



The Association for Child & Adolescent Counseling

June 20, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Trump,

On behalf of the Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling (ACAC), a division of the American Counseling Association (ACA), we are writing to convey our concern for the children forcibly separated from their parents at the border and detained in DHS and HHS facilities. We also respectfully request that the current government administration immediately reunite separated families. We have ample scientific and historical data, which identifies the abusive nature of these experiences on children and provides evidence of long-lasting negative mental health, physical health, and economic impacts on individuals who experience this type of trauma, as well as the communities in which they live.

Scientific evidence indicates these relationally traumatic experiences create long lasting negative effects on individuals and communities:

- There is a tremendous amount of research spanning decades indicating that experiences result in relational trauma, also called Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) by the Centers for Disease Control, who has published findings from large-scale public health studies conducted by Kaiser Permanente, a large insurance company. These studies demonstrate negative effect of ACEs on health and wellbeing and financial impacts to the country resulting from ACEs (CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html>)
- Relational trauma is considered toxic stress resulting in a child's development of an overly sensitive autonomic nervous system (ANS), resulting in chronically higher levels of stress hormones, like cortisol, and hypervigilance (CDC, 2014; Middlebrooks & Audage, n.d.; WHO, n.d.). Hypervigilance results if a person is living in an environment with chronic threats to his/her health or safety, then the brain becoming more sensitive to environmental threats, which is actually adaptive. However, this over-activation signals a change in brain development in both structure and functioning.

- According to the Child Trauma Academy's Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT; Perry, 2006), recently highlighted by Oprah Winfrey, indicates that the younger a child is when experiencing trauma, the more likely there will be lasting neurobiological impacts (<https://chronicleofsocialchange.org/child-welfare-2/oprah-putting-trauma-informed-care-bruce-perry-front-center>).
- We also know that relational trauma manifesting in changes in neurobiological functioning can have lifetime negative effects on their ability to develop empathy, particularly for young (0-3 year old) children (Hare, 1993; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2005).
- Research indicates that traumatized children develop higher rates of physical illness, mental illness, addiction, and criminal behavior (CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/cestudy/index.html>)

Historical evidence indicates government enforced child separation from ethnic and religious minority parents results in negative outcomes for individuals and community health.

- **Native American Children:** The Dawes Act of 1887 resulted the U.S. government removing very young indigenous children from their homes and placing them in assimilation-model boarding schools so they would become 'Americanized' (Holm, 2007; Prucha, 1984). The government acknowledged this as a 'wrong' action by passing the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA; Pub. L. 95-608) in 1978 to address concerns about placement of indigenous children with non-native families or institutions (Barbell & Freundlich, 2001).
- **African Children:** The Smithsonian's Museum of African American History and Culture documents the history of enslaved children being separated from their parents as part of the "Weeping Time" exhibit. The voices we hear in these narratives demonstrate the terror experienced by these parents and children at the time (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/05/31/barbaric-americas-cruel-history-of-separating-children-from-their-parents/?utm_term=.45a1f3120e01).
- **Jewish Children:** During WWII, the Nazi party separated Jewish children from their parents, placing each in separate concentration camps. Now in their 70's and 80's these individuals recount the terror experienced from this separation (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/18/separation-children-parents-families-us-border-trump>; <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hidden-children-of-the-holocasut>).
- **Japanese-American Children:** President Roosevelt authorized Japanese Relocation in Executive Order 9066. We have documented first person accounts from the children (now adults) who were separated from their parents in Japanese Internment Camps. They tell us that they experienced these detention facilities as 'prison camps' and were traumatized in such a way that has lasted throughout their lifetimes (<https://splinternews.com/a-former-japanese-internment-camp-prisoner-on-the-dire>

[1826858234](#)). Additionally, Executive Order 9066 violated the 5th Amendment's guarantee that no one will be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law and under the equal protection guarantee (<https://www.quora.com/How-did-the-Executive-Order-9066-violate-the-constitution>).

- **Scientific studies demonstrate evidence that there is an intergenerational/transgenerational transmission of trauma**, which explains how these types of traumatic experiences affect not only one group of children, but the generations of children that follow them in their own families and cultures (Braga, Mello, & Fiks, 2012; Brown-Rice, 2013; Danieli, 1998; Daud, Skoglund, & Rydelius, 2005; Dekel & Goldblatt, 2008; Freyberg, 1980; Sigal, 1971; Sorscher & Cohen, 1997; Starman, 2006; Yehuda, Schmeidler, Wainberg, Binder-Byrnes, & Duvdevani, 1998; Yehuda, Halligan, & Grossman, 2001; Rieck, 1994; Nadler, Kav-Venaki, & Gleitman, 1985; Sagi-Schwartz, van Ijzendoorn, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2008). For an explanation of this process see Portney, 2003 Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma: An Introduction for the Clinician <http://www.psychiatrytimes.com/comorbidity-psychiatry/intergenerational-transmission-trauma-introduction-clinician>.

We ask that you consider the overwhelming multi-disciplinary peer-reviewed scientific evidence demonstrating the negative impact on individuals and communities related to child separation from parents into camp-like facilities. Additionally, we strongly urge you to immediately reunite children with their families as we believe these actions to be inconsistent with the values of the American people.

Sincerely,

Catherine Tucker

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