MIGRANT DETAINEE
DNA Collection

MIGRANT FAMILY
Verification with DNA

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

Information accurate as of Feb 2021

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

DNA tests of migrant families with children are used to verify relationship claims to potentially 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

A rapid DNA test onsite at an ICE detention center can determine whether a parent shares DNA with a child. The DNA test comparison is done in under two hours using mouth swabs

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 rarely treated as a felony.

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 over-represented in the justice system. Detainee collection could worsen any bias in CODIS. The balance of costs and benefits 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 contact borderdnaproject@gmail.com

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