

DNA ANALYSIS OF MIGRANT FAMILY UNITS

When a family arrives at the U.S. border, **DNA** analysis might be requested by the U.S. government to verify the relationship of minor children with their parents

This pamphlet was not produced by any government agency

The information on DNA testing is based on public sources

Information is accurate as of January 2022

DNA analysis process

After a family unit is selected for testing...

1. The parent will be asked permission for the test
2. A mouth swab is used to collect a DNA sample from each parent and each child
3. Swabs might be put into a rapid DNA instrument on-site or sent to an accredited laboratory to obtain DNA data similar to a fingerprint
4. The instrument compares the DNA data from each parent-child pair
5. The rapid DNA test should take about two hours, but the whole process could take longer. The laboratory DNA test usually takes weeks at minimum
6. Test results indicate whether a genetic parent-child relationship is likely

DNA analysis has its limits...

DNA analysis is used **ONLY** to verify genetic parent-child relationships

DNA analysis is **NOT** intended to verify a child's relationship with:

- Aunts or uncles
- Brothers or sisters
- Cousins

DNA analysis will **NOT** verify a child's relationship with:

- Step-parents
- Adoptive parents

Sometimes the results will be inconclusive or might need further review by scientists

What happens next?

What happens after the DNA analysis is unclear

We do know that...

- The DNA sample (mouth swab) is destroyed after the analysis
- The conclusions from the analysis will be kept for government review for 20 years

Things to keep in mind...

- How DNA results are weighed in immigration decisions is unclear. Other approaches might be used to verify relationships that are not genetic
- Many questions remain about DNA analysis for families and how it is used in immigration proceedings
- Families will be asked permission for the DNA analysis. Refusal could weaken a family's claim and lead to deportation or family unit separation
- Even if the analysis verifies the relationship, deportation or family separation is still a possibility
- If possible, families should consult an attorney for advice

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