

SDBP statement related to the separation of children from families at the border:
July 18, 2018

Individuals and families from Central America are coming to the U.S. to seek asylum due to the violence, intimidation and threats in their home countries. There also continues to be attempted entry into the U.S. by immigrants seeking opportunities for a better life for themselves and their children.

On April 6, 2018 Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a “zero-tolerance” policy regarding attempted illegal entry into the U.S. This policy led to incarceration for adults and separation of children to a variety of holding situations.

Children and parents belong together. Children who are separated from their primary caregivers may experience toxic stress and a disruption of attachment that can have severe emotional, behavioral and physical implications. Depending on the age of the child and the circumstances of the separation, there can be long-term effects such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, learning problems, or substance abuse.

Children should not be confined in unfamiliar locations without their parents. Children who have been separated from their caregivers should be returned to their families as soon as possible. In the meantime, they should receive emotional support, nurturing and age-appropriate intervention to help mitigate the effects of the separation. Children should also not be given psychotropic medications without the knowledge and consent of their parents.

As professionals in the field of Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics, we have grave concern that the current practices at the U.S.-Mexico border will lead to a different kind of “border crisis” – in which a generation of children will experience lifelong repercussions as a result of our misguided approach to immigration enforcement. SDBP supports legislation that provides for family unity and humane treatment of children and families who are awaiting adjudication of their immigration cases. SDBP opposes legislative policies and practices that separate children and parents and that fail to take into consideration children’s unique developmental needs.

Background information has been gathered by SDBP Advocacy committee and can be found on our Website under Advocacy committee.

You can find information on how to contact your US congress people by going to <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>. It is important that your voice is heard!

Society for Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics