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**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF ARIZONA**

C.M., et al.,  
Plaintiffs,  
v.  
United States of America,  
Defendant.

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A.P.F., et al.,  
Plaintiffs,  
v.  
United States of America,  
Defendant.

No. CV-19-05217-PHX-SRB  
No. CV-20-00065-PHX-SRB  
**ORDER**

Pending before the Court are Defendant United States of America’s Motion for Summary Judgment on C.M. Plaintiffs’<sup>1</sup> claims and C.M. Plaintiffs’ Motion for Partial Summary Judgment. (Doc. 371, 19-cv-5217, US-CM Mot.; Doc. 378, 19-cv-5217, CM Mot.) The Court will also consider the United States’ Motion for Summary Judgment on A.P.F. Plaintiffs’<sup>2</sup> claims and A.P.F. Plaintiffs’ Motion for Partial Summary Judgment. (Doc. 363, 20-cv-65, US-APF Mot.; Doc. 362, 20-cv-65, APF Mot.)

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<sup>1</sup> Referring collectively to C.M., B.M., L.G., B.G., M.R., J.R., O.A., L.A., V.C., and G.A.  
<sup>2</sup> Referring collectively to A.P.F., O.B., J.V.S., H.Y., J.D.G., M.G., H.P.M., A.D., M.C.L., A.J., R.Z.G., and B.P.

1 **I. BACKGROUND<sup>3</sup>**

2 **A. Factual Background**

3 This case arises out of the United States’ forced separation of noncitizen parent  
4 Plaintiffs from their children along the United States-Mexico border.

5 **1. Immigration Background**

6 A noncitizen “who arrives in the United States (whether or not at a designated port  
7 of arrival . . .)” is considered an “applicant for admission” and must “be inspected by  
8 immigration officers.” 8 U.S.C. § 1225(a)(1), (3). It is unlawful for a noncitizen to, *inter*  
9 *alia*, “enter[] or attempt[] to enter the United States at any time or place other than as  
10 designated by immigration officers or . . . elude[] examination of inspection by immigration  
11 officers.” *Id.* § 1325(a). A noncitizen’s first violation of § 1325(a) is a misdemeanor  
12 punishable by fine, six months imprisonment, or both. *Id.* A noncitizen present in the  
13 United States in violation of the law may also be removed from the United States. *See id.*  
14 § 1227. “Removal is a civil, not criminal, matter.” *Arizona v. United States*, 567 U.S. 387,  
15 396 (2012).

16 In 1997, the federal government entered into a settlement agreement known as the  
17 Flores Settlement Agreement (“Flores Agreement”), which “sets out nationwide policy for  
18 the detention, release, and treatment of minors in [the United States’] custody.” (Doc. 372,  
19 19-cv-5217, US-CM SOF ¶ 1; Doc. 379-20, 19-cv-5217, Ex. 85, (“Flores Agreement”) ¶  
20 9.) Among other things, the Flores Agreement requires the government to house children  
21 in facilities that meet certain standards, which includes providing “contact with family  
22 members who were arrested with the minor.” (Flores Agreement ¶ 12.A.) It also favors  
23 releasing children from custody to a parent or legal guardian when possible and requires  
24 the government and facilities licensed to house minors to make “prompt and continuous  
25 efforts . . . toward family reunification.” (*Id.* ¶¶ 14, 18–19.)

26 An “unaccompanied alien child” (“UAC”) is a child under 18 years of age who “has  
27 no lawful immigration status in the United States” and either has “no parent or legal

28 <sup>3</sup> All exhibit page numbers in this Order refer to the document’s ECF page number or bates  
number unless otherwise indicated.

1 guardian in the United States” or “no parent or legal guardian in the United States . . .  
2 available to provide care and physical custody.” 6 U.S.C. § 279(g); 8 U.S.C. § 1232(g)  
3 (incorporating the definition of UAC by reference). The Office of Refugee Resettlement  
4 (“ORR”), an office within the Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”), is  
5 responsible for “the care and placement of [UACs] who are in Federal custody by reason  
6 of their immigration status.” 6 U.S.C. § 279(b)(1)(A). The Trafficking Victims Protection  
7 and Reauthorization Act (“TVPRA”) also imposes responsibility on the Secretary of HHS  
8 for the detention, care, and custody of UACs. 8 U.S.C. § 1232(b)(1). Except for  
9 “exceptional circumstances,” any United States department or agency must transfer a child  
10 to HHS “not later than 72 hours after determining that such child is” a UAC. *Id.*  
11 § 1232(b)(3).

## 12 **2. The DHS Referral Policy**

13 In early 2017, government officials, including Customs and Border Protection  
14 (“CBP”) Commissioner Kevin McAleenan and then-acting Department of Homeland  
15 Security (“DHS”) Secretary John Kelly, considered separating parents and children as a  
16 method to deter illegal immigration into the United States. (Doc. 379, 19-cv-5217, (“CM  
17 SOF”) ¶¶ 1–2.) Immigration advocates, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and members  
18 of Congress issued warnings to Secretary Kelly and Immigration and Customs  
19 Enforcement (“ICE”) Director Thomas Homan that separating children from their parents  
20 would inflict trauma on these families. (*Id.* ¶¶ 3–5; Doc. 364, 20-cv-65, (“APF SOF”) ¶¶  
21 11–12; *see* Doc. 379-2, 19-cv-5217, Ex. 4; Doc. 379-3, 19-cv-5217, Ex. 6.) In July 2017,  
22 CBP agents in El Paso, Texas, began referring all adults who unlawfully entered the United  
23 States for prosecution under 8 U.S.C. § 1325, including adults traveling with children (“El  
24 Paso Pilot”). (CM SOF ¶ 6.) Under the El Paso Pilot, CBP agents would typically refer a  
25 parent for prosecution, designate the child as a UAC, separate the child from her parent,  
26 and transfer the child to ORR custody. (*Id.* ¶ 7.) The Pilot was terminated in November  
27 2017 to allow CBP leadership “to review all aspects of [the] program and brief up the chain  
28 at the appropriate level.” (*Id.* ¶ 9; Doc. 364-6, 20-cv-65, Ex. 16.) The DHS Office of

1 Inspector General (“DHS OIG”) determined that CBP headquarters was aware of “system  
2 deficiencies related to tracking family separations” but that CBP did not modify its systems  
3 to address these challenges. (Docs. 379-4 to 379-11, 19-cv-5217, Ex. 13, (“DHS OIG  
4 Audit”) at CD-US-0213932–33.)

5 In January 2018, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a letter to DHS  
6 Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen warning that a policy of separating families would inflict trauma  
7 and potentially lead to “toxic stress” in children. (CM SOF ¶ 14; *but see* Doc. 398, 19-cv-  
8 5217, (“US-CM CSOF”) ¶ 14 (disputing that Secretary Nielsen received the letter).)  
9 Members of the United States Senate reiterated these warnings in March 2018. (*See* Doc.  
10 379-13, 19-cv-5217, Ex. 17 (addressing letter to Secretary Nielsen).) ICE and CBP officials  
11 also informed Secretary Nielsen of concerns from non-governmental organizations that  
12 separating families could “be detrimental to the health, safety and well-being of children.”  
13 (CM SOF ¶ 16; APF SOF ¶ 31.)

14 On April 6, 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions “direct[ed] each United States  
15 Attorney’s Office along the Southwest Border—to the extent practicable, and in  
16 consultation with DHS—to adopt immediately a zero-tolerance policy for all offenses  
17 referred for prosecution under [8 U.S.C. §] 1325(a)” (“Zero Tolerance Policy”). (CM SOF  
18 ¶ 17; Doc. 364-6, 20-cv-65, Ex. 24, at 58.) On April 23, 2018, Commissioner McAleenan,  
19 Director Homan, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Director Francis Cissna  
20 issued a memorandum titled “Increasing Prosecutions of Immigration Violations,” to  
21 Secretary Nielsen, proposing three prosecution referral policy options for unlawful entries  
22 into the United States along the United States-Mexico border (“Referral Memorandum”).  
23 (US-CM SOF ¶ 6; Doc. 372-3, 19-cv-5217, Ex. C Att. 3, (“Referral Memorandum”) at 12.)  
24 The Referral Memorandum evaluated each option’s feasibility, potential “legal risk,” and  
25 anticipated “deterrent impact.” (Referral Memorandum at 12.) McAleenan, Homan, and  
26 Cissna recommended option three of the Referral Memorandum:

27 **Option 3- Refer all Amenable Adults, including those presenting as part**  
28 **of a [family unit]:** Work with DOJ, the Department of Health and Human  
Services, and other interagency partners to develop a quickly scalable  
approach to achieve 100% immigration violation prosecution referral for all  
amenable adults, including those initially arriving or apprehended with

1 minors.

2 (*Id.* at 12, 14.)<sup>4</sup> An “amenable adult” was any adult suspected of being “eligible to be  
3 prosecuted” under § 1325(a). (US-CM SOF ¶ 9 (citing Doc. 372-1, Ex. A Att. 1,  
4 (“McAleenan Dep.”) at 61:8–15); *see, e.g.*, Doc. 404, 19-cv-5217, (“CM CSOF”) ¶ 9.) The  
5 “effectiveness” of the El Paso Pilot was a factor in recommending option three, but the  
6 Referral Memorandum did not discuss system deficiencies experienced during the El Paso  
7 Pilot. (APF SOF ¶¶ 39–41; *see* Referral Memorandum at 13.) McAleenan, Homan, and  
8 Cissna noted that option three would “requir[e] significant resources and present[]  
9 increased legal risk.” (Referral Memorandum at 12.)

10 On May 4, 2018, Secretary Nielsen approved option three of the Referral  
11 Memorandum as the policy of DHS to refer all amenable adults for prosecution (“Referral  
12 Policy”). (*See, e.g.*, Doc. 379-13, 19-cv-5217, Ex. 19, (“Referral Policy”).) Secretary  
13 Nielsen “direct[ed] all DHS law enforcement officers at the border to refer all illegal border  
14 crossers to the Department of Justice for criminal prosecution to the extent practicable.”  
15 (Doc. 364-6, 20-cv-65, Ex. 28, (“Policy Memorandum”) at 74–75.) The Referral Policy  
16 did not address processes for tracking separated families, coordinating communication  
17 between family members, or reuniting family members, but Secretary Nielsen stated that  
18 “[i]f adopting [the] policy requires additional resources, each office shall identify and  
19 request such additional resources.” (Policy Memorandum at 74–75.)

## 20 **2. Referral Policy Implementation**

21 Prior to and during the effective period of the Referral Policy, CBP would separate  
22 families for reasons including “criminal prosecution of the adult; criminal history of the  
23 adult; threats to the safety of the public or child welfare concerns; an outstanding warrant  
24 for the adult; illness or other medical issues impacting the adult’s ability to care for the  
25 child; and concerns relating to parentage.” (Doc. 365, 20-cv-65, (“US-APF SOF”) ¶ 42.)  
26 Officers would conduct “case-by-case review[s]” of these factors to determine whether to

27 <sup>4</sup> Option one proposed that DHS “develop a quickly scalable approach to increase  
28 prosecution in accordance with USAO capacity.” (Referral Memorandum at 12.) Option  
two proposed that DHS “develop a quickly scalable approach to achieve 100% immigration  
violation prosecution referral for all amenable single adults.” (*Id.*)

1 separate a family unit. (Doc. 365, 20-cv-65, Ex. A Att. 2, (“Homan Dep.”) at 222:3–  
2 224:19.) During the Referral Policy however, CBP agents separated parents and children  
3 and transferred children to ORR regardless of whether their parents were in fact prosecuted  
4 or ever placed into criminal custody. (CM SOF ¶¶ 40–41.) If CBP officers identified issues  
5 with potential prosecution referrals, they were instructed to “highlight the areas of concern”  
6 for the U.S. Attorney’s Office. (APF SOF ¶ 57 (quoting Doc. 364-7, 20-cv-65, Ex. 30,  
7 (“Agent R. Dep.”) at 181:13–22).)

8         According to the United States, “[p]rior to and while the DHS Referral Policy was  
9 in effect,” CBP did not have any “directives” “prescribing precisely” when to designate a  
10 child as a UAC or when to transfer a child to HHS. (US-APF SOF ¶ 26.) But CBP agents  
11 would “as a matter of operational practice” request a transfer of a child to ORR custody  
12 “as expeditiously as possible” after designating their parent as amenable to prosecution.  
13 (*Id.* ¶¶ 27, 35.) Moreover, CBP agents would not reunite parents and children even if the  
14 U.S. Attorney’s Office declined to prosecute the parent or if the parent returned from  
15 criminal custody to the same station as her child. (CM SOF ¶¶ 43–44; APF SOF ¶ 58.) On  
16 May 10, 2018, ICE Executive Associate Director Matthew Albence expressed to Homan  
17 that parents who were prosecuted, had pled guilty, and were sentenced to time-served  
18 would return to CBP custody before their children had been transferred to ORR and asked  
19 CBP agents to adjust their detention procedures to avoid “a situation in which the parents  
20 are back in the exact same facility as their children.” (Doc. 379, 19-cv-5217, Ex. 44, at 85.)  
21 Albence was concerned that reunification would “undermine[] the entire effort and the  
22 [department] [would] look completely ridiculous [going] through the effort of prosecuting  
23 only to send them to a FRC and out the door.” (Doc. 364-9, 20-cv-65, Ex. 41, at 11.)

24         On June 20, 2018, then-President Trump issued Executive Order 13841 announcing  
25 a policy “to maintain family unity, including by detaining alien families together where  
26 appropriate and consistent with law and available resources.” (Doc. 364-12, 20-cv-65, Ex.  
27 46.) Southwest CBP sectors were directed to “suspend Section 1325 prosecution referrals  
28 for adult members of family units.” (US-CM SOF ¶ 39.) On June 23, 2018, Albence

1 instructed that families would only be reunited for removal and would not be placed in an  
2 “[FRC] for the sole purpose of releasing 20 days later.” (Doc. 364-12, 20-cv-65, Ex. 49, at  
3 98–99.) But on June 26, 2018, the United States District Court for the Southern District of  
4 California issued a preliminary injunction enjoining the separation of parents and children  
5 and ordering the government to reunite all parents and children within 30 days of the  
6 court’s order. *See Ms. L. v. ICE*, 310 F. Supp. 3d 1133, 1149–50 (S.D. Cal. 2018). Even  
7 after *Ms. L*, the government was still developing systems to facilitate communication and  
8 reunification of parents and children. (APF SOF ¶ 80 (citing Doc. 364-7, 20-cv-65, Ex. 32,  
9 (“Robert Guadian Dep.”)).)

10 In 2019, the DHS OIG conducted an audit of the Referral Policy and concluded that  
11 DHS lacked the information technology necessary to effectively track separated families  
12 while the Referral Policy was in effect, despite knowing of these deficiencies following the  
13 El Paso Pilot.<sup>5</sup> (DHS OIG Audit at CD-US-0213915, 0213932–39.) The DHS OIG also  
14 found that “Border Patrol and ICE headquarters did not provide adequate guidance to field  
15 personnel to ensure successful implementation of the [Referral Policy],” and DHS lacked  
16 any standard procedures to reunify separated families. (*Id.* at CD-US-0213939–42.)  
17 According to the United States, it utilized “pre-existing processes and practices” to  
18 facilitate communication between separated families and coordinate family reunification  
19 because the Referral Policy did not “prescribe[] [a] specific course of action.” (*E.g.*, US-  
20 CM SOF ¶¶ 17, 31.)

21 The parties disagree on the purpose of the Referral Policy. According to the United  
22 States, the “policy objectives” of the Referral Policy were to, *inter alia*, “deter and provide  
23 criminal consequences for illegal Southwest Border crossings,” and ease the operational  
24 challenges of unlawful entries by family units. (*E.g.*, *id.* ¶ 19.) Secretary Nielsen  
25 maintained that DHS did not have a child separation policy, but instead a policy “to  
26 increase consequences for those who choose to break the law,” which caused parents to be

27 <sup>5</sup> The OIG Audit refers to the Referral Policy as the “Zero Tolerance Policy.” (*See* DHS  
28 OIG Audit at CD-US-0213915 (“From May 5, 2018, to June 20, 2018, DHS adopted a  
*Zero Tolerance Policy* to refer for prosecution all adults illegally entering the United  
States.” (emphasis in original)).)

1 “separated from their child.” (CM SOF ¶ 39; Doc. 372-2, 19-cv-5217, Ex. B Att. 1, at 10;  
2 Doc. 364-8, 20-cv-65, Ex. 39 (Secretary Nielsen stating that separating families at the  
3 border is “no different than what we do every day in every part of the United States when  
4 an adult of a family commits a crime. If you as a parent break into a house, you will be  
5 incarcerated by police and thereby separated from your family. We’re doing the same thing  
6 at the border”).) According to Plaintiffs, Nielsen, McAleenan, and Homan (collectively,  
7 the “Policymakers”) adopted and implemented the Referral Policy as a front for what was  
8 in fact a child separation policy designed to deter immigration into the United States. (CM  
9 CSOF ¶ 19; Doc. 432, 20-cv-65, (“APF CSOF”) ¶ 19.) Plaintiffs point out that the  
10 government separated Plaintiffs and transferred the children to ORR custody despite never  
11 prosecuting parent Plaintiffs. (*E.g.*, CM SOF ¶¶ 40–43.)

### 12 3. C.M. Plaintiffs’ Family Separations

13 C.M. Plaintiffs are five mothers and their respective children who were separated  
14 by federal officers after unlawfully entering the United States near Yuma, Arizona,  
15 between ports of entry in May 2018. (*See generally id.* ¶¶ 55–120.)

16 On May 8, 2018, V.C. and her six-year-old son G.A. were apprehended and  
17 transported to Yuma Station after entering the United States near Yuma, Arizona, between  
18 ports of entry. (*Id.* ¶ 55; US-CM SOF ¶¶ 114–15.) CBP agents “identified [V.C.] as an  
19 adult amendable to prosecution” but never referred V.C. for prosecution or placed her into  
20 criminal custody. (CM SOF ¶¶ 68–69; US-CM SOF ¶ 116.) But on May 10, 2018, V.C.  
21 and G.A. were informed they would be separated. (CM SOF ¶ 58.) According to V.C., as  
22 children waited in line crying, a CBP agent laughed and taunted the families by saying,  
23 “Don’t cry, today is a happy day. It’s Mother’s Day.” (Doc. 379-18, 19-cv-5217, Ex. 52,  
24 ¶¶ 6–8.) CBP agents then “directed parents and children to line up on opposite walls” and  
25 “physically” separated children from their parents. (CM SOF ¶¶ 60–61.) G.A. was  
26 separated from V.C. on May 10 and did not speak to his mother for almost two months.  
27 (*Id.* ¶¶ 63–66; US-CM SOF ¶¶ 120, 131.) V.C. and G.A. were reunited on July 26, 2018.  
28 (US-CM SOF ¶ 130.)



1 On May 8, 2018, M.R. and her twelve-year-old son J.R. were apprehended and  
2 transported to Yuma Station after entering the United States near Yuma, Arizona, between  
3 ports of entry. (*Id.* ¶¶ 78–79; CM SOF ¶ 70.) CBP agents told M.R. and other mothers that  
4 the United States “want[ed] to take away [their] children.” (CM SOF ¶ 71.) M.R. was told  
5 that she would be deported without J.R., and they were separated on May 10, 2018. (*Id.* ¶  
6 76; US-CM SOF ¶ 84.) M.R. was referred for prosecution on May 11, 2018, but the U.S.  
7 Attorney’s Office declined to prosecute M.R. that same day. (US-CM SOF ¶¶ 86–87.) M.R.  
8 and J.R. spoke on the phone following their separation, during which “[i]mmigration  
9 officers nearby laughed and shook their heads listening to M.R. and J.R. cry.” (CM SOF ¶  
10 80.) M.R. and J.R. were reunited on July 26, 2018. (US-CM SOF ¶ 92.)

11 On May 9, 2018, C.M. and her five-year-old son B.M. were apprehended and  
12 transported to Yuma Station after entering the United States near Yuma, Arizona, between  
13 ports of entry. (*Id.* ¶¶ 43–44; CM SOF ¶ 84.) At Yuma Station an immigration officer told  
14 C.M. that she would be removed from the United States without B.M., laughed, and said  
15 “Happy Mother’s Day.” (CM SOF ¶ 85.) CBP agents designated C.M. as amenable to  
16 prosecution and made a placement request for B.M. with ORR. (US-CM SOF ¶ 45.) As  
17 C.M. pleaded with a CBP officer not to take B.M. because he would be unable to  
18 understand anyone, the officer laughed “and made fun of her indigenous accent.” (CM SOF  
19 ¶ 87.) CBP agents separated C.M. and B.M. on May 11, 2018, and “pulled” B.M. from  
20 C.M. “by force.” (*Id.* ¶ 89; US-CM SOF ¶¶ 49–50.) The U.S. Attorney’s Office declined  
21 to prosecute C.M. on May 14, 2018, and C.M. was never placed in criminal custody. (US-  
22 CM SOF ¶ 54; CM SOF ¶ 98.) C.M. and B.M. were reunited on July 26, 2018. (US-CM  
23 SOF ¶ 59.)

24 On May 11, 2018, O.A. and her five-year-old daughter L.A. were apprehended and  
25 transported to Yuma Station after entering the United States between ports of entry near  
26 Yuma, Arizona. (*Id.* ¶¶ 96–97; CM SOF ¶ 99.) CBP agents separated L.A. from her mother  
27 on May 13, 2018, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office declined to prosecute O.A. on May 14,  
28 2018. (US-CM SOF ¶¶ 104–05.) O.A. was never placed in criminal custody. (CM SOF ¶¶

1 110–11.) O.A. and L.A. were reunited on September 13, 2018. (US-CM SOF ¶ 112.)

2 On May 16, 2018, L.G. and her six-year-old daughter B.G. were apprehended and  
3 transported to Yuma Station after entering the United States between ports of entry near  
4 Yuma, Arizona. (*Id.* ¶¶ 61–62; CM SOF ¶ 112.) CBP agents designated L.G. as amenable  
5 to prosecution and made a placement request for B.G. with ORR. (US-CM SOF ¶¶ 63–66.)  
6 CBP agents separated B.G. from L.G. on May 17, 2018, L.G. was referred for prosecution,  
7 and the U.S. Attorney’s Office declined to prosecute L.G. on May 18, 2018. (*Id.* ¶¶ 69, 72.)  
8 L.G. was never placed in criminal custody. (CM SOF ¶¶ 118–19.) L.G. and B.G. spoke for  
9 the first time approximately forty days after being separated and were reunited on July 24,  
10 2018. (*Id.* ¶ 116; US-CM SOF ¶¶ 76–77.)

#### 11 **4. A.P.F. Plaintiffs’ Separations**

12 A.P.F. Plaintiffs are six fathers and their respective children who were separated by  
13 federal officers after entering the United States between ports of entry near Yuma, Arizona,  
14 or presenting at ports of entry. (*See generally* APF SOF ¶¶ 85–150.)

15 On May 8, 2018, J.V.S. and his five-year-old daughter H.Y. were apprehended and  
16 transported to Yuma Station after entering the United States between ports of entry. (US-  
17 APF SOF ¶¶ 43–44.) On May 9, 2018, CBP agents informed J.V.S. that H.Y. was “going  
18 to be transferred to New York,” and agents physically pulled H.Y. from J.V.S. (APF SOF  
19 ¶¶ 88–89.) H.Y. was transferred to ORR custody on May 10, 2018. (US-APF SOF ¶ 49.)  
20 J.V.S. was referred for prosecution on May 11, 2018, which the U.S. Attorney’s Office  
21 declined that same day. (APF SOF ¶ 92.) J.V.S. and H.Y. were reunited on July 21, 2018.  
22 (*Id.* ¶ 95.)

23 On May 12, 2018, H.P.M. and his six-year-old daughter A.D. were apprehended  
24 and transported to Yuma Station after entering the United States between ports of entry.  
25 (*Id.* ¶ 96; US-APF SOF ¶¶ 60, 63.) CBP agents designated H.P.M. as amenable to  
26 prosecution and on May 13, 2018, separated A.D. and transferred her to ORR custody.  
27 (US-APF SOF ¶¶ 64, 69.) An agent carried A.D. away “on his shoulder” but no agent  
28 informed H.P.M. “what was going to happen to” her. (APF SOF ¶¶ 97–99.) H.P.M. was

1 referred for prosecution but the U.S. Attorney's Office declined to prosecute H.P.M. on  
2 May 15, 2018. (US-APF SOF ¶ 74.) H.P.M. was removed to Guatemala on June 7, 2018,  
3 and A.D. was removed on August 30, 2018 to be reunited with H.P.M. (*Id.* ¶¶ 77–79.)

4 On May 18, 2018, A.P.F. and his son O.B. were apprehended and transported to  
5 Yuma Station after entering the United States between ports of entry. (*Id.* ¶¶ 81, 84; APF  
6 SOF ¶ 107.) CBP designated A.P.F. as amenable to prosecution and separated A.P.F. and  
7 O.B. on May 19, 2018. (US-APF SOF ¶¶ 85–88, APF SOF ¶ 110.) A.P.F. was referred for  
8 prosecution but the U.S. Attorney's Office declined to prosecute A.P.F. on May 21, 2018.  
9 (US-APF SOF ¶ 94; APF SOF ¶ 113.) A.P.F. and O.B. were reunited on July 25, 2018.  
10 (APF SOF ¶ 115.)

11 On May 19, 2018, J.D.G. and his eleven-year-old daughter M.G. were apprehended  
12 and transported to Yuma Station after entering the United States between ports of entry.  
13 (US-APF SOF ¶¶ 100–01.) CBP designated J.D.G. as amenable to prosecution, referred  
14 him for prosecution on May 20, 2018, and placed M.G. in a separate cell at Yuma Station.  
15 (APF SOF ¶ 117.) The U.S. Attorney's Office declined to prosecute J.D.G. on May 22,  
16 2018, but CBP still transferred M.G. to ORR custody on May 24, 2018. (*Id.* ¶¶ 121–23;  
17 US-APF SOF ¶¶ 108–09.) J.D.G. and M.G. were reunited at a detention facility on July 22,  
18 2018. (APF SOF ¶ 127.)

19 On November 13, 2017, R.Z.G. and his nine-year-old daughter B.P. sought entry  
20 into the United States at the DeConcini port of entry in Nogales, Arizona. (*Id.* ¶ 128; US-  
21 APF SOF ¶ 120.) R.Z.G. and B.P. were transferred to ICE custody, and on November 15,  
22 2017, ICE agents separated the two based on R.Z.G.'s criminal and immigration history.  
23 (US-APF SOF ¶¶ 117–119 (describing R.Z.G.'s prior unlawful entries into the United  
24 States), 122; APF SOF ¶ 130.) B.P. cried when officers separated her from R.Z.G., after  
25 which an "officer hit her with a belt buckle" and threatened to hit her again if she continued  
26 crying. (APF SOF ¶ 131; *but see* Doc. 393, 20-cv-65, ("US-APF CSOF") ¶ 131.) R.Z.G.  
27 was transferred to a separate facility on November 15, 2017, and B.P. was transferred to  
28 ORR custody on November 16, 2017. (US-APF SOF ¶¶ 126–27.) R.Z.G. was removed to

1 Guatemala on December 13, 2017, and B.P. was removed on July 26, 2018 to be reunited  
2 with R.Z.G. (*Id.* ¶ 133.)

3 On November 19, 2017, M.C.L. and his seven-year-old son A.J. sought entry into  
4 the United States at the DeConcini Port of Entry in Nogales, Arizona. (*Id.* ¶ 147.) On  
5 November 20, 2017, CBP agents decided to separate M.C.L. and A.J. based on M.C.L.’s  
6 immigration and criminal history. (*Id.* ¶¶ 137–146 (describing M.C.L.’s immigration and  
7 criminal history), 148; APF SOF ¶ 139.) A.J. was transferred to ORR custody on November  
8 20, 2017, and M.C.L. was transferred to ICE custody on November 21, 2017. (US-APF  
9 SOF ¶¶ 152–53.) M.C.L. was removed to Guatemala on January 17, 2018, and A.J. was  
10 removed on July 26, 2018 to be reunited with M.C.L. (*Id.* ¶¶ 156–60.)

### 11 **B. Procedural Background**

12 C.M. Plaintiffs filed suit on September 19, 2019, alleging two causes of action under  
13 the Federal Tort Claims Act (“FTCA”): (1) intentional infliction of emotional distress  
14 (“IIED”); and (2) negligence. *See* 28 U.S.C. §§ 1346(b), 2671–80; (Doc. 1, 19-cv-5217,  
15 CM Compl. ¶¶ 387–93.) A.P.F. Plaintiffs filed suit on January 10, 2020, alleging three  
16 causes of action under the FTCA: (1) IIED; (2) negligence; and (3) loss of child’s  
17 consortium. (Doc. 1, 20-cv-65, APF Compl. ¶¶ 303–30.) On April 14, 2020, the Court  
18 granted A.P.F. Plaintiffs’ Motion to Transfer to promote judicial economy given the cases’  
19 substantial overlap. (*See* Doc. 35, 19-cv-5217, 04/14/2020 Order; *see* Doc. 10, 20-cv-65.)  
20 A.P.F. Plaintiffs filed their Amended Complaint on July 16, 2020, adding four additional  
21 fathers and their children to this suit. (*See* Doc. 34, 20-cv-65, APF Am. Compl.)

22 Except for A.P.F. Plaintiffs’ claims specific to M.C.L., A.J., R.Z.G., and B.P. (“Port  
23 of Entry Plaintiffs”), the parties’ arguments in their respective Motions are, for all intents  
24 and purposes, the same. (*Compare* US-CM Mot., *and* CM Mot., *with* US-APF Mot., *and*  
25 APF Mot.) On March 9, 2023, the United States filed its Motions, arguing that Plaintiffs’  
26 FTCA claims fail because (1) Plaintiffs cannot bring institutional tort claims under the  
27 FTCA, (2) Plaintiffs’ claims are barred by the FTCA’s discretionary function exception,  
28 and (3) Plaintiffs have failed to establish their IIED claims. (*See generally* US-CM Mot.;

1 US-APF Mot.) C.M. Plaintiffs and A.P.F. Plaintiffs also filed their respective Motions on  
2 March 9, 2023, each seeking partial summary judgment as to the liability elements of their  
3 IIED and negligence claims. (*See* CM Mot. at 1–2; APF Mot. at 1–2.) The parties timely  
4 filed their responses and replies. (Doc. 403, 19-cv-5217, (“CM Resp.”); Doc. 424, 19-cv-  
5 5217, (“US-CM Reply”); Doc. 397, 19-cv-5217, (“US-CM Resp.”); Doc. 421, 19-cv-5217,  
6 (“CM Reply”); Doc. 421, 20-cv-65, (“APF Resp.”); Doc. 428, 20-cv-65, (“US-APF  
7 Reply”); Doc. 392, 20-cv-65, (“US-APF Resp.”); Doc. 429, 20-cv-65, (“APF Reply”).)  
8 The Court heard oral argument on June 13, 2023. (*See* Doc. 427, Min. Entry.)

## 9 **II. LEGAL STANDARD & ANALYSIS**

10 Under Fed. R. Civ. P. 56, summary judgment is properly granted when: (1) there is  
11 no genuine dispute as to any material fact; and (2) after viewing the evidence most  
12 favorably to the non-moving party, the movant is clearly entitled to prevail as a matter of  
13 law. *Celotex Corp. v. Catrett*, 477 U.S. 317, 322–23 (1986); *Eisenberg v. Ins. Co. of N.*  
14 *Am.*, 815 F.2d 1285, 1288–89 (9th Cir. 1987). A fact is “material” when, under the  
15 governing substantive law, it could affect the outcome of the case. *Anderson v. Liberty*  
16 *Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 248 (1986). A genuine dispute of material fact exists if “the  
17 evidence is such that a reasonable jury could return a verdict for the nonmoving party.” *Id.*  
18 In considering a motion for summary judgment, the court must regard as true the non-  
19 moving party’s evidence if it is supported by affidavits or other evidentiary material.  
20 *Eisenberg*, 815 F.2d at 1289; *see also Celotex*, 477 U.S. at 324. However, the non-moving  
21 party may not merely rest on its pleadings; it must produce some significant probative  
22 evidence tending to contradict the moving party’s allegations, thereby creating a material  
23 question of fact. *Anderson*, 477 U.S. at 256–57; *First Nat’l Bank of Ariz. v. Cities Serv.*  
24 *Co.*, 391 U.S. 253, 289 (1968).

### 25 **A. FTCA Jurisdiction**

26 The United States is generally immune from suits for damages. A court has  
27 jurisdiction to entertain a suit against the United States only “to the extent that it has waived  
28 its sovereign immunity.” *Reed ex rel. Allen v. U.S. Dep’t of the Interior*, 231 F.3d 501, 504

1 (9th Cir. 2000) (citing *Blackburn v. United States*, 100 F.3d 1426, 1429 (9th Cir. 1996)).

2 The FTCA waives the United States' immunity for:

3 [C]ivil actions on claims against the United States, for money damages . . .  
4 for injury or loss of property, or personal injury or death caused by the  
5 negligent or wrongful act or omission of any employee of the Government  
6 while acting within the scope of his office or employment, under  
circumstances where the United States, if a private person, would be liable  
to the claimant in accordance with the law of the place where the act or  
omission occurred.

7 28 U.S.C. § 1346(b)(1). The FTCA's waiver of immunity allows the United States to be  
8 held liable under a theory of respondeat superior for "the intentionally wrongful or careless  
9 conduct" of its employees. *Laird v. Nelms*, 406 U.S. 797, 799 (1972); see *Lee v. United*  
10 *States*, No. CV 19-08051-PCT-DLR (DMF), 2020 WL 6573258, at \*6 (D. Ariz. Sept. 18,  
11 2020) ("The FTCA applies only to 'the negligent or wrongful act or omission of *any*  
12 *employee of the United States* while acting within the scope of his office or employment,'  
13 not to generalized theories of negligence asserted against the staff and employees of federal  
14 institutions as a whole." (emphasis in original)).

15 There are, however, several exceptions to the United States' waiver of immunity.  
16 Relevant to the United States' Motions is the "discretionary function exception" ("DFE"),  
17 under which the United States is immune from suit for any claim "based upon the exercise  
18 or performance or the failure to exercise or perform a discretionary function or duty on the  
19 part of a federal agency or an employee of the Government, whether or not the discretion  
20 involved be abused." 28 U.S.C. § 2680(a). Plaintiffs must show that the Court has subject  
21 matter jurisdiction under the FTCA's waiver of immunity, while the United States must  
22 prove that the DFE applies. *Prescott v. United States*, 973 F.2d 696, 701–03 (9th Cir. 1992).

### 23 **1. Plaintiffs Do Not Assert "Institutional" Claims**

24 The United States first argues that the Court lacks jurisdiction because Plaintiffs are  
25 asserting "institutional" or "systemic" claims that challenge "official agency  
26 policymaking." (E.g., US-CM Mot. at 5–7.) Citing a single paragraph in each of Plaintiffs'  
27 Complaints, the United States contends that Plaintiffs challenge the Referral Policy, which  
28 was the result of "policymaking or agency-wide misconduct" rather than the tortious

1 misconduct of any individual employees. (*Id.* at 6 (citing CM Compl. ¶ 1); US-APF Mot.  
2 at 7 (citing APF Compl. ¶ 15).) Plaintiffs’ claims also “arise out of” law enforcement  
3 activities “taken pursuant to the DHS Referral Policy.” (*E.g.*, US-CM Mot. at 8.) Plaintiffs  
4 counter that the United States “overlooks substantial evidence” supporting Plaintiffs’  
5 allegations of tortious conduct by individual federal employees.<sup>6</sup> (*E.g.*, C.M. Resp. at 14–  
6 15.) The Court agrees with Plaintiffs.

7 Plaintiffs in this case provide instances of individual conduct by Nielsen,  
8 McAleenan, Homan, and Albence to support their argument that the government  
9 “negligently and intentionally established” a policy designed to separate noncitizen  
10 families as a means of deterrence at the southern border. Plaintiffs assert, *inter alia*, that  
11 the Policymakers and CBP agents “forcibly separat[ed] Plaintiffs for months as a means of  
12 deterrence, with no plan for tracking, facilitating communication, or reunifying separated  
13 families promptly.” (APF Resp. at 11; *see also* CM Resp. at 14.) Plaintiffs further contend  
14 that Secretary Nielsen adopted the Referral Policy despite knowing of the “severe  
15 emotional trauma” it would cause parents and children. (*E.g.*, CM Mot. at 21–22.) These  
16 are not “institutional” tort claims.

17 The United States argues that Plaintiffs’ claims “indisputably arise out of  
18 separations resulting from enforcement action taken pursuant to the DHS Referral Policy.”  
19 (*E.g.*, US-APF Mot. at 8.) This argument ignores Plaintiffs’ evidence specific to federal  
20 officials and employees at Yuma Station who separated Plaintiffs. (US-CM Mot. at 6; *see*  
21 CM SOF ¶¶ 55–120; APF SOF ¶¶ 85–150.) Though the “[t]ortious acts or omissions of  
22 government agencies or the federal government as a whole cannot form the basis for FTCA  
23 claims,” the United States cannot shield itself from liability by characterizing each  
24 employee’s actions as that of an agency or policy action generally. (*See* US-CM Mot. at  
25 6); *Fuentes-Ortega v. United States*, 640 F. Supp. 3d 878, 885 (D. Ariz. 2022) (finding the

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26  
27 <sup>6</sup> Plaintiffs’ failure to name the specific agents who designated parent Plaintiffs as  
28 amenable to prosecution or children Plaintiffs as UACs and effectuated the separations is  
not fatal to Plaintiffs’ claims. *See Wilbur P.G. v. United States*, No. 4:21-CV-04457, 2022  
WL 302319, at \*6 (N.D. Cal. May 10, 2022). The Court’s use of the term “government”  
refers to unspecified United States employees responsible for the challenged conduct.

1 court had subject matter jurisdiction over FTCA claim where the plaintiffs made “specific  
2 allegations regarding individual federal employees and officers”); *F.R. v. United States*,  
3 No. CV-21-00339-PHX-DLR, 2022 WL 2905040, at \*3–4 (D. Ariz. Jul. 22, 2022) (finding  
4 subject matter jurisdiction “to the extent the complaint alleges tortious misconduct by  
5 individual government employees” but not “[t]o the extent Plaintiffs intend to sue the  
6 United States for the alleged tortious misconduct of the relevant agencies writ large”).

## 7           **2. The Discretionary Function Exception Does Not Apply**

8           The United States contends that it is immune from suit because the DFE applies to  
9 both the Policymakers’ and CBP agents’ conduct. (US-CM Mot. at 8; US-APF Mot. at 9.)

10           “Whether a challenged action falls within the [DFE] requires a particularized  
11 analysis of the specific agency action challenged.” *Myles v. United States*, 47 F.4th 1005,  
12 1011 (9th Cir. 2022) (quoting *GATX/Airlog Co. v. United States*, 286 F.3d 1168, 1174 (9th  
13 Cir. 2002)). The Court must identify Plaintiffs’ “specific allegations of agency  
14 wrongdoing” and then apply a two-part test to determine whether the DFE applies to that  
15 challenged conduct. *Id.* (quoting *Young v. United States*, 769 F.3d 1047, 1053–54 (9th Cir.  
16 2014)); *Terbush v. United States*, 516 F.3d 1125, 1129 (9th Cir. 2008) (citing *Berkovitz v.*  
17 *United States*, 486 U.S. 531, 536–37 (1988)). First, the employee’s conduct must  
18 “involve[] an element of judgment or choice.” *Berkovitz*, 486 U.S. at 536. The DFE does  
19 not apply when the Constitution, “a federal statute, regulation, or policy specifically  
20 prescribes a course of action for an employee to follow” because “the employee has no  
21 rightful option but to adhere to the directive.” *Id.*; *see also Nurse v. United States*, 226 F.3d  
22 996, 1002 (9th Cir. 2000) (“[G]overnmental conduct cannot be discretionary if it violates  
23 a legal mandate.”); *Broidy Cap. Mgmt., LLC v. State of Qatar*, 982 F.3d 582, 591 (9th Cir.  
24 2020) (“The discretion of the U.S. Government is, of course, cabined by the applicable  
25 limitations in the U.S. Constitution, federal statutes and regulations, and any other relevant  
26 binding source of law.”); *Nieves Martinez v. United States*, 997 F.3d 867, 877 (9th Cir.  
27 2021) (“Even if the agents’ actions involved elements of discretion, agents do not have  
28



1 discretion to violate the Constitution.”).<sup>7</sup>

2 Second, if the challenged conduct involved an element of judgment or choice, that  
3 judgment must be “of the kind that the discretionary function exception was designed to  
4 shield, namely, . . . governmental actions and decisions based on considerations of public  
5 policy.” *Terbush*, 516 F.3d at 1129 (citation and internal quotations omitted); *see United*  
6 *States v. Varig Airlines*, 467 U.S. 797, 814 (1984) (explaining that the DFE was designed  
7 to “prevent judicial ‘second-guessing’ of legislative and administrative decisions grounded  
8 in social, economic, and political policy through the medium of an action in tort”). The  
9 challenged action “‘need not *actually* be grounded in policy considerations’ so long as it  
10 is, ‘by its nature, susceptible to a policy analysis.’” *GATX/Airlog*, 286 F.3d at 1174  
11 (emphasis in original) (quoting *Nurse*, 226 F.3d at 1001). “The focus of this second step is  
12 ‘not on the agent’s subjective intent in exercising the discretion conferred by statute or  
13 regulation,’ but rather ‘on the nature of the actions taken and on whether they are  
14 susceptible to policy analysis.’” *Gonzales v. United States*, 814 F.3d 1022, 1027–28 (9th  
15 Cir. 2016) (quoting *United States v. Gaubert*, 499 U.S. 315, 325 (1991)).

16  
17 <sup>7</sup> The Court agrees with Plaintiffs that the qualified immunity analysis is inapplicable to  
18 the DFE. (*See* CM Resp. at 21–22; APF Resp. at 13–15; *see, e.g.*, US-CM Mot. at 21–26.)  
19 In *Galvin v. Hay*, the Ninth Circuit cited *Nurse* and held that the DFE did not bar the  
20 plaintiffs FTCA claim for false arrest because the federal officers had violated the  
21 plaintiffs’ constitutional rights. 374 F.3d 739, 758 (9th Cir. 2004). The *Galvin* Court  
22 nevertheless affirmed the district court’s dismissal of the FTCA claim by applying  
23 California law to find that the federal officers had “reasonable cause to believe” that the  
24 arrest was lawful because their conduct did not violate clearly established law. *Id.* (citation  
25 omitted). It did not apply the qualified immunity analysis to shield the officers’ conduct  
26 under the DFE in the first instance. *See also Loumiet v. United States*, 828 F.3d 935, 944–  
27 45 (D.C. Cir. 2016) (explaining that a carve-out for unconstitutional conduct “would  
28 authorize [FTCA] claims . . . for conduct that violates the mandates of a statute, rule, or  
policy, while insulating the government from claims alleging on-duty conduct so egregious  
that it violates the more fundamental requirements of the Constitution”). The United States’  
citation to *Bryan v. United States*, 913 F.3d 356 (3d Cir. 2019) misses the mark. In *Xi v.*  
*Haugen*, the Third Circuit made clear that “unconstitutional government conduct is per se  
outside the [DFE]” and rejected the argument that *Bryan* adopted the qualified immunity  
analysis for the DFE. 68 F.4th 824, 839 & n.11 (3d Cir. 2023). Moreover, “[a] plaintiff  
who identifies constitutional defects in the conduct underlying her FTCA tort claim . . .  
may affect the availability of the discretionary-function defense, but she does not thereby  
convert an FTCA claim into a constitutional damages claim against the government; state  
law is necessarily still the source of the substantive standard of FTCA liability.” *Loumiet*,  
828 F.3d at 945–46; (*see* US-CM Mot. at 22 (arguing that a “carveout” in the DFE for  
constitutional violations “would effectively create a back door for constitutional claims  
under the FTCA”).)

1 “[A]s a remedial statute, [the FTCA] should be construed liberally, and its  
2 exceptions should be read narrowly.” *Terbush*, 516 F.3d at 1135 (citations and internal  
3 quotations omitted). The Court should “identify ‘those circumstances which are within the  
4 words and reason of the exception’—no less and no more.” *Dolan v. U.S. Postal Serv.*, 546  
5 U.S. 481, 491–92 (2006) (citation omitted).

6 **i. The Policymakers’ Conduct**

7 “Typically, the promulgation of policies and rules is protected by the FTCA’s  
8 discretionary function exception.” *Nurse*, 226 F.3d at 1002. The United States argues that  
9 the DFE shields Secretary Nielsen’s issuance of the Referral Policy, specifically, her  
10 “approval of referring for prosecution all adults amenable to prosecution for violation of 8  
11 U.S.C. § 1325(a).” (US-CM Mot. at 10.) But Plaintiffs do not challenge Secretary Nielsen’s  
12 decision to refer all amenable adults for prosecution. (*See, e.g.*, CM Resp. at 16–17.)  
13 Instead, Plaintiffs claim that Secretary Nielsen, McAleenan, Homan, Cissna, and Albence,  
14 among others, developed and implemented a policy designed to deter Central American  
15 individuals from unlawfully immigrating to the United States by separating families  
16 without justification and knowing that it would inflict trauma upon children and parents.  
17 (*See* CM Resp. at 17–21; APF Resp. at 17–18, 28–29.) Plaintiffs argue that the DFE does  
18 not apply because this conduct violated Plaintiffs’ constitutional right to family integrity.  
19 (*E.g.*, CM Resp. at 17–21.)

20 The United States argues that the Court should avoid inquiring into the  
21 Policymakers’ subjective intent to determine whether the DFE applies. (*E.g.*, US-CM Mot.  
22 at 24 (citing *Gaubert* for the proposition that the proper inquiry is whether the conduct is  
23 susceptible to policy analysis and not the employee’s subjective intent).) Plaintiffs counter  
24 that the subjective intent of the Policymakers is relevant to whether their conduct shocks  
25 the conscience for a due process violation. (CM Resp. at 20–21; APF Resp. at 18.) The  
26 Court agrees with Plaintiffs. Because the government lacks discretion to violate a person’s  
27 due process rights, the Court finds it must consider the Policymakers’ subjective intent  
28

1 behind the adoption of the Referral Policy.<sup>8</sup> (*See generally* US-CM Mot.)

2 All persons in the United States are guaranteed the due process rights of the Fifth  
3 Amendment. *Matthews v. Diaz*, 426 U.S. 67, 77 (1976); *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678,  
4 693 (2001) (“[T]he Due Process Clause applies to all ‘persons’ within the United States,  
5 including aliens, whether their presence here is lawful, unlawful, temporary, or  
6 permanent.”). The substantive component of the Due Process Clause protects “against  
7 government interference with certain fundamental rights and liberty interests,” regardless  
8 of the process provided, “unless the infringement is narrowly tailored to serve a compelling  
9 [government] interest.” *Washington v. Glucksberg*, 521 U.S. 702, 720–21 (1997); *Lopez-*  
10 *Valenzuela v. Arpaio*, 770 F.3d 772, 780 (9th Cir. 2014). “[T]he interest of parents in the  
11 care, custody, and control of their children . . . is perhaps the oldest of the fundamental  
12 liberty interests recognized by [the Supreme] Court.” *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57, 65  
13 (2000) (collecting cases); *see also Rosenbaum v. Washoe County*, 663 F.3d 1071, 1079  
14 (9th Cir. 2011) (“The substantive due process right to family integrity or to familial  
15 association is well established. A parent has a ‘fundamental liberty interest’ in  
16 companionship with his or her child.” (citation omitted)).

17 The United States’ separation of Plaintiffs for weeks or months unquestionably  
18 interfered with Plaintiffs’ right to family integrity. *See Jacinto-Castanon de Nolasco v.*  
19 *U.S. Immigr. and Customs Enf’t*, 319 F. Supp. 3d 491, 501 (D.C. 2018) (finding separation  
20 of parent and sons in separate facilities with “periodic phone calls” interfered with the  
21 mother’s care, custody, and control, particularly while her sons “endure[d] the bewildering

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22  
23 <sup>8</sup> The United States contends that, in any event, only Secretary Nielsen’s intent would be  
24 relevant to assessing the purpose of the Referral Policy. (US-CM Mot. at 24–25.) None of  
25 the cases the United States cites foreclose considering the motives of other officials  
26 involved in developing the Referral Policy, but instead illustrate that the decisionmaking  
27 *process* may often reveal evidence of intent. *See Vill. of Arlington Heights v. Metro. Hous.*  
28 *Dev. Corp.*, 429 U.S. 252, 268 (1977) (explaining that “legislative or administrative history  
may be highly relevant” to determining whether a discriminating purpose was a motivating  
factor); *City of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio v. Buckeye Comm. Hope Found.*, 538 U.S. 188, 196–  
97 (evidence of discriminatory intent may include “statements made by decisionmakers *or*  
*referendum sponsors* during deliberation” (emphasis added)); *Dep’t of Com. v. New York*,  
139 S. Ct. 2551, 2575 (2019) (in an APA case, “presented . . . with an explanation for  
agency action that is incongruent with what the record reveals about the agency’s priorities  
and *decisionmaking process*” (emphasis added)).

1 experience of detention”). And Plaintiffs’ evidence suggests an inconsistency between the  
2 pronounced purpose of the Referral Policy—to refer all amenable adults for prosecution—  
3 and the Policymakers’ underlying intent. The United States asserts that “the evenhanded  
4 enforcement of the immigration laws” cannot form the basis of a due process violation and  
5 that the Referral Policy applied to all adults unlawfully entering the United States  
6 regardless of familial status. (US-CM Mot. at 25–26 (citation omitted); US-APF Mot. at  
7 28.) But Plaintiffs have offered evidence that the Policymakers intended to separate  
8 families irrespective of whether the parents were ever prosecuted to deter other potential  
9 migrants from entering the United States. (CM CSOF ¶ 19; APF CSOF ¶ 19.) And in V.C.’s  
10 case, the government separated her and G.A. despite never referring V.C. for prosecution.  
11 (See CM SOF ¶¶ 68–69; US-CM SOF ¶ 116.) This could serve no compelling or legitimate  
12 government interest.<sup>9</sup> *C.f. R.I.L-R v. Johnson*, 80 F. Supp. 3d 164, 188–90 (D.D.C. 2015)  
13 (finding that general civil detention “for the sake of sending a message of deterrence to  
14 other Central American individuals who may be considering immigration” is not justified  
15 by any legitimate government interest); *Jacinto-Castanon*, 319 F. Supp. 3d at 502 (finding  
16 no support in federal law for the proposition that separating families in immigration  
17 custody serves a legitimate government objective).

18 There is also a genuine dispute of material fact as to whether the government’s  
19 intrusion upon Plaintiffs’ right to family integrity was “so egregious, so outrageous, that it  
20 may fairly be said to shock the contemporary conscience.” *County of Sacramento v. Lewis*,  
21 523 U.S. 833, 847 n.8 (1998); see *Rosenbaum*, 663 F.3d at 1079. Conduct “shock[s] the  
22 conscience” when it is “intended to injure in some way unjustifiable by any government  
23 interest” or results from “deliberate indifference.” *Lewis*, 523 U.S. at 849–50, 855. Where,  
24 as here, “actual deliberation is practical, then an [official’s] ‘deliberate indifference’ may

25 \_\_\_\_\_  
26 <sup>9</sup> The cases that the United States cites in support of its argument that there was no  
27 constitutional directive prohibiting the separation of Plaintiffs are inapposite. See, e.g.,  
28 *Delgado v. I.N.S.*, 637 F.2d 762, 762–63 (10th Cir. 1980) (removing noncitizen father of  
citizen children did not violate due process); *Marin-Garcia Holder v. Holder*, 647 F.3d  
666, 674 (7th Cir. 2011) (same); *United States v. Dominguez-Portillo*, No: EP-17-MJ-  
4409-MAT, 2018 WL 315759, at \*6 (W.D. Tex. Jan 5, 2018) (separating families after  
parents were criminally charged did not violate due process).

1 suffice to shock the conscience,” while the intent to harm standard generally applies when  
2 an employee must make “snap judgment[s].” *Wilkinson v. Torres*, 610 F.3d 546, 554 (9th  
3 Cir. 2010) (citation omitted). Plaintiffs persuasively argue that the Policymakers designed  
4 the Referral Policy to separate families as a means of deterrence and despite knowing that  
5 it would cause severe trauma to children and parents. Plaintiffs remained separated even  
6 while parent Plaintiffs were in civil immigration detention pending removal proceedings.  
7 (*E.g.*, US-CM SOF ¶¶ 54, 59; CM SOF ¶¶ 98, 110–11 (stating Plaintiffs never transferred  
8 to criminal custody); APF SOF ¶¶ 121–23 (stating the government transferred M.G. to  
9 ORR custody after the U.S. Attorney’s Office declined to prosecute J.D.G., who was being  
10 held in the same facility).) And evidence indicates that the Policymakers knew the  
11 government was ill-equipped to inform parent Plaintiffs of their children’s whereabouts or  
12 establish communication between family units. (*See, e.g.*, DHS OIG Audit at CD-US-  
13 0213915, 0213932–42.) This raises genuine issues of fact whether the Policymakers  
14 implemented the Referral Policy with deliberate indifference to the harm it would cause  
15 Plaintiffs.

## 16 **ii. Border Patrol’s Conduct**

17 The United States argues that the DFE applies to CBP’s implementation of the  
18 Referral Policy. (*E.g.*, US-CM Mot. at 13.) Specifically, the United States asserts that CBP  
19 agents at Yuma Station exercised discretion to refer an amenable adult for prosecution,  
20 “and, relatedly, whether and when to deem a child traveling with an amenable adult as  
21 ‘unaccompanied’ within the meaning of the TVPRA.” (*Id.* at 13.) Because a child cannot  
22 accompany her parent to criminal custody, designating the child as a UAC “is integrally  
23 related to the decision to initiate prosecution itself.” (*Id.* at 14–15.)

24 The United States’ attempt to bootstrap CBP agents’ UAC determinations to the  
25 exercise of prosecutorial discretion is unpersuasive. The United States cites *Blanco Ayala*  
26 *v. United States*, where the Fourth Circuit held that “the decisions to detain and remove [a  
27 non-citizen] are discretionary because they are bound up in the decisions surrounding the  
28 investigatory step.” 982 F.3d 209, 215 (4th Cir. 2020); (*see* US-CM Mot. at 14–15.) The

1 United States also points to *S.E.B.M. by & through Felipe v. United States*, a case in which  
2 the government had in fact prosecuted the father. No. 1:21-cv-00095-JHR-LF, 2023 WL  
3 2383784, at \*14 (D. N.M. Mar. 6, 2023); (*see* US-CM Mot. at 10.) The court in *S.E.B.M.*  
4 explained that the child became a UAC upon the government’s decision to prosecute her  
5 father, which was “indivisible” from and caused their separation. 2023 WL 2383784 at  
6 \*14–15; *see also Peña Arita v. United States*, 470 F. Supp. 3d 663, 686–87 (S.D. Tex.  
7 2020) (agreeing with the United States that “once the discretionary *decision to prosecute*  
8 is made [by the U.S. Attorney’s Office], the separation of prisoners from their families is  
9 plainly legal” (emphasis added)). But the CBP agents’ UAC determinations in this case are  
10 not similarly “bound up” in or “indivisible” from the decision to refer the parent Plaintiffs  
11 for prosecution because the *possibility* of facing prosecution did not make parent Plaintiffs  
12 unavailable to provide care and custody. Plaintiffs were never prosecuted or held in  
13 criminal custody.<sup>10</sup>

14 The United States contends that whether and when to designate a child as a UAC  
15 was nevertheless “a discretionary determination susceptible to policy analysis” because an  
16 agency’s interpretation of a statute is a discretionary act. (*E.g.*, US-CM Mot. at 15; US-  
17 CM Reply at 10–11 (citing *Villanueva v. United States*, 708 F. Supp. 2d 960, 975 (D. Ariz.  
18 2009)).) Plaintiffs counter that CBP agents lacked discretion to designate children Plaintiffs  
19 as UACs because parent Plaintiffs were still available to provide care and custody while  
20 their prosecution referrals were pending. (CM Resp. at 22–23; APF Resp. at 22–23.)

21 The TVPRA directs all United States departments and agencies to transfer a child  
22 to HHS “after determining that such child is an unaccompanied alien child.” 8 U.S.C.  
23 § 1232(b)(3). And a child is a UAC only if “no parent or legal guardian *is available* to  
24 provide care and physical custody”; the TVPRA does not grant CBP agents discretion to  
25

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26 <sup>10</sup> The United States also contends that parent Plaintiffs’ detention in ICE custody was a  
27 discretionary act. (US-APF Mot. 18–22.) A.P.F. Plaintiffs counter that ICE’s authority to  
28 arrange for the place of detention is irrelevant because Plaintiffs challenge their separations  
that occurred well before parent Plaintiffs were transferred to ICE custody. (APF Resp. at  
25.) And C.M. Plaintiffs note that a parent’s detention does not categorically render that  
parent unavailable. (C.M. Resp. at 23 n.13.) The Court agrees with Plaintiffs.

1 make pre-emptive determinations that a parent *might become* unavailable.<sup>11</sup> 6 U.S.C.  
2 § 279(g) (emphasis added); *c.f. K.O. by & through E.O. v. United States*, No. 4:20-12015-  
3 TSH, 2023 WL 131411, at \*7 (D. Mass. 2023) (ORR lacks authority to detain non-UACs);  
4 (*see* Doc. 404-2, 19-cv-5217, Ex. 10, (“Jordan Dep.”) at 129:4–131:17 (explaining that  
5 CBP made UAC determinations based on the expectation that children would become  
6 UACs if their parents were prosecuted).) And though CBP agents may encounter  
7 circumstances where they must exercise “some professional judgment” in determining  
8 whether a child meets the definition of a UAC, “that professional judgment is not the same  
9 as ‘discretion.’” *Myers v. United States*, 652 F.3d 1021, 1029 (9th Cir. 2011) (finding the  
10 DFE inapplicable where a policy requiring review of a health and safety plan by an  
11 industrial hygienist or someone of “equivalent” training and experience was “not so  
12 uncertain in its definition of the requisite training . . . that it [was] ‘discretionary’”). This  
13 “interpretation comports with the significant procedural safeguards that traditionally  
14 accompany attempts by the Government to intervene in the relationship between a parent  
15 and child.” *Maldonado v. Lloyd*, No. 18 Civ. 3089 (JFK), 2018 WL 2089348, at \*6 (S.D.  
16 N.Y. May 4, 2018) (“Analyzing the ordinary meaning” of “available to provide care and  
17 physical custody” to find that a child was not a UAC).<sup>12</sup>

18 Citing *Fisher Bros. Sales, Inc. v. United States*, 46 F.3d 279, 287 (3d Cir. 1995), the  
19 United States argues that the DFE protects CBP agents’ decisions to designate the children  
20 Plaintiffs as UACs based on “currently available information” instead of waiting for the  
21 U.S. Attorney’s Office to confirm that it would prosecute parent Plaintiffs. (*E.g.*, US-CM

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22  
23 <sup>11</sup> The United States asserts that “for operational reasons,” it calculates the 72-hour time  
24 limit to transfer a child to ORR “as running from the time the child determined to be a  
25 UAC is apprehended.” (US-CM Mot. at 16 n.14.) But the TVPRA expressly requires a  
26 child to be transferred within 72 hours after they are determined to be a UAC, while the  
27 Flores Agreement only requires transfer “as expeditiously as possible.” 8 U.S.C.  
28 § 1232(b)(3); (Flores Agreement ¶ 12A.) Neither requires transfer to ORR custody within  
72 hours after a child is first apprehended.

<sup>12</sup> The *Maldonado* court noted that “[a] parent might be physically present in the United  
States and yet not ‘available to provide care and physical custody’ when, for example, the  
parent ‘refuses to make herself available to take custody of a child’ or is ‘incarcerated or  
otherwise in custodial detention.’” 2018 WL 2089348, at \*5 n.6 (quoting *D.B. v. Cardall*,  
826 F.3d 721, 747 (4th Cir. 2016) (Floyd, J., dissenting)). None of these circumstances  
existed when CBP agents separated Plaintiffs and designated the children as UACs.

1 Mot. at 16–17; US-CM Reply at 11.) *Fisher* is inapposite, as it concerned the  
2 Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration’s decision to refuse entry of imported  
3 produce based on data indicating the produce was possibly adulterated, which was “clearly  
4 [a] ‘matter of choice’ for a person occupying his position” and “not in conflict with any  
5 applicable statute or regulation.” 46 F.3d at 283, 285. The Commissioner’s choice to refuse  
6 entry of the produce based on then-available information was also susceptible to policy  
7 analysis. *Id.* at 286–87. But here, CBP agents pre-emptively designated children Plaintiffs  
8 as UACs by suspecting that their parents would be prosecuted. Whether a child meets the  
9 definition of a UAC does not implicate the same “matter of choice” for CBP agents and  
10 the Court need not consider whether it may have been susceptible to policy analysis.

11 Because CBP officers did not have discretion to pre-emptively designate children  
12 Plaintiffs as UACs before parent Plaintiffs were in fact unavailable to provide care and  
13 custody, the DFE does not apply. The Court finds that it has subject matter jurisdiction  
14 over Plaintiffs’ claims and denies the United States’ Motions.<sup>13</sup>

### 15 **iii. Separation of the Port of Entry Pls.**

16 The United States contends that ICE agents’ decisions to separate and detain the  
17 Port of Entry Plaintiffs are shielded by the DFE. (US-APF Mot. at 22.) Specifically, the  
18 United States argues that both M.C.L. and R.Z.G. were detained due to their criminal  
19 histories and prior removals from the United States, which ICE considers when making  
20 detention decisions. (*Id.*) The port of entry Plaintiffs assert that they were denied procedural  
21 due process because they were not provided any opportunity to be heard before the  
22 government separated them. (APF Resp. at 20–21.)

23 Procedural due process guarantees “fair procedure in connection with any  
24 deprivation of life, liberty, or property by” the government. *Collins v. City of Harker*

25 <sup>13</sup> The United States does not argue that the CBP agents’ specific conduct when separating  
26 Plaintiffs is shielded by the DFE. The CBP agents’ statements to and treatment of Plaintiffs  
27 is not the type of judgment or choice susceptible to policy analysis. (*See, e.g.*, CM SOF ¶¶  
28 59, 71–72, 85, 87; APF SOF ¶¶ 86, 89, 111, 131, 143); *c.f. Myles*, 47 F.4th at 1012  
(explaining that the DFE does not apply to law enforcement investigative tactics that have  
“no legitimate policy rationale”); *Gaubert*, 499 U.S. at 325 n.7 (“Although driving requires  
the constant exercise of discretion, the official’s decisions in exercising that discretion can  
hardly be said to be grounded in regulatory policy.”).



1 *Heights*, 503 U.S. 115, 125 (1992). “To satisfy procedural due process, a deprivation of  
 2 life, liberty, or property must be ‘preceded by notice and opportunity for hearing  
 3 appropriate to the nature of the case.’” *Lone Star Sec. & Video, Inc. v. City of Los Angeles*,  
 4 584 F.3d 1232, 1236 (9th Cir. 2009) (quoting *In re Yochum*, 89 F.3d 661, 672 (9th Cir.  
 5 1996)). “The fundamental requirement of due process is the opportunity to be heard ‘at a  
 6 meaningful time and in a meaningful manner.’” *Matthews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319, 333  
 7 (1976) (quoting *Armstrong v. Manzo*, 380 U.S. 545, 552 (1965)). The requirements of due  
 8 process require a balancing of factors set out in *Matthews*:

9 First, the private interest that will be affected by the official action; second,  
 10 the risk of an erroneous deprivation of such interest through the procedures  
 11 used, and the probable value, if any, of additional or substitute procedural  
 12 safeguards; and finally, the Government’s interest, including the function  
 13 involved and the fiscal and administrative burdens that the additional or  
 14 substitute procedural requirement would entail.

15 *Id.* at 335.

16 The United States does not seriously dispute that the Port of Entry Plaintiffs were  
 17 not given any opportunity to be heard before the government separated children Plaintiffs  
 18 and transferred them to ORR. (*See* US-APF Reply at 11–12.) Instead, the United States  
 19 contends that Port of Entry Plaintiffs provide no support for a procedural due process  
 20 violation in the context of the government’s unique concerns at the border. (*Id.* at 12.) But  
 21 the right to family integrity is “fundamental,” and the United States points to no caselaw  
 22 that suggests the government could separate Plaintiffs, purportedly based on M.C.L. and  
 23 R.Z.G.’s criminal and immigration history, without *any* opportunity for them to be heard.  
 24 *Troxel*, 530 U.S. at 65; *Rosenbaum*, 663 F.3d at 1079; (*e.g.*, US-APF SOF ¶¶ 122, 148.)  
 25 Plaintiffs’ evidence suggests that the government separated the Port of Entry Plaintiffs  
 26 within minutes and, in the case of M.C.L., avoided informing him that the government was  
 27 going to do so. (APF SOF ¶¶ 130, 139–40.)

28 The United States has failed to establish that the DFE applies to the government’s  
 separation of the Port of Entry Plaintiffs.

### **B. Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress**

Plaintiffs seek partial summary judgment on their IIED and negligence claims. (*See*

1 *generally* CM Mot.; APF Mot.) The Court considers the Motions together because  
 2 Plaintiffs’ requested rulings are nearly identical. To prevail on a claim for IIED, a plaintiff  
 3 must prove (1) “the conduct by the defendant must be ‘extreme’ and ‘outrageous’”; (2)  
 4 “the defendant must either intend to cause emotional distress or recklessly disregard the  
 5 near certainty that such distress will result from his conduct”; and (3) “severe emotional  
 6 distress must indeed occur as a result of defendant’s conduct.” *Ford v. Revlon, Inc.*, 734  
 7 P.2d 580, 585 (Ariz. 1987). Plaintiffs contend that the government’s separation of Plaintiffs  
 8 was extreme and outrageous and conducted with a reckless disregard of causing Plaintiffs  
 9 emotional distress. (*See* CM Mot. at 16–23; APF Mot. at 18–26.)

### 10 **1. Extreme and Outrageous Conduct**

11 Arizona defines “extreme and outrageous” as going “beyond all possible bounds of  
 12 decency, and to be regarded as atrocious, and utterly intolerable in a civilized community.”  
 13 *Id.* (quoting Restatement (Second) of Torts § 46 cmt. d). Plaintiffs argue that the  
 14 government’s separation of families was extreme and outrageous. (CM Mot. at 16–17; APF  
 15 Mot. at 18–22.) Specifically, the Policymakers’ conduct was extreme and outrageous  
 16 because they implemented the Referral Policy despite knowing that the government was  
 17 ill-equipped to track or reunite separated families and facilitate communication between  
 18 parents and children. (*E.g.*, CM Mot. at 17–19.) Plaintiffs also assert that CBP agents’  
 19 conduct in separating Plaintiffs was extreme and outrageous because agents, *inter alia*,  
 20 mocked mothers when separating their children, separated children from their parents by  
 21 physical force, failed to provide parent Plaintiffs with information on their children’s  
 22 location or wellbeing or on how to communicate, and failed to promptly reunite families.<sup>14</sup>

23 <sup>14</sup> H.P.M. signed a form that stated he was voluntarily returning to Guatemala and  
 24 authorizing A.D. to remain in the United States for her immigration proceedings. (US-APF  
 25 SOF ¶ 76.) A.D. was not removed to Guatemala until August 30, 2018. (*Id.* ¶¶ 78–79.)  
 26 H.P.M. argues that he was removed under “false pretenses” because A.D. remained in ORR  
 27 custody after H.P.M. was deported. (APF Mot. at 21.) The United States disputes this  
 28 assertion and argues that in any event H.P.M.’s claim is barred by the FTCA’s  
 misrepresentation exception. (US-APF Resp. at 18–19.) The misrepresentation exception  
 bars claims of negligent or fraudulent misrepresentation under the FTCA. *Pauly v. U.S.  
 Dep’t of Agric.*, 348 F.3d 1143, 1151 (9th Cir. 2003). Though H.P.M.’s deportation without  
 A.D. is “the result of allegedly inaccurate information . . . either by design (fraud) or by  
 inadvertence (negligent misrepresentation),” H.P.M. may still maintain an IIED claim for  
 the government’s other challenged conduct related to his separation. *Id.*; (*see* APF Reply

1 (*Id.* at 20–21; APF Mot. at 19–20.)

2 The United States disputes Plaintiffs characterization of CBP officers’ treatment of  
3 families in CBP custody. (*See* US-APF Resp. at 13 n.16, 22 n.24 (citing Doc. 393-1, 20-  
4 cv-65, Ex. A Att. 6, Joseph Comella Dep. 203–08, 229–33).) And whether the  
5 government’s method of separating Plaintiffs, facilitating contact between Plaintiffs, and  
6 arranging for their reunification went “beyond all possible bounds of decency” raises issues  
7 of material fact. (*See* US-APF Resp. at 22; *see, e.g.*, US-APF SOF ¶¶ 46–48, 65–68, 134–  
8 35 (documenting Plaintiffs’ respective family relationships and separations).) The Court  
9 denies Plaintiffs’ Motions as to whether the government’s separation of Plaintiffs was  
10 extreme and outrageous.

## 11 **2. Whether the Government Showed Reckless Disregard**

12 Plaintiffs contend that the government also recklessly disregarded the near certainty  
13 that emotional distress would result from the family separations. (CM Mot. at 21–23; APF  
14 Mot. at 22–26.) Plaintiffs argue that the Policymakers were repeatedly warned of the  
15 possibility that family separations would cause trauma and “toxic stress” in children and  
16 knew that the government did not adequately prepare for an influx of separated families.  
17 (CM Mot. at 22; *see* APF Mot. at 24–25.) The United States disputes that Secretary Nielsen  
18 ever actually received these warnings, and that in any event, a host of factors were weighed  
19 before Secretary Nielsen chose the Referral Policy. (*E.g.*, US-APF Resp. at 23–24.) The  
20 information considered by the Policymakers when deciding to implement the Referral  
21 Policy raises issues of material fact. *See Lucchesi v. Stimmell*, 716 P.2d 1013, 1017 (Ariz.  
22 1986) (en banc) (“[I]f the state of mind or intent of one of the parties is a material issue,  
23 summary judgment is improper.” (citation omitted)). Plaintiffs assert that their IIED claims  
24 center on the government’s act of separating Plaintiffs in the face of information that it  
25 would impose trauma, and not on the Policymakers’ implementation of the Referral Policy  
26 generally. (*E.g.*, APF Reply at 14–15.) But whether the Policymakers recklessly  
27 disregarded the emotional harm that separating families could cause based on the

28 \_\_\_\_\_  
at 9–10, 9 n.10.)

1 information available to them—from warnings from the public to the Policymakers’  
 2 understanding of the systems in place to manage the separations—is precisely the type of  
 3 factual inquiry ill-suited for summary judgment.<sup>15</sup>

4 The Court denies Plaintiffs’ Motions as to whether the government recklessly  
 5 disregarded the near certainty that the Referral Policy would cause Plaintiffs emotional  
 6 distress.<sup>16</sup>

### 7 C. Negligence

8 To prevail on a negligence claim, a plaintiff must prove by a preponderance of the  
 9 evidence “(1) a duty requiring the defendant to conform to a certain standard of care; (2) a  
 10 breach by the defendant of that standard; (3) a causal connection between the defendant’s  
 11 conduct and the resulting injury; and (4) actual damages.” *Gipson v. Kasey*, 150 P.3d 228,  
 12 230 (Ariz. 2007) (en banc) (citation omitted). Whether a duty exists is an issue of law,  
 13 while breach, causation, and damages all involve factual issues. *Id.*; *Lips v. Scottsdale*  
 14 *Healthcare Corp.*, 229 P.3d 1008, 1010 (Ariz. 2010) (en banc). Plaintiffs seek partial  
 15 summary judgment on their negligence claims and argue that the government owed  
 16 Plaintiffs a duty and breached the applicable standard of care.<sup>17</sup> (*See* CM Mot. at 23–25;

17 <sup>15</sup> C.M. Plaintiffs assert in passing that the CBP agents who separated C.M. Plaintiffs  
 18 recklessly disregarded that their “unnecessarily cruel” separations would cause severe  
 19 emotional distress. (CM Mot. at 22.) The Court denies C.M. Plaintiffs Motion because this  
 20 raises similar issues of fact to that of the Policymakers’ conduct. Port of Entry Plaintiffs  
 21 contend that the government acted with reckless disregard by separating the Port of Entry  
 22 Plaintiffs because “the government knew” by March 2017 that a separation policy would  
 23 cause trauma to families. (APF Mot. at 23–24.) But Port of Entry Plaintiffs present no  
 24 evidence that the CBP agents responsible for their separations had knowledge of this  
 25 information, which was generally expressed to the Policymakers as well as high-level  
 26 agency officials following the El Paso Pilot. (*See id.* at 23 (citing warnings by immigration  
 27 organizations and Congress to the Policymakers and knowledge of “CBP headquarters  
 28 personnel”).) The Court denies A.P.F. Plaintiffs’ Motion on this point.

<sup>16</sup> The Court denies the United States’ Motions on Plaintiffs’ IIED claims. The United  
 States contends that Plaintiffs’ separations were “authorized by federal law” and therefore  
 privileged. (*E.g.*, US-CM Mot. at 27–28.) This argument is undermined by the Court’s  
 findings above that the DFE does not shield the government’s conduct that violated a legal  
 mandate. (*See supra* Part II.A.2.) Though referring parent Plaintiffs for prosecution may  
 have been authorized by federal law, this says nothing of CBP agents’ decisions to separate  
 Plaintiffs and transfer children Plaintiffs to ORR custody.

<sup>17</sup> The United States contends that Plaintiffs cannot recover under both their IIED claims  
 and negligence claims for the same conduct. (*E.g.*, US-CM Resp. at 23.) But Plaintiffs may  
 pursue both causes of action when the government’s intent is in dispute or different acts  
 support each cause of action. *See Lewis v. Dirt Sports LLC*, 259 F. Supp. 3d 1039, 1046  
 n.5 (D. Ariz. 2017) (explaining that a plaintiff may pursue both intentional tort and

1 APF Mot. at 26–29.)

2 **1. Whether the United States Owed Plaintiffs a Duty**

3 A duty is an “obligation, recognized by law, which requires the defendant to  
4 conform to a particular standard of conduct in order to protect others against unreasonable  
5 risks of harm.” *Gipson*, 150 P.3d at 230. “Duties of care may arise from special  
6 relationships based on contract, family relations, or conduct undertaken by the defendant,  
7 and from public policy considerations.” *Lips*, 229 P.3d at 1010 (quoting *Gipson*, 150 P.3d  
8 at 232). Plaintiffs argue that the United States owed Plaintiffs a duty because a special  
9 relationship existed between the parties while Plaintiffs were in the United States’ custody.  
10 (CM Mot. at 23–24; APF Mot. at 27–28.) The Court agrees.

11 A duty of care exists if “the relationship of the parties was such that the defendant  
12 was under an obligation to use some care to avoid or prevent injury to the plaintiff.”  
13 *Markowitz v. Ariz. Parks Bd.*, 706 P.2d 364, 368 (Ariz. 1985) (in banc). Arizona law  
14 recognizes a duty arising from “special relationships such as guardian-ward and jailer-  
15 prisoner.” *Gilbert v. La Paz County*, No. CV 18-01792-PHC-DGC (DMF), 2020 WL  
16 2064099, at \*13 (D. Ariz. Apr. 29, 2020); *c.f. Fleming v. State Dep’t of Pub. Safety*, 352  
17 P.3d 446, 448 (Ariz. 2015) (en banc) (“[U]nder our common law, when DPS takes custody  
18 of someone in a manner that deprives the person of the opportunity for self-protection, it  
19 assumes a duty to protect that person against unreasonable risk of physical harm.” (citing  
20 Restatement (Second) of Torts § 314A(1)(a), (4))). Like a jailor-prisoner relationship,  
21 federal immigration officials owe a duty of care to noncitizens that they detain and hold in  
22 custody.<sup>18</sup>

23 **2. Whether the United States Breached its Standard of Care**

24 “In negligence cases, the duty if it exists is always the same—to conform to the legal

25 \_\_\_\_\_  
26 negligence theories “[w]here a defendant’s intent is genuinely disputed”).

27 <sup>18</sup> The United States mischaracterizes the inquiry as whether Arizona law imposes a duty  
28 for the government to keep parents and children together pending criminal or immigration  
proceedings. (*E.g.*, US-CM Resp. at 23.) The issue of whether there is a duty is distinct  
from “the specific details of the required standard of conduct.” (*E.g.*, CM Reply at 14  
(quoting *Anthony v. United States*, CV-20-08002-PCT-DJH, 2022 WL 4781938, at \*3 (D.  
Ariz. Sept. 30, 2022)).)

1 standard of reasonable conduct in light of the apparent risk.” *Avitia v. Crisis Preparation*  
2 *and Recovery Inc.*, 521 P.3d 373, 377 (Ariz. Ct. App. 2022) (quoting *Coburn v. City of*  
3 *Tucson*, 691 P.2d 1078, 1080 (Ariz. 1984)) (cleaned up). “The standard of care is defined  
4 as [w]hat the defendant must do, or must not do . . . to satisfy the duty.” *Gipson*, 150 P.3d  
5 at 230 (citation and internal quotations omitted); *Coburn*, 691 P.2d at 1080 (“[T]he details  
6 of conduct necessary to meet [a duty] will vary from case to case, depending upon the  
7 foreseeability of harm if the person under the obligation pursues or fails to pursue a  
8 particular course of conduct.”).

9 Plaintiffs assert the government did not provide “reasonable care under the  
10 circumstances,” because it *inter alia*, (1) failed to inform parent Plaintiffs about their  
11 children’s location and wellbeing, (2) failed to enable regular communication between  
12 Plaintiffs, and (3) did not promptly reunite Plaintiffs. (CM Mot. at 24–25; APF Mot. at 28–  
13 29 (both quoting *Markowitz*, 706 P.2d at 368).) The United States contends that Plaintiffs  
14 have not demonstrated a breach of the appropriate standard of care. (US-CM Resp. at 24–  
15 25; US-APF Resp. at 27.)

16 Assuming Plaintiffs correctly defined the applicable standard of care, the Court  
17 finds that genuine issues of material fact preclude summary judgment. The parties dispute  
18 the government’s facilitation of communication between parent Plaintiffs and their  
19 children. (*See, e.g.*, CM SOF ¶¶ 81, 92, 116–17; US-CM SOF ¶¶ 60, 77, 95; US-APF SOF  
20 ¶¶ 80, 134; APF CSOF ¶¶ 80, 134.) And the United States asserts that its systems  
21 adequately tracked Plaintiffs’ family units for the duration of their separations. (*E.g.*, US-  
22 CM SOF ¶¶ 46–48, 51, 66–68, 71; US-APF SOF ¶¶ 46–48, 53, 65–68.) In addition, all  
23 children Plaintiffs except for L.A. and A.D. were reunited their parents within the 30 days  
24 required by the court’s order in *Ms. L. See Ms. L.*, 310 F. Supp. 3d at 1149–50; (US-CM  
25 SOF ¶¶ 59, 76, 92, 112, 130; US-APF SOF ¶¶ 58, 79, 98, 114, 133, 160.)

26 Plaintiffs contend that the government’s violation of “its own standards for the  
27 treatment of detained migrants” and those standards in the Flores Agreement is evidence  
28 that the government breached its duty of care. (CM Mot. at 25 n.10; CM Reply at 15 n.18;

1 APF Reply at 17.) Specifically, Plaintiffs assert that pursuant to the Flores Agreement, the  
2 government must provide “contact with family members who were arrested with the  
3 minor.” (Flores Agreement ¶ 12.A.) The CBP’s National Standards on Transport, Escort,  
4 Detention, and Search (“TEDS”) state that “[g]enerally, family units with juveniles should  
5 not be separated.” (Doc. 379-19, 19-cv-5217, Ex. 83, (“TEDS Manual”) at 22, 29.) And  
6 ICE’s Performance-Based National Detention Standards (“ICE Standards”) permit  
7 indigent detainees to “request a call to immediate family or others in personal or family  
8 emergencies or on an as-needed basis.” (Doc. 379-19, 19-cv-5217, Ex. 84, (“ICE  
9 Standards”) at 407–408.) But none of these standards establish that the government failed  
10 to provide reasonable care *under the circumstances*, that is, when CBP was experiencing  
11 an influx of illegal immigration into the United States and coordinating communication  
12 and reunification of thousands of families during the Referral Policy. (*See* DHS OIG Audit  
13 at CD-US-0213915, 0213915 (explaining that DHS apprehended approximately 107,000  
14 families and 50,000 children at the United States-Mexico border in fiscal year 2018 and  
15 separated an estimated 3,014 children under the Referral Policy).) For instance, the ICE  
16 Standards also state that communication access can be restricted “[w]hen required by the  
17 volume of detainee telephone demand.” (ICE Standards at 406.) Whether the government’s  
18 breached its duty of care is a factually intense inquiry inappropriate for summary judgment.

### 19 **III. CONCLUSION**

20 The Court denies the United States’ Motions for Summary Judgment because the  
21 United States has not shown that the discretionary function exception bars Plaintiffs’  
22 claims. The Court grants C.M. Plaintiffs’ and A.P.F. Plaintiffs’ Motions for Partial  
23 Summary Judgment on whether the United States owed Plaintiffs a duty of care. But there  
24 remain issues of material fact whether the United States breached its duty. The Court denies  
25 the parties’ Motions as to C.M. Plaintiffs’ and A.P.F. Plaintiffs’ IIED claims.

26 **IT IS ORDERED** denying the United States’ Motion for Summary Judgment on  
27 C.M. Plaintiffs’ claims (Doc. 371, 19-cv-5217).

28 **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** denying the United States’ Motion for Summary

1 Judgment on A.P.F. Plaintiffs' claims (Doc. 363, 20-cv-65).

2 **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** granting in part and denying in part C.M. Plaintiffs'  
3 Motion for Partial Summary Judgment (Doc. 378, 19-cv-5217).

4 **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** granting in part and denying in part A.P.F.  
5 Plaintiffs' Motion for Partial Summary Judgment (Doc. 362, 20-cv-65).

6


7 Dated this 24th day of October, 2023.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan R. Bolton  
United States District Judge

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