice, as well as international and non-governmental organizations. Under this effort, these international organizations will administer a triaging system to identify, prioritize, and transport individuals to select ports of entry consistent with our capacity to safely process them at those ports. This process is currently designed for a limited number of individuals with pending removal proceedings before the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) who were returned to Mexico under MPP. There are approximately 25,000 individuals in the MPP program with proceedings pending before EOIR.

# What are the general steps in this process?

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First, individuals may register for intake via an online support hub, where they will be asked to provide basic information to confirm eligibility. Through the support hub, they can ask questions about the process of their case. There will also be a telephone hotline to answer questions and offer support. The support hub is available via: [https://conecta.acnur.org/\(/redirect?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F\)](https://conecta.acnur.org/(/redirect?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F)), and registration went live on February 19, 2021. This hub is operated by facilitating organizations with the support of the U.S. government.

Next, facilitating organizations will transmit registration information to DHS to verify that the individual is an on-going removal proceeding pursuant to MPP and is eligible for this facilitated process. DHS will respond with a positive or negative indicator based on several data points to inform the facilitating organizations whether an individual is eligible to enter the United States as part of this process. DHS has provided criteria to facilitating organizations to prioritize individuals based on duration of their enrollment in MPP and other vulnerability factors.

Once confirmed as having a pending immigration court case, individuals will be contacted by facilitating organizations and provided instructions for accessing a designated staging location, where they will complete a health questionnaire and undergo testing for COVID-19. Individuals who test negative will be sheltered and receive further assistance in preparation for U.S. processing. Those who test positive will be supported by facilitating organizations to isolate and/or seek treatment in line with the policy of the relevant local health authority in Mexico. Following isolation and screening, such an individual will again be eligible for facilitated arrival at a designated port of entry. At the staging site, facilitating organizations will provide EOIR-33 Change of Address forms and offer additional legal services and support.

Individuals who complete the testing and screening requirements above will be transported from the staging site to the designated port of entry for processing into the United States. If they completed the Change of Address form, DHS will use this form to administratively move their case to the immigration court closest to the migrant's identified address. Unless an individual presents a national security or public safety concern, the individual will generally be assessed for enrollment in an alternative-to-detention program, released by DHS, and provided instructions for contacting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at their destination.

## Am I able to use this process? (#)

This process is available to a limited set of individuals. Only those who were returned to Mexico under MPP and have pending immigration proceedings can use this process. Individuals returned to Mexico who do not currently have pending proceedings will not be processed into the United States at this time. Case status information is available on the EOIR website in English and Spanish (<https://portal.eoir.justice.gov/>) (under “Automated Case Information” on the right side). This process is not currently available for individuals who have received a final order of removal or have had their cases terminated.

For those who believe they may have been enrolled in MPP and have a pending immigration proceeding before EOIR, they can register through the virtual hub at [https://conecta.acnur.org/\(/redirect?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F\)](https://conecta.acnur.org/(/redirect?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F)). Individuals should not take any action at this time and should remain where they are to await further instructions. Facilitating organizations will confirm the status of their removal proceedings and once confirmed, they will receive instructions on entry protocols.

## How is DHS protecting individuals and communities against COVID-19? (#)

The Administration’s policy is to protect our national and border security, address the humanitarian challenges at the U.S.-Mexico border, and ensure public health and safety. Resolving the plight of vulnerable migrants at our borders is aligned with both our national interests and our values as a nation. The United States will prioritize the public health and safety of our communities, U.S. government personnel, and migrants throughout the process.

DHS will employ all necessary safety precautions in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, including mandatory face coverings and social distancing. Individuals processed through this program will be tested for COVID-19 before entering the United States. At staging sites, facilitating organizations will use antigen testing for COVID-19, temperature checks, and health questionnaires to determine whether individuals intended to be presented at ports of entry have COVID-19 or other communicable diseases.

After being cleared, facilitating organizations will transport individuals to designated ports of entry in accordance with applicable physical distancing guidelines. Surgical masks will be provided for any individual who lacks an appropriate face covering. The facilitating

organizations will also provide each individual the same CDC instructions given to international air travelers. DHS will only process individuals consistent with its capacity to safely do so while fully executing its important national security and trade and travel facilitation missions.

## How can I register? (#)

A virtual registration process, accessible online from any location, opened on February 19, 2021 via: [https://conecta.acnur.org/\(/redirect?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F\)](https://conecta.acnur.org/(/redirect?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F)). Once registered, individuals enrolled in MPP determined to have pending cases before EOIR will be provided additional information about where and when to present themselves at staging sites. Facilitating organizations will support individuals in the program and ready them for processing into the United States.

Coming to the border on one's own provides no advantage in this program – intake will occur away from the ports of entry.

## Where is this happening? (#)

Processing of individuals enrolled in MPP with pending immigration proceedings who are transported by facilitating organizations will occur at certain designated ports of entry. DHS began processing cases at the San Ysidro port of entry (San Diego, CA) on February 19, 2021, and plans to begin processing at the Gateway International Bridge (Brownsville, TX) and the Paso del Norte port of entry (El Paso, TX) soon.

As a reminder, intake for this process does not occur at the ports of entry, but through the [https://conecta.acnur.org/\(/redirect?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F\)](https://conecta.acnur.org/(/redirect?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F)) and individuals will be instructed on where to go for staging and to be scheduled for processing at the ports. DHS plans to initially process limited numbers of individuals to identify and resolve any logistical challenges that may arise. DHS expects that in the coming days and weeks, designated ports of entry will be able to expand processing to their full capacity. This capacity will be consistent with the ability to safely process individuals and will depend on factors impacting our partners on both sides of the border. DHS will consider additional ports for this process over time, but registration will continue to be remote.

Physical presence at a port of entry does not offer access to this phased effort. Instead, individuals must register virtually at [https://conecta.acnur.org/\(/redirect?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F\)](https://conecta.acnur.org/(/redirect?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F))

[url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F\).](https://conecta.acnur.org/) We strongly discourage any rush to U.S. ports of entry to avoid causing confusion and delay in this important process.

## If I have an active removal proceeding and am not currently in Mexico, should I return to Mexico for processing? (#)

Individuals enrolled in MPP who have pending proceedings before EOIR but are located in a country other than Mexico should remain where they are and first follow the directions to identify themselves through [https://conecta.acnur.org/\(/redirect?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F\)](https://conecta.acnur.org/(/redirect?url=https%3A%2F%2Fconecta.acnur.org%2F)).

If your pending MPP case status is confirmed, you will receive specific instructions.

## Once I am processed through the POE, how will I get to my next destination? (#)

To the extent possible, individuals will need to arrange their own transportation. If needed, there are networks of non-governmental organizations that may be able to help arrange transportation and shelter in route to designated staging locations.

## Are individuals vetted before entry? (#)

The United States is continuing to strictly enforce our existing immigration laws and border security measures. DHS will follow existing protocols – including biometric checks – to confirm that individuals do not pose a threat to the American public. Anyone determined to pose a national security or public safety threat will be referred to ICE for a custody determination.

## How long will this new process for individuals in MPP last? (#)

DHS is working as expeditiously as possible but has not set a deadline by which the process will end. Any such determination would be made in consultation with partners.

## What are the vulnerability criteria that facilitating organizations will use? (#)

Facilitating organizations will generally prioritize individuals based on their enrollment date into MPP, while also considering other vulnerability criteria provided by DHS. Those who have been waiting the longest will generally be prioritized first, along with those who find themselves in particularly vulnerable situations.

## What happens if the facilitating organization cannot verify my case status? (#)

Facilitating organizations will request more information and contact the CBP Traveler Communication Center to seek resolution.

## What happens when my case is completed? (#)

This new process is about ensuring that individuals who were returned to Mexico under MPP can proceed with their immigration proceedings in the United States. Entry into the United States through this process does not guarantee the right to stay in the United States, nor does it impact eligibility for relief or protection from removal. The process, however, will facilitate an individual's ability to appear before an immigration judge and have their claims heard. If a claim is denied, and any appeal process runs its course, the individual will be subject to removal from the United States.

## How is DHS tracking individuals once they are processed into the United States? (#)

The safety of the American public and all those we encounter remains a top priority. DHS will make a risk-based determination to take into custody or enroll certain individuals into

alternative-to-detention (ATD) programs at the port of entry. Otherwise, ICE will consider enrolling these individuals into ATD or other case management programs after the migrants arrive at their final destination.

## Additional Resources (#)

- February 19, 2021: [DHS Statement on First Step in Process to Address Individuals in Mexico with Active MPP Cases](/news/2021/02/19/dhs-statement-first-step-process-address-individuals-mexico-active-mpp-cases) (</news/2021/02/19/dhs-statement-first-step-process-address-individuals-mexico-active-mpp-cases>).
- February 18, 2021: [Public Health and the Draw Down of the Migrant Protection Protocols Program](https://www.state.gov/public-health-and-the-draw-down-of-the-migrant-protection-protocols-program/) (<https://www.state.gov/public-health-and-the-draw-down-of-the-migrant-protection-protocols-program/>) | [State.gov](https://www.state.gov)
- February 18, 2021: [FACT SHEET: DHS Announces Process to Address Individuals Outside the United States with Active MPP Cases](https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/02/18/fact-sheet-dhs-announces-process-address-individuals-outside-united-states-active) (<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/02/18/fact-sheet-dhs-announces-process-address-individuals-outside-united-states-active>).
- February 16, 2021: [The MPP Program and Border Security Joint Statement by Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Assistant to the President and Homeland Security Advisor Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/02/16/the-mpp-program-and-border-security-joint-statement-by-assistant-to-the-president-and-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-and-assistant-to-the-president-and-homeland-security-advisor-elizabeth-sherwood-randall) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/02/16/the-mpp-program-and-border-security-joint-statement-by-assistant-to-the-president-and-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-and-assistant-to-the-president-and-homeland-security-advisor-and-deputy-na/>) | [Whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)
- February 11, 2021: [DHS Announces Process to Address Individuals in Mexico with Active MPP Cases](/news/2021/02/11/dhs-announces-process-address-individuals-mexico-active-mpp-cases) (</news/2021/02/11/dhs-announces-process-address-individuals-mexico-active-mpp-cases>).
- February 11, 2021: [Fact Sheet: DHS Announces Process to Address Individuals Outside the United States with Active MPP Cases](/news/2021/02/18/fact-sheet-dhs-announces-process-address-individuals-outside-united-states-active) (</news/2021/02/18/fact-sheet-dhs-announces-process-address-individuals-outside-united-states-active>).
- February 2, 2021: [Executive Order on 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](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/02/02/executive-order-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/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/02/02/executive-order-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/>) | [Whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)
- January 20, 2021: [DHS Statement on the Suspension of New Enrollments in the Migrant Protection Protocols Program](https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/01/20/dhs-statement-suspension-new-enrollments-migrant-protection-protocols-program) (<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/01/20/dhs-statement-suspension-new-enrollments-migrant-protection-protocols-program>).

# Previous Administrations (#)

- [Archive: Migrant Protection Protocols \(/archive/migrant-protection-protocols\)](/archive/migrant-protection-protocols)

Last Published Date: February 20, 2021