



Genetic Testing and Reuniting Families

Approved by the ACP Executive Committee of the Board of Regents on behalf of the ACP Board of Regents on July 10, 2018

Reuniting families who have been separated at the US border should proceed as expeditiously as possible but if it involves medical testing, testing should be done in the least intrusive manner; safeguard health and other information; and be a last resort means of identification. What testing is being done and why should be understandable to the individual (adult and child).

Government agencies and any other involved entities should not use the individual's samples or information beyond what is needed for prompt family reunification, nor should samples or information be stored in databases or otherwise. As HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Jonathan White has said, test results should be "solely used to accurately connect parents with children."

Genetic testing raises ethical issues and yields health and other results not only about an individual, but about entire families and ancestry. Commercial genetic testing can entail analysis of hundreds of thousands of parts of the human genome. In these circumstances of reuniting families, broad genetic testing is intrusive and likely unnecessary. It also raises significant privacy risks and can take extended time to generate results. If medical testing is needed to assist matching parent and child, rapid DNA fingerprinting paternity/maternity tests that give results in hours and that do not generate additional genetic information beyond paternity/maternity could be utilized. Testing of a broader scope, with safeguards, should only proceed if there are no other reasonable alternatives. When medical tests are used, informed consent and privacy issues must be addressed.