



**GLOBAL ALLIANCE**  
for Behavioral Health and Social Justice

## Resolution on Comprehensive Asylum-Seeking Family Reunification

*An official statement from the Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice (formerly American Orthopsychiatric Association)*

The Global Alliance embeds its work in principles of social justice and human rights to promote equity, behavioral health, and well-being for all. In recognition of this commitment, we ardently oppose family separation practices and policies within the United States (U.S.) immigration process. Further, we are committed to addressing the physical and psychological harms caused by family separation through reunification and comprehensive individual and community supports.



### Key Facts of Family Separation

- More than 5,500 families were separated under the Trump Administration
- Most of the children separated were under 12 years of age
- When the separation policy began, there was no plan to reunite separated families
- There are more than 500 parents still missing due to U.S. government deportations

The government-sanctioned act of separating children from their families is a human rights' violation per international law. Families from Latin America are driven from their countries of origin to seek asylum in the U.S. to escape crime and violence, economic insecurity and deprivation, government and police corruption, and climate disasters. Yet, in a failed attempt to deter asylum seekers from coming to the U.S., the former presidential administration implemented a formal policy to separate families at the Southern border. This "zero-tolerance" family separation policy received swift condemnation from legal, human rights, and children's advocacy groups worldwide, but thousands of families had already

been irreparably harmed by the time the policy ended. The current presidential administration must now remediate the harm inflicted upon these families.

The Biden administration has begun the slow process of reuniting families; however, the government must also consider the long-term and enduring impacts that many children and families will suffer because of the separations. Children will likely experience lifelong developmental, emotional, and behavioral challenges. To address the traumas associated with family separation, children and their families will need intensive community, educational, behavioral, emotional, and medical support. Many separated asylum-seeking family members have already been deported to their countries of origin where they are still threatened with persecution, and they cannot access the necessary supports only available in high resource settings like the U.S., which is in contradiction to the core principle of non-refoulement in the *Geneva Refugee Convention*.

The Global Alliance firmly believes that family reunification must occur quickly and comprehensively. The U.S. government must take responsibility and ensure that the affected families have accessible and

affordable support. This necessitates immediate reunification of all separated families along with the following expectations:

- Complete transparency to the public regarding all family reunification efforts and continued support
- Provision of protected statuses or visas to separated families, including families that have already been deported
- Governmental financial assistance and affordable health insurance for families to access culturally/linguistically responsive and trauma-informed healthcare including mental health services
- Assistance for family and child support services that enable immigrant families to navigate U.S. society and services
- Investment in community-centered programs and systems that advocate for and interact with immigrant families and children, including but not limited to education, language services, career services, and legal services

<p><b>Additional Resources</b></p> <p>American Civil Liberties Union  <a href="https://www.aclu.org/families-belong-together">https://www.aclu.org/families-belong-together</a></p> <p>American Immigration Council:  <a href="https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org">https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org</a></p> <p>Families Belong Together  <a href="https://www.familiesbelongtogether.org/about/">https://www.familiesbelongtogether.org/about/</a></p> <p>Immigrant Legal Resource Center:  <a href="http://www.ilrc.org">http://www.ilrc.org</a></p> <p>International Justice Resource Center:  <a href="https://ijrcenter.org/">https://ijrcenter.org/</a></p> <p>Migration Policy Institute:  <a href="https://www.migrationpolicy.org">https://www.migrationpolicy.org</a></p> <p>Universal Declaration of Human Rights:  <a href="http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/">http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/</a></p>	<p><b>Relevant Articles from <i>American Journal of Orthopsychiatry</i></b></p> <p>Brabeck, K. M., Lykes, M. B., &amp; Hunter, C. (2014). The psychosocial impact of detention and deportation on U.S. Migrant children and families. doi: <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ort0000011">http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ort0000011</a></p> <p>Kronick, R., Rousseau, C., &amp; Cleveland, J. (2015). Asylum-seeking children’s experiences of detention in Canada: A qualitative study. <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ort0000061">http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ort0000061</a></p> <p>McLeigh, J. D. (2010). How do immigration and customs enforcement (ICE) practices affect the mental health of children? <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.2010.01011.x">https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.2010.01011.x</a></p> <p>Miller, A., Hess, J. M., Bybee, D., &amp; Goodkind, J. R. (2018). Understanding the mental health consequences of family separation for refugees: Implications for policy and practice. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000272">https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000272</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>How Can You Help?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate yourself and others about stereotypes, stigma, and human rights violations against immigrant families and the impacts on behavioral and physical health</li> <li>• Contact your government representatives to support legislation to reunify and aid families separated by the U.S. immigration</li> <li>• Volunteer your time or donate to a non-profit organization that advocates for and/or provides myriad resettlement services for immigrant communities</li> <li>• Participate in or organize a community event to support immigrant communities</li> </ul>	

*Principally drafted by Cori Tergesen with contributions by Wendy de los Reyes, Gita Jaffe, Kirby Magid and the Global Mental Health and Migrants and Displaced Persons Task Forces.*