

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION RESIDENT AND FELLOW SECTION

Resolution: 12
(I-26)

Introduced by: Rishab Chawla, MD, Parul Chhatpar, MD, Priya Gupta, MD, Sean de Leon, MD, Amanda Kahn, MD

Subject: Ensuring the Appropriate Placement of Children After Parental Deportation

Referred to: Reference Committee

Whereas, 5.8 million U.S. households are home to at least one undocumented resident, 5.5 million children in these households were born in the U.S., and 1.8 million children live in a household with two undocumented parents¹; and

Whereas, there is an estimated 145,000 U.S. citizen children with one parent in immigration detention, and more than 22,000 of these children have two parents in custody^{2,3}; and

Whereas, approximately 36.5% of these children are <6 years old, 36.1% aged 6-12, and 27.4% aged 13-17²; and

Whereas, parental detention and deportation can disrupt established family caregiving arrangements and impose substantial economic and societal costs associated with providing continued care for affected U.S.-born children¹; and

Whereas, separation from a primary caregiver during critical developmental periods removes the child's primary stress buffer, inducing toxic stress that impairs emotional co-regulation and physiologic functioning⁴; and

Whereas, U.S.-born Latino children ages 6-12 whose parents were detained or deported exhibited significantly greater post-traumatic stress symptoms, internalizing problems, suicidal ideation, and poorer overall functioning than peers without such exposure^{5,6}; and

Whereas, U.S.-citizen adolescents who recently experienced parental deportation had significantly worse health status and more behavioral problems than adolescents in comparable families⁷; and

Whereas, among 190 children affected by parental arrest, detention, or deportation, over half cried frequently and one-third had concurrent sleep, eating, and crying disturbances persisting beyond nine months, worsening with longer separation⁸; and

Whereas, judicial precedent, federal child welfare law, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Directive 11064.4 recognize parental rights in determining the placement of their children, but do not mandate safety screening of designated caregivers before placement⁹⁻¹¹; and

Whereas, ICE does not always follow Directive 11064.4, particularly in cases where a final order of removal was issued, and the individual is deported rapidly^{12,13}; and

Whereas, federal oversight has found that ICE does not consistently document detained

1 parents' custody preferences or track whether children were placed with a designated caregiver,
2 leaving no auditable record of placement decisions prior to removal^{14,15}; and
3

4 Whereas, immigration enforcement-related parental separation is associated with increased
5 foster care entry, and the absence of a standardized federal process has left families reliant on
6 informal arrangements outside child welfare systems and states with fragmented caregiver
7 designation mechanisms^{13,16}; and
8

9 Whereas, such informal arrangements culminated in the murder of a child after his mother was
10 deported¹⁷; and
11

12 Whereas, children held in ICE or contracted detention facilities have faced unsanitary conditions
13 and inadequate access to medical care, food, and water, with a congressional investigation
14 citing credible reports of human rights abuses¹⁸; and
15

16 Whereas, ICE data fields implemented in September 2025 on detained parents and their minor
17 children do not capture the physical, developmental, behavioral, or mental-health outcomes of
18 affected children¹⁹; and
19

20 Whereas, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent
21 Psychiatry, and American Psychiatric Association have policies that recommend trauma
22 evaluation and care coordination, and support expeditious reunification of children separated
23 from their parents²⁰⁻²²; and
24

25 Whereas, current AMA policy addresses the health and wellbeing of children during deportation
26 proceedings, but not after, or the parent's autonomy in deciding where their child is placed; and
27

28 Whereas, the scale and severity of harm to U.S.-citizen children of deported parents stands in
29 contrast to the absence of any federal process for honoring parental placement decisions,
30 screening substitute caregivers, reporting these children's health outcomes, or connecting them
31 to timely health and social services; therefore be it
32

33 RESOLVED, that our American Medical Association (AMA) support policies that preserve the
34 ability of parents or primary caregivers who are detained or deported to participate in decisions
35 regarding their child's health and wellbeing, including designation of an appropriate caregiver,
36 consistent with the child's safety and applicable law; and be it further
37

38 RESOLVED, that our AMA advocate for safe, timely, culturally and linguistically appropriate,
39 and trauma-informed processes to ensure continuity of health care for children experiencing
40 immigration enforcement-related separation from a parent or primary caregiver; and be it further
41

42 RESOLVED, that our AMA support privacy-protective mechanisms for secure communication
43 between detained or deported parents and designated caregivers to facilitate continuity of care
44 and health care decision-making.
45

Fiscal Note: Modest

REFERENCES

1. Lisiecki M, Apruzzese G. Proposed 2024 mass deportation program would socially and economically devastate American families. Center for Migration Studies of New York. Published 2024. Accessed August 6, 2026. <https://cmsny.org/publications/2024-mass-deportation-program-devastate-american-families-101024/>
2. Howard L, Cancian M, Cantu N, Watson T. The administration has detained 400,000 immigrants: what do we know about their children? Brookings Institution. Published May 18, 2026. Accessed August 7, 2026. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-administration-has-detained-400000-immigrants-what-do-we-know-about-their-children/>

3. Powell E, Cancian M, Cantu N, Watson T. How many children are affected by parental immigrant detention? Brookings Institution. Published 2026. Accessed August 6, 2026. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-many-children-are-affected-by-parental-immigrant-detention/>
4. Martinez-Donate A, Rangel MG, Lieberman JT, et al. Between the lines: a mixed-methods study on the impacts of parental deportation on the health and well-being of U.S. citizen children. *J Migr Health*. 2024;9:100233. doi:10.1016/j.jmh.2024.100233
5. Roche KM, White RMB, Lambert SF, et al. Association of family member detention or deportation with Latino or Latina adolescents' later risks of suicidal ideation, alcohol use, and externalizing problems. *JAMA Pediatrics*. 2020;174(5):478-486. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2020.0014
6. Rojas-Flores L, Clements ML, Hwang Koo J, London J. Trauma and psychological distress in Latino citizen children following parental detention and deportation. *Psychol Trauma*. 2017;9(3):352-361. doi:10.1037/tra0000177
7. Chaudry A, Capps R, Pedroza JM, Castañeda RM, Santos R, Scott MM. Facing Our Future: Children in the Aftermath of Immigration Enforcement. Urban Institute; 2010. Accessed August 7, 2026. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/28331/412020-Facing-Our-Future.PDF>
8. *Troxel v Granville*, 530 US 57 (2000).
9. Child welfare: state plan requirements under the Title IV-E Foster Care, Adoption Assistance, and Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program. Congressional Research Service. Published 2025. Accessed August 6, 2026. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R42794>
10. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Detention and removal of alien parents or legal guardians. Directive 11064.4. US Department of Homeland Security; August 29, 2022. Accessed August 7, 2026. <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/policy/11064.4.pdf>
11. Dickerson C. [Article title]. *The Atlantic*. Published May 2026. Accessed August 6, 2026. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/2026/05/honduras-deportations-without-children/687153/>
12. Velasco K, Lisiecki M, Watson T. What will deportations mean for the child welfare system? Brookings Institution. Published 2025. Accessed August 6, 2026. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-will-deportations-mean-for-the-child-welfare-system/>
13. Marcus J. ICE blames a mother it deported for her two-year-old son's alleged murder in the US months later. *Yahoo News*. Published May 16, 2026. Accessed August 7, 2026. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/ice-blames-mother-deported-her-154138729.html>
14. US Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General. ICE did not consistently provide separated migrant parents the opportunity to bring their children upon removal. Published May 17, 2021. Accessed August 7, 2026. <https://www.oversight.gov/reports/audit/ice-did-not-consistently-provide-separated-migrant-parents-opportunity-bring-their>
15. Amuedo-Dorantes C, Arenas-Arroyo E. Split families and the future of children: immigration enforcement and foster care placements. *AEA Pap Proc*. 2018;108:368-372. doi:10.1257/pandp.20181104
16. Sacchetti M. She was deported without her toddler. Then ICE blamed her for his killing. *Washington Post*. Published May 16, 2026. Accessed August 6, 2026. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2026/05/16/she-was-deported-without-her-toddler-then-ice-blamed-her-his-murder/>
17. Freyer FJ. Health hazards in ICE detention centers. *Am J Nurs*. 2026;126(8):12-13. doi:10.1097/AJN.0000000000000356
18. US Government Accountability Office. Immigration enforcement: arrests, detentions, and removals, and issues related to selected populations. Published 2021. Accessed August 6, 2026. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-36>
19. Linton JM, Griffin M, Shapiro AJ. Detention of immigrant children. *Pediatrics*. 2017;139(5). doi:10.1542/peds.2017-0483
20. Linton JM, Green A; Council on Community Pediatrics. Providing care for children in immigrant families. *Pediatrics*. 2019;144(3). doi:10.1542/peds.2019-2077
21. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Separating immigrant children from their families. Published 2017. Accessed August 6, 2026. https://www.aacap.org/aacap/Policy_Statements/2018/Separating_Immigrant_Children_From_Their_Families.aspx
22. American Psychiatric Association. Position Statement on the Mental Health Needs of Immigrant and Refugee Children, Adolescents, and Their Families. American Psychiatric Association; 2019. Accessed August 7, 2026. <https://www.psychiatry.org/getattachment/52f4041f-e375-4855-8065-7a406b2b2cc1/Position-Immigration-Children-Adolescents-and-their-Families.pdf>

RELEVANT AMA POLICY

Care of Women and Children in Family Immigration Detention H-350.955

1. Our AMA recognizes the negative health consequences of the detention of families seeking safe haven.
2. Due to the negative health consequences of detention, our AMA opposes the expansion of family immigration detention in the United States.
3. Our AMA opposes the separation of parents from their children who are detained while seeking safe haven.
4. Our AMA will advocate for access to health care for women and children in immigration detention.
5. Our AMA will advocate for the preferential use of alternatives to detention programs that respect the human dignity of immigrants, migrants, and asylum seekers who are in the custody of federal agencies.
6. Our AMA advocates for the implementation of evidence-based, child-centered, and trauma-informed policies across all detention centers, ensuring detained minors have access to developmentally appropriate socioemotional care, including physical contact, and for all detained people, free, unfettered communication access including regular in-person communication, phone calls, and letters.

7. Our AMA supports efforts to address and mitigate concerns and accusations of child abuse and neglect in detention centers.

Consideration of the Health and Welfare of U.S. Minor Children in Deportation Proceedings Against Their Undocumented Parents D-60.966

Our AMA: (1) supports that the mental health, physical well-being, and welfare of U.S. citizen minors should be taken into consideration in determining whether undocumented parents of U.S. citizen minors may be detained or deported; and (2) will work with local and state medical societies and other relevant stakeholders to address the importance of considering the health and welfare of U.S. citizen minors in cases where the parents of those minors are in danger of detention or deportation.

Mental Health Issues and Use of Psychotropic Drugs for Undocumented Immigrant Children H-60.905

1. Our AMA objects to policies separating undocumented, immigrant parents or guardians from children.
2. Our AMA only supports the practice of administering psychotropic drugs to immigrant children when there has been evaluation by appropriate medical personnel, and with parental or guardian consent or court order except in the case of imminent danger to self or others.
3. Our AMA (a) supports education for immigration officials regarding increased risk of sexual assault and sexual trauma amongst unaccompanied minor immigrant children, as well as the emotional decompensation in this immigrant population due to these abuses and other traumas, and (b) encourages policies designed to decrease incidence of sexual assault, increase reporting and timely access to treatment services, and decrease stress and emotional trauma.