



Statement on US Government Plan to Deport Guatemalan Children

September 2, 2025

Over Labor Day weekend, the US government attempted to deport approximately 75 unaccompanied children from Guatemala overnight. Lawyers for the children say the plan was to expel them without notice or a chance to contest deportation, in some cases cutting short ongoing immigration proceedings. A federal judge issued an emergency order stopping the removals and temporarily allowing the children to remain in the United States.

Children's HealthWatch is deeply troubled by this situation. Our expertise in pediatric health has shown us the harmful connection between indiscriminate immigration enforcement and risks to children's well-being.

Trauma in a child's early years can have [lasting consequences](#) for their [physical, emotional, cognitive, and mental health](#). Research also shows that children whose parents know someone who has been deported are [2.4 times more likely](#) to be referred for or diagnosed with a developmental disorder. A similar, and often more severe, impact on young children directly exposed to the fear and uncertainty of deportation [has been documented](#).

"The government has a responsibility to ensure that children in their custody are properly cared for," says Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, Executive Director of Children's HealthWatch. "This means treating them with dignity, providing for their basic needs, and respecting their due process rights to a full and fair review of their circumstances. Fear and uncertainty harm children's mental and physical well-being. And for children who are at risk of danger after deportation, the government's duty to protect their health and safety is even more urgent."

We applaud the swift action of the justice system to protect unaccompanied children and urge the Administration to live up to our Constitution's guarantee of due process rights for ALL people, including children.

About Children's HealthWatch: *Founded in 1998, Children's HealthWatch is a nonpartisan network of pediatricians, public health researchers, and children's health and policy experts committed to improving children's health in America. The network collects real-time data in urban hospitals across the country on infants and toddlers from families facing economic hardship, then analyzes and shares its findings with academics, legislators, and the public.*