Policy Statement

The detention and separation of immigrant children from their parents is unjust, inhumane, illegal, and a national tragedy. The Association of Black Nursing Faculty joins hundreds of nursing and medical organizations in calling for the reunification of these children with their parents with all deliberate speed. The process of forced separation of children from their parents is reminiscent of the cruel enslavement of African Americans in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and the 20th century removal of young Native American Indian children from their parents for the purpose of indoctrination and relocation to missionary boarding schools across the United States. In both of these instances, the children and their parents suffered wounds that were lifelong traumatic historical events. Now in the 21st, children, most of who are black and brown babies and children from countries south of the United States border, are subject to a historical pattern rooted in an ideology of white male supremacy and bigotry. It is a deliberate aggressive act of trauma imposed on these children and their families.

The impact of the separation of children from their parents represents a major catastrophic traumatic event in a child’s life. Over the past twenty years, numerous studies document the lifelong health effects of parental separation from children. For example, childhood experiences of parental separation are associate with increased risks of schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, chronic depression, psychosis, alcohol and injection drug use disorders, sex work, and premature death from the leading causes of death (Felitti et al., 1998, Brown, et al., 2009; Wu et al., 2010; Duhig et al, 2015; Pakarzian et al., 2015; Bohman, Låftman, Päären, & Jonsson, 2017; Larson, Chapman, Spetz, & Brindis, 2017).

Purpose

Above all, the Association of Black Nursing Faculty calls for the reunification of children with their families, humane, legal and moral treatment of children and their families throughout the immigration process upon entering our southern borders.

Recommendations

We urge the federal government to cease from exposing children to the traumatic conditions in immigrant detention centers, such as, forcing them in metal cages with no bathing facilities, extreme hot and cold temperatures, open toilets, cement floors for sleeping and sitting for extended periods, inadequate food and water, and environments void of empathy and caring.

These children and their families should have their 14th Amendment, due process rights, which are guaranteed by the United States Constitution to every person regardless of citizenship. These children and their parents should have legal representation throughout the immigration process. Immigrant parents should not be coerced to plead guilty to any charge against them, and face deportation from the United States without their children.

References


ABNF Statement on the
Detention and Separation of Children and Families Entering the US

258. doi:10.1016/S0749-3797(98)00017-8


Web Links

Joint Letter Signed by Nursing Organizations

The following list of nursing organizations represents those organizations that have signed off on the joint statement to the US Secretary of Homeland Security urging the US government to end the policy on separation of immigrant children at the borders:

American Academy of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Nephrology Nurses Association
American Nurses Association
American Organization of Nurse Executives
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Society for Pain Management Nursing
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses
Association of Public Health Nurses
Association of Veterans Affairs Nurse Anesthetists
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Dermatology Nurses' Association
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
International Association of Forensic Nurses
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists
National Association of Hispanic Nurses
National Association of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Neonatal Nurses
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Nurses
National Black Nurses Association
National Council of State Boards of Nursing
National Forum of State Nursing Workforce Centers
National League for Nursing
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium
Oncology Nursing Society
Organization for Associate Degree Nursing