



JUNE, 2018

For the Health and Well-being of Immigrant Children: A Statement from the Northwest Immigrant and Refugee Health Coalition

It is critical for those of us charged with the well-being of children and families to speak out for their protection, as we have been reminded this week by the zero-tolerance policy separating and detaining families. We are a Washington State coalition of health professionals and public health practitioners; whose mission is to advocate and care for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. The forceful separation of children from parents and the recent relocation of some of these children and parents to Washington State makes this national crisis also a local concern.

We call for the federal and local government to follow the recent recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics on the Detention of Immigrant Children:

1. Even in cases where temporary detention and repatriation is deemed necessary, the nurturing relationship with parents and trusted caregivers should never be violated unless there are concerns for the safety of the child.
2. Eliminate exposure to conditions or settings that may re-traumatize children, such as those that currently exist in detention or detention itself.
3. Children should not be subjected to these facilities because conditions at CBP Processing Centers are inconsistent with AAP recommendations for the appropriate care and treatment of children.
4. Processing of children and family units should occur in a child friendly manner, taking place outside of current CBP processing centers or conducted by child welfare professionals to provide conditions that emphasize the health and well-being at this critical stage of immigration proceedings.

Additional recommendations include the provision of community-based alternatives to detention, case

management, regular medical evaluations and trauma informed mental health care.

As Americans, we are most proud of our moments when we uphold the values of equality, tolerance, and compassion. We expect these qualities to be reflected in our immigration policy, especially with regard to children. The zero-tolerance policy is the antithesis of the “better angels of our nature” that President Lincoln envisaged our country to champion. As health professionals and public health practitioners it is our responsibility to hold everyone accountable to the fact that when it comes to children and families we must “first do no harm”.

[Visit the NWIRHC website to add your name to this statement](#)

Join together on Sat, June 30th: [Families Belong Together Event](#), 11am, SeaTac Detention Center

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