



Separating Families Has Lasting Consequences

When provided the opportunity, refugees become key contributors to the nation's economic vitality. International [research](#) has shown that refugees enter the workforce, boost native-born workers' wages, and increase job opportunities. Instead of welcoming these new American families into the social and economic fabric of our nation, the Trump administration is tearing them apart.

From May 5 to June 9, 2018, the Trump administration forcibly removed 2,342 children from their parents as part of its new zero-tolerance policy. That policy classifies all immigrants who enter without inspection as criminal violators. The administration may view separating children and families as a short-term negotiating tactic, but these actions will have lasting consequences for children. We know that traumatic experiences like these harm children's future health, education, and economic outcomes.

Refugee children often have traumatic experiences before, during, and after their journey to a new country. In order to be [eligible for asylum](#), refugees must have experienced persecution in their home countries. Experiences after arrival in the U.S. can subject families to more trauma and impact their abilities to integrate into American society.

Breaking up families further [increases stress](#) and robs children of the necessary buffer and comfort that a parent provides. Children who experience isolation and peer conflict are more likely to [engage in risky](#) or delinquent behavior. Chronic stress rewires the young brain and [impairs concentration](#) and memory, leading to difficulties learning, poor emotional health, disorderly conduct, and anxiety. For the over 2,300 children already torn from their families, these experiences will follow them long past today.

The administration has now announced that it plans to detain children and families together. We know, however, that detention also harms children. Studies [show](#) that children in detention display negative physical and emotional symptoms and can later experience post-traumatic symptoms, developmental delays, and difficulty functioning in school.

Extensive research shows that experiencing trauma and stress as a child leads to worse long-term economic outcomes. Having [four or more](#) adverse childhood experiences is associated with being 1.6 times more likely to be in poverty as an adult, and 2.3 times more likely to not graduate high school and be unemployed.

There are proven alternatives to detention that cost less and do not inflict additional trauma on families. The president's budget estimates that detaining families [costs \\$319 per person per day](#),

compared to alternatives that [cost one-twentieth](#) that amount or less while accomplishing the same goals.

After a family is approved for asylum, robust integration services, including trauma-informed educational services, mental health services, and other wraparound services, can help children and [refugees](#) start [new lives](#) in America. Instead of setting up children and families to fail, we should be investing in their success as future Americans.