

Children's HealthWatch is a nonpartisan network of pediatricians, public health researchers, and children's health and policy experts. We adamantly oppose the cruel and inhumane process of separating children from their parents at the border currently being employed by US Government agencies. We urge in the strongest terms possible that the separations be discontinued immediately, and that all detained children be immediately returned to their parents' custody and provided restorative trauma-informed care.

Science from Children's HealthWatch and others has supported the basic American values that children thrive when their families have the support and encouragement to be able to keep them safe, healthy, well-fed, and stably housed. The long-term security and prosperity of our country, and of other countries, depends on how we treat all children and families, regardless of where they are born. Our research over the past 20 years has documented that the harmful effects that economic hardships, violence, discrimination, and other adverse childhood experiences have on the health, development, and well-being of young children extends to adulthood and into the next generation.¹

The damaging process of separating children, especially young children, from their parents when they attempt to enter the US, many of them seeking asylum², and placing children in makeshift detention facilities is counter to American values and to the evidence shown by Children's HealthWatch. We are also particularly alarmed by the practice of removing young children and placing them in "tender age shelters."³ The first years of life are crucial for healthy growth and development. Exposure to trauma and disruption during this critical window has grave impacts on the long-term physical, emotional, cognitive and mental health of infants and toddlers.^{4,5} We join the protests expressed by policymakers, professional organizations, and citizens throughout the country that this Administration's practice of separating young children from their parents be stopped immediately.

¹ Sun J, Patel F, Rose-Jacobs R, Frank DA, Black MM, Chilton M. Mothers' adverse childhood experiences and their young children's development. *Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2017;53(6):882-891. Available at: <http://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/Mothers%E2%80%99-Adverse-Childhood-Experiences-and-Their.pdf>

² Rosenberg M. Nearly 1,800 families separated at U.S.-Mexico border in 17 months through February. Reuters, 8 June 2018. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-children-exclusive/exclusive-nearly-1800-families-separated-at-us-mexico-border-in-17-months-through-february-idUSKCN1J42UE>

³ The Associated Press. Youngest migrants held in 'Tender Age' shelters. New York Times, 19 June 2018. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2018/06/19/us/ap-us-immigration-toddlers-detained.html>

⁴ Shonkoff JP, Garner AS, Siegel BS, Dobbins MI, Earls MF, Garnder AS, et al. The lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress. *Pediatrics*, 2012;129(1):e232-e246.

⁵ Chu AT and Lieberman AF. Clinical implications of traumatic stress from birth to age five. *Annu Rev Clin Psychol*, 2010;6:469-94.