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May 29, 2018

Statement of APA President Regarding the Traumatic Effects of Separating Immigrant Families

WASHINGTON — Following is the statement of APA President Jessica Henderson Daniel, PhD, regarding the deleterious impact on the health and well-being of children and families who are separated as they seek to enter the United States without proper documentation:

“The administration’s policy of separating children from their families as they attempt to cross into the United States without documentation is not only needless and cruel, it threatens the mental and physical health of both the children and their caregivers. Psychological research shows that immigrants experience unique stressors related to the conditions that led them to flee their home countries in the first place. The longer that children and parents are separated, the greater the reported symptoms of anxiety and depression for the children. Negative outcomes for children include psychological distress, academic difficulties and disruptions in their development.

“The American Psychological Association calls on the administration to rescind this policy and keep immigrant families intact (</advocacy/immigration/index.aspx>) . We support practical, humane immigration policies that consider the needs of immigrants, and particularly immigrant families. We must adopt policies that take into account what we know about the harmful, long-term psychological effects of separation on children and their families. This is not an acceptable policy to counter unlawful immigration.”

The American Psychological Association, in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. APA's membership includes nearly 115,700 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 54 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives.

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