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Separating Immigrant Families Is Harmful and Cruel Say Leading Mental Health and Social Justice Groups

December 2017 – New York, NY – It was announced last week that the Trump Administration is considering a punitive plan that would separate children from their parents when undocumented families are caught entering the country.. This deliberate, inhumane action of separating parents and children, not only goes against the norms of social justice, but also against the findings of child development studies: Children separated from their parents, especially from their mothers, suffer great harm. There is a large body of literature documenting that parental separation has profound negative effects on children's "psychological well-being, scholastic achievement, social relationships, and adult socioeconomic status". The impact of the stress resulting from forced separations lasts a lifetime. Trauma is also inflicted on parents who are rendered helpless to protect their children.

Separating children from their parents based on immigration status is an act of cruelty. Children need a safe and secure environment where they can thrive - physically, emotionally, socially, and academically. The family is the building block of a healthy society and provides the caring environment where children develop that personal sense of security and belonging critical to their ability to excel in all their undertakings. Many immigrants come to the U.S. to give their children a better life and future than was ever possible for them in their homeland. These immigrants are hard-working and contribute to the vitality and vibrancy of our country. Their only wish is their hope that they, and their children, be given the opportunity to prove themselves as contributing members of our American society.

We urge Krisjien Neilson, Secretary of Homeland Security, to refuse to endorse this inhumane and harmful policy.

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