DNA Bridge \ Puente ADN

Using DNA to Reunify Separated Migrant Families



DNA Bridge consortium is an interdisciplinary group of physicians, scientists, and human rights advocates developing a science, ethics-based approach to DNA technology and DNA data management to support family reunification of migrant children separated from their families. The consortium is comprised of expert volunteers; it is not profitoriented. We have tools, expertise, connections, and structures ready to assist.

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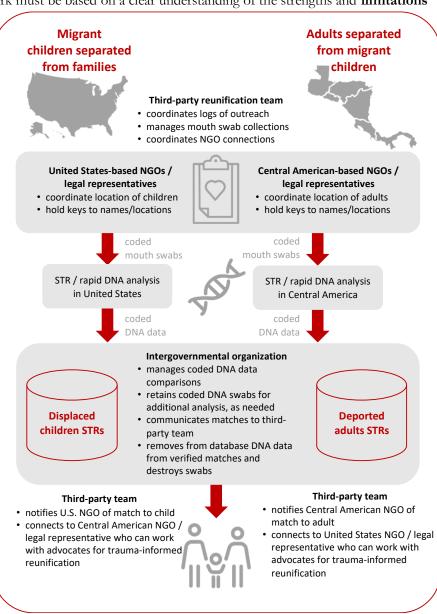
Given the significant harms of family separation, it is critical to ensure timely and proper use of DNA technology as a powerful tool to link genetic families. No technology—including DNA analysis—can reunite all families; however, this limitation should not serve as rationale to avoid applying DNA tools to support prompt reunification of families.

A DNA-led approach can provide a **secure**, **ethical**, and **humane** means of connecting separated family members.

- We strongly support the use of DNA for purposes of family reunification outside of government control.
- DNA kinship tests through accredited forensic laboratories have demonstrable rigor for acceptance of results.
- A DNA-led family reunification framework must be based on a clear understanding of the strengths and limitations
 - of **DNA** technologies. The process requires cooperation with organizations tracking non-DNA evidence of relationships.
- We define family reunification as a comprehensive approach where separated family members are identified, reconnected, and provided legal counsel and psychosocial support. Families should decide whether to provide a DNA sample and whether or not to re-connect. Families' trust in the process should be reciprocated by approaching families with respect, promoting their agency throughout the reunification process, and applying principles of cultural and linguistic competency and fluency.
- **DNA-based strategies** have assisted disaster victim and missing persons identifications and war crime investigations. Our approach builds on prior successes, for example:
 - o <u>International Commission on</u> <u>Missing Persons</u>
 - o <u>Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo</u> in Argentina
 - o <u>Pro-Búsqueda</u> in El Salvador
 - <u>Fundación de Antropología</u>
 <u>Forense</u> in Guatemala

Guidelines can be applied from **prior uses** to delineate a scientifically sound, ethical, family-centered approach.

E. Barnert *et al.*, *Science* 10.1126/science.abh3979 (2021)



DNA Bridge Approach