



Jose Alfredo Ledezma, 35, of Honduras, holds a folder next to his wife and daughter outside of Catholic Charities Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen on Aug. 2, 2021. The shelter has seen a dramatic drop in migrants since last summer. (Sophie Park/The Texas Tribune)

Berenice Garcia

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Migrant shelters that helped nearly a thousand asylum seekers per day at the height of migrant crossings just a few years ago are now nearly empty.

The shelters mostly along the Texas-Mexico border reported a plunge in the number of people in their care since the Trump administration effectively closed the border to asylum seekers in January. Some expect to close by the end of the month.

McAllen officials reported an average of fewer than 12 people arriving at the respite center run by Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley this month and are on track to have fewer than 350 people in February. In January, the respite center received a total of 3,188 people.

The asylum seekers who arrive at these shelters are dropped off by U.S. Customs and Border Protection after they have been processed by immigration officials and given a notice to appear in immigration court at a later date.

The staff at the shelters provide food, a place to stay, and other necessities until the migrants move on to their final destination in the U.S.

Annunciation House, an El Paso-based migrant shelter network, has a total of about 40 people at the shelters, according to Ruben Garcia, director of the organization.

Because of the small number of people in their shelters, only four of the more than 20 facilities in their network are in operation. Garcia said he will likely close more by the end of the month, keeping only one or two open.

But most of those sites were closed last year, Garcia said, as the number of migrant arrivals began to dwindle under the Biden administration. This was partly due to the Mexican government's efforts to crack down on immigration but also former President Joe Biden's executive order last summer that did not allow people to apply for asylum if they entered the country between ports of entry.

When Biden was still in office, Annunciation House received a daily average of 250 to 300 people which Garcia said was low for the shelter.

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"Even before the election, the numbers were already significantly down," Garcia said.

Another El Paso shelter, Casa del Sagrado Corazon, also saw fewer arrivals last year, prompting the closure of their shelter in September, according to Michael Debruhl, the shelter director.

A shelter in San Antonio, the Migrant Resource Center, [stopped](#) accepting new migrants last week due to low numbers.

At the respite center in McAllen run by Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, the low number of people had led to staff cuts even before they received notice they would no longer receive funds from the federal government.

Sister Norma Pimentel, the executive director of RGV Catholic Charities, said she received notice on Jan. 30 that the center would no longer be compensated for the shelter's expenses as they had been through the Shelter and Services Program.

Congress established that federal program, which is run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, during Trump's first term to reimburse local and state governments and nonprofits for providing emergency aid to migrants such as food and shelter.

"As it is, we were already cutting down staff because we don't have people come in anymore or the numbers are very, very low, like 10 or five," Pimentel said.

Despite the loss in federal funds and the small number of people arriving at the shelter, Pimentel said the respite center will continue to be available to those who need it.

"We will continue to operate as long as there's a need," Pimentel said. "If there are people who we can help, the church will always be present to help."

This story appears in the **Trump's Second Term** feature series. [View the full series.](#)