



For Immediate Release: January 25, 2017

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AAP Statement on Protecting Immigrant Children

by: Fernando Stein, MD, FAAP, President, American Academy of Pediatrics

"The mission of the American Academy of Pediatrics is to protect the health and well-being of all children—no matter where they or their parents were born. Following today's immigration-focused Executive Orders signed by President Donald Trump, the Academy underscores continued commitment to our mission and reiterates our support for immigrant children and their families.

"Immigrant families are our neighbors, they are part of every community, and they are our patients. The Executive Orders signed today are harmful to immigrant children and families throughout our country. Many of the children who will be most affected are the victims of unspeakable violence and have been exposed to trauma. Children do not immigrate, they flee. They are coming to the U.S. seeking safe haven in our country and they need our compassion and assistance. Broad scale expansion of family detention only exacerbates their suffering.

"Far too many children in this country already live in constant fear that their parents will be taken into custody or deported, and the message these children received today from the highest levels of our federal government exacerbates that fear and anxiety. No child should ever live in fear. When children are scared, it can impact their health and development. Indeed, fear and stress, particularly prolonged exposure to serious stress – known as toxic stress – can harm the developing brain and negatively impact short- and long-term health.

"The American Academy of Pediatrics is non-partisan and pro-children. We urge President Trump and his Administration to ensure that children and families who are fleeing violence and adversity can continue to seek refuge in our country. Immigrant children and families are an integral part of our communities and our nation, and they deserve to be cared for, treated with compassion, and celebrated. Most of all, they deserve to be healthy and safe. Pediatricians stand with the immigrant families we care for and will continue to advocate that their needs are met and prioritized."

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