

America should have zero tolerance for the damage being inflicted on immigrant children.

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The Foundation for Child Development strongly opposes immigration policies that inflict harm upon children by severing familial bonds which threatens their well-being and emotional security. Research evidence demonstrates that immigration practices that separate children and families, such as “zero-tolerance” policies, have disastrous consequences for children. Splitting children from their families can create needless child trauma, putting thousands of children at risk for unhealthy development that can have serious consequences throughout life. Such separations must end, and children must be immediately reunited with their families to prevent further injury to children.

There is no question that children are caused great harm when separated from their parents.

Separating children from their families exposes them to emotional and psychological trauma that will lead to years of behavioral and learning problems that will be difficult to remediate. In research commissioned by the Foundation for Child Development, [Dr. Liseth Rojas-Flores](#) has shown significant traumatic impact on children who have deported or detained parents. Mental health and socio-economic risk factors such as PTSD symptoms, depression, poor functioning skills, and anxiety are just a few of the serious consequences.

Policies that isolate and allow indefinite detention of families needlessly places children in conditions that can harm their healthy development. Additional research found that children who witnessed the arrest of a parent at detention or deportation experienced higher levels of anxiety symptoms and mental health problems than those who did not.

We urge a return to more humane immigration practices and enforcement. Keep immigrant families together in environments where children have a fighting chance to thrive—and immediately reunite separated families. Doing any less is fundamentally destructive to children’s development in the immediate and in the long term.

The Foundation for Child Development joins the many child development experts, nonprofit organizations, and child advocates to express its deep concern about the impact of the zero-tolerance immigration policies on innocent children—and calls for an end to their practice.