In June of 2018, the administration codified the practice of family separation at our border with the “Zero-Tolerance” immigration policy, resulting in thousands of children being ripped from the arms of their parents and placed in government custody. As a veteran provider of children and family services, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) was poised to respond to the crisis.

Through our longstanding partnership with the Office of Refugee Resettlement, LIRS provided immediate care and counseling to 148 children who had been separated from their parents. Meanwhile we continued to advocate boldly on the issue. As public outrage swelled, the administration announced a reversal of the policy. But for separated families, the damage could not be undone.

“At one point during her time with us, she colored a picture of Nemo from Finding Nemo and said that she felt like she was Nemo when she and her dad were separated.”

–FWD.us volunteer working with LIRS partner
Transitioning from the traumatic experience of separation, families under LIRS’s care were met by friendly volunteers, child welfare experts, and trauma-informed case workers from Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest and Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains.

“[One father] said he hoped one day his little girl would grow up and be like the volunteers that helped them when they were released.”
– FWD.us volunteer working with LIRS partner

Thanks to an outpouring of support from donors like you, LIRS was able to provide immediate care to hundreds of newly reunited families.

LIRS provided temporary shelter, food, and care to 450 PARENTS AND CHILDREN immediately following reunification.

In total, LIRS provided emergency support to 215 FAMILIES before arranging travel to their final destination.

LIRS mobilized 37 PARTNERS IN 33 STATES to provide extended support to these families, once they had settled into a new community.

We gave out 61 CELL PHONES equipping families to connect with additional services and communicate with loved ones.

We provided 452 REFERRALS to families in need of community services including 134 to LEGAL SERVICES and 65 to MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

We are grateful to the congregations, foundations, and private companies that gave generously to support this life-changing work.