

President's Statement: Separating Children from Families

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) is a medical association representing physicians dedicated to the health of children and families around the globe. As such, we know that children who experience sudden separation from one or both parents, especially under frightening, unpredictable, and chaotic circumstances, are at higher risk for developing illnesses such as anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorders (PTSD), and other trauma-induced reactions.

This is especially the case for children who are fleeing war, violence, and other traumatic situations from their home countries. Parental support is an essential and proven protective factor that substantially reduces risk for adverse health and developmental outcomes for children. Separating these children from their families in times of stress creates unnecessary and high-risk trauma at the very time they need care and support the most.

As child and adolescent psychiatrists, we know that pulling families apart can often cause harm. It is our responsibility as physicians to put an end to the idea and practice of separating vulnerable children from their families, including high-risk immigrant children. AACAP strongly opposes any policy or legislation that separates children and families in these stressful situations.

Sincerely,

Karen Dineen Wagner, MD, PhD
President, AACAP