



Crossing the Line: An Inside Look at Family Separation

Webinar Toolkit

Background

The situation of migrant children and families on our southern border is complex and changing rapidly. Please keep in mind that new information is coming out daily.

Back in May 2017, LIRS started reporting a significant increase in [family separation](#) at our southern border and, in recent months we've seen a startling acceleration in this trend. From May 6 through May 19 alone, 658 children were separated from their parents, and this number has now climbed to **over 2,300 separated children**. This is a direct result of the [“zero-tolerance” policy](#) announced by Attorney General Jeff Sessions on May 7, 2018, which criminally charges all apprehended parents – including asylum seekers – crossing into the United States between ports of entry. The Department of Homeland Security claims that family separation is (a) a protective measure for children whose parents/guardians cannot immediately provide and proof of relationship, and (b) a “deterrent” for future families looking to cross the border into safety.

The facts are: desperate families fleeing domestic and gang violence will not be deterred when staying in Central America means risking the lives of their children and loved ones.

On June 20, President Trump caved to increasing political pressure and public outrage by issuing a [new Executive Order](#) that was portrayed as putting an end to family separation. This Executive Order *does not guarantee a halt to family separation*, and it provides *no solution for previously separated families*. Additionally, the directive calls for **indefinite family detention** – that is, children will be imprisoned with their parents in federal detention facilities, violating the 20-day detainment limit established by the [Flores Agreement](#) (read more from our colleagues at the Women’s Refugee Commission [here](#)).

While 500 separated children have been reportedly reunited with their families, the administration has presented *no plan to reunite the remaining children and families*.

Alternatives

There are many alternatives to detention, such as releasing individuals on their own recognizance, on parole, to a sponsor or family member in the United States, or to a community support program. Alternatives to detention that are currently used boast high compliance rates and cost, on average, just \$6 per day, per person. Learn more about [alternatives to detention here](#).

Talking points



The June 20th Executive Order implements indefinite detention of children and families crossing the border between ports of entry. Additionally, it does not guarantee an end to family separation.



While children are no longer being ripped from the arms of their parents for the sole purpose of deterring immigration, they will now go to jail with their parents.



Detention traumatizes families, undermines the basic family structure, and has devastating psycho-social impacts on children.



Indefinite family detention is a threat to family values and human dignity.



Indefinite family detention also ignores the fundamental principles of family unity that calls for individuals to be placed in the least restrictive setting and the right to expeditious processing.



Children belong with their families in the community, not in government custody and in facilities that are not designed for young children.

We ask you to . . .



Contact your members of Congress. Email, call, tweet ... even snail mail! Contact your members of Congress (1 representative, 2 senators) and urge them to immediately reunite separated families and put an end to indefinite family detention. A sample phone call and letter can be found below.



Donate. Your [monetary donation](#) to LIRS helps us to address the most urgent needs facing children and their families and enables us to maintain our capacity to serve them.



Educate, educate, educate. You can help to educate your family, friends, churches, and community groups. Organize and host discussions with a local LIRS partner, discuss family separation and detention with friends over coffee, or mobilize your church community to action. If you don't have a partner in your area, reach out to dc@lirs.org for assistance! *We encourage you to post pictures of your community education initiatives on social media using our hashtags – we'll re-share!*

Sample phone script

Call (202) 224-3121 three times (1 representative, 2 senators) to contact your members of Congress. You can find your members of Congress [here](#). Use this as a sample message during your calls:



"I am your constituent from [City, State], and I am deeply disturbed by the continued separation of families and the practice of indefinite family detention. I urge you to work with your colleagues in Congress to immediately reunite families and end indefinite family detention, and to provide a solution that preserves family values and human dignity at our border. Separation and indefinite family detention ignore the fundamental principles of family unity that call for families to be placed in the least restrictive setting and afforded the right to expeditious processing. As your constituent, I cannot in good conscience allow for this to continue. The safety and well-being of children and the integrity of our nation is at stake."

Sample letter

You can use the following letter to mail or email your three members of Congress:

The Honorable [Senator/Representative]
[room number] [Congressional office building]
Washington, DC [20510/20515]

Dear _____:

As your constituent, I am deeply disturbed by the practice of indefinite family detention and family separation among migrants. I urge you to work with your colleagues in Congress to end indefinite family detention and provide a solution that preserves family values and human dignity at our border. Indefinite family detention ignores the fundamental principles of family unity that call for families to be placed in the least restrictive setting and afforded the right to expeditious processing. As your constituent, I cannot in good conscience allow for this to continue. The safety and well-being of children and the integrity of our nation is at stake.



On June 20, 2018, President Trump signed an executive order that signaled a halt to the practice of "zero-tolerance" family separation, opting instead to imprison these children and families in federal detention centers. Since 2004, LIRS has closely monitored the conditions in family detention centers and the findings are appalling. Detention traumatizes families, undermines the basic family structure, and has a devastating psycho-social impact on children.

Since World War II, the U.S. has been the global leader in offering refuge to people escaping persecution, war or violence in their home country. We know the U.S. is capable of doing more and call on you to end indefinite family detention and family separation among migrants. Thank you for your public service, and please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
[Signature and address]

Social media actions

Don't forget to take your advocacy global – use **#KeepFamiliesTogether** and **#EndFamilyDetention** to give separated children and families a voice. *Share your discussion pictures and tag LIRS (@LIRSorg) on Facebook, Twitter, and Insta for LIRS to repost!*

Feel free to use any of the platform-specific content from the toolkit below, or share your own content using **#KeepFamiliesTogether** and **#EndFamilyDetention**

Facebook



Seeking asylum is a protected right under international AND US domestic law, yet families are being jailed every day for doing just that.

Join us in standing up for separated immigrant children and their families. Add a temporary profile picture using LIRS's frame, then get your friends to do the same.
#KeepFamiliesTogether #EndFamilyDetention



URGENT: Tonight, thousands of parents are wondering where their children are. Children remain forcibly separated from their families, and the government has not yet established a plan for family reunification.

Call your members of Congress and urge them to reunite families IMMEDIATELY. Congress needs to seek compassionate immigration reform that protects asylum seekers, maintains the sanctity of family unity, and doesn't jail children. **#KeepFamiliesTogether #EndFamilyDetention**

Twitter



2300: immigrant children separated by the US government since May
46: the average number of children separated per day, April 19-May 31
0: tolerance for "zero-tolerance"
#KeepFamiliesTogether #EndFamilyDetention



FACT: seeking asylum is a right protected under international AND domestic US law
FACT: the US government separated children from their families to "deter" desperate families from seeking asylum
FACT: we have a responsibility to speak up
#KeepFamiliesTogether #EndFamilyDetention



Congress & @POTUS: We are a nation of immigrants, founded on the ideal of offering freedom from violence and persecution. Seeking asylum is not a crime, but separating families is.
#KeepFamiliesTogether #EndFamilyDetention



@[Your Legislator]: Thousands of parents are wondering where their children are tonight. We urge you to seek compassionate immigration reform that protects asylum seekers, maintains the sanctity of family unity, and doesn't jail children. #KeepFamiliesTogether #EndFamilyDetention



FACT: Family detention jails children, causes trauma, and costs on average \$161.36 per person per day.

FACT: Alternatives to family detention boast high compliance rates, cost an average of \$6 per person per day, and are HUMANE.

#KeepFamiliesTogether #EndFamilyDetention



URGENT: The US is separating immigrant children from their families and jailing asylum-seekers. Call your members of Congress today and urge them to immediately halt family separation and family detention. #KeepFamiliesTogether #EndFamilyDetention

Instagram



Share your community action pics @LIRS with our LIRS photo frame! Don't forget to add our hashtags! #KeepFamiliesTogether #EndFamilyDetention