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USCIS is Strengthening Screening for Family Members Abroad Seeking to Join Refugees in the United States

On Feb. 1, USCIS and the Department of State implemented new procedures to ensure that all individuals admitted as refugees receive similar, thorough vetting – whether they are principal refugees, accompanying family members, or following-to-join refugees.

A following-to-join refugee is the spouse or child of a principal refugee who lives abroad and wishes to join the principal refugee in the United States.

These measures resulted from the 120-day review mandated by [section 6\(a\) of Executive Order 13780 \(PDF\)](#), which specifically directed the Department of Homeland Security to determine what additional procedures should be implemented to ensure that individuals seeking admission as refugees do not pose a threat to the security and welfare of the United States.

New security measures that apply to following-to-join refugees processed overseas include:

- Ensuring that following-to-join refugees receive the full baseline interagency screening and vetting checks that other refugees receive.
- Requesting that the following-to-join refugee submit his or her Form I-590, Registration for Classification as Refugee, in support of the principal refugee's [Form I-730, Refugee/Asylee Relative Petition](#), earlier in the adjudication process. USCIS or the Department of State will contact petitioners directly to request this information.
- Vetting certain nationals or stateless persons against classified databases.

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