

Fact Sheet

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USCIS WILL FURTHER STRENGTHEN MEASURES THAT SUPPORT THE REUNIFICATION OF FAMILIES SEPARATED BY THE CASTRO REGIME

USCIS announced changes today to its existing policies that will increase opportunities for family reunification and reaffirmed its continued practice of providing protection under its in-country refugee processing program, consistent with U.S. international protection obligations.

IMPACT OF FAMILY REUNIFICATION POLICY

Immigration processing in Cuba is regulated by the September 4, 1994, Joint Communique between the U.S. government and the government of Cuba. This document allows the United States to process a minimum of 20,000 migrants for travel to the United States each year. Historically, three classes have made up the 20,000 goal: (1) those who receive family-based immigrant visas, (2) those who receive refugee protection, and (3) those who receive discretionary parole under the Special Cuban Migration Program (SCMP), referred to as the Cuban Lottery.

Each year, however, there is a significant backlog of individuals who have applied for family-based immigrant visas that are not available to be issued. Today's plan aims to reduce this backlog by recognizing these individuals as a fourth class of migrants. In addition to Cuban Lottery winners, we will also exercise our discretion to parole such individuals into the United States.

Under this new policy, family reunification parolees will make up approximately 60 percent of the discretionary paroles granted each year with Lottery winners making up the remaining approximately 40 percent. The table below reflects the impact of this policy:

Category	Approx. Average 2001-2005	After Today's Announcement
Family-based Immigrant Visas	4,100	4,100
Refugees	5,000	5,000
Discretionary Lottery Parolees	12,500	5,000
Discretionary Family	0	7,500

Reunification (Backlog) Parolees		
Total	21,600	21,600

BACKGROUND ON THREE HISTORIC CUBAN MIGRATION CLASSES

FAMILY-BASED IMMIGRANT VISAS

The Immigration and Nationality Act provides Lawful Permanent Resident and United States Citizen family members the right to immigrate family members to the United States. Because there are annual worldwide and other limitations on the number of available visas, in some instances, family members wait for long time periods outside of the United States until a visa is available for use.

REFUGEE PROGRAM

The United States is committed to providing protection to persons who flee persecution in their home countries. The United States provides in-country processing for approximately 5,000 refugees in Cuba annually. The United States is committed both through international treaty and through domestic policy to upholding the principles of the United States Refugee Program.

LOTTERY/SPECIAL CUBAN MIGRATION PROGRAM

The lottery system was created in 1994 and has had three open seasons for registry. To qualify Cubans must be between 18 and 55 years of age and have two of the following three characteristics: (1) completion of higher level education or secondary education, (2) three years of work experience, or (3) relatives in the U.S. Participants are randomly selected and are paroled into the United States.

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