

DETAINEE

DNA Collection



FAMILY

Verification by DNA

The difference between these two DNA uses upon entry to the United States is often a source of confusion

Information accurate as of Apr 2022



Federal law authorizes DNA collection of migrant detainees for the FBI database CODIS to investigate crimes and missing persons cases



DNA tests of families with children in ICE custody are used to verify relationship claims to detect child trafficking and immigration fraud



A mouth swab is collected by a CBP agent and sent for analysis to the FBI where the resulting DNA identification data is uploaded to CODIS. This is NOT a rapid DNA test



Mouth swabs of the parent and child are taken to test whether they share DNA. Samples are either sent to a lab or tested onsite using a rapid DNA instrument. Rapid DNA tests take two hours. Lab tests take 24 hours or longer



The FBI keeps the samples indefinitely. The DNA identification data remains in the detainee index of CODIS indefinitely



The mouth swabs are thrown away, but a record is kept on whether the DNA test verified parentage



Most of the DNA data in CODIS are from people arrested for or convicted of a felony. Illegal border crossing is a misdemeanor



Not all family units are tested. How families are selected is unknown. While the test is considered voluntary, refusal could mean deportation or family separation



Black and Latinx individuals are already over-represented in CODIS. Detainee collection worsens this. The balance of cost and benefit to public safety is unclear



Family is not defined by biological ties alone. Currently, rapid DNA is only used to verify parent-child relationships

Acronyms

- CODIS – Combined DNA Index System
- CBP – Customs and Border Protection
- ICE – Immigration and Customs Enforcement

For more information visit bit.ly/borderDNAproducts

The BorderDNA Resources project is supported by the Center for ELSI Resources and Analysis