

Safe and Humane Treatment of Refugee and Immigrant Children

Position Brief

SUMMARY

The National Association of School Nurses calls on the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to ensure that refugee and immigrant children and families have access to clean, safe housing, hygiene, and other supplies necessary to maintain health and to prioritize the reunification of refugee and immigrant children who have been separated from their families.

RATIONALE

Children subjected to unsafe and inhumane conditions can experience trauma, resulting in irrevocable damage for a vulnerable population deserving of our protection regardless of their immigration status. Studies show that adverse childhood experiences have long-term physical and mental health consequences and that immigrant children are at greater risk due to the trauma experienced before, during or after immigration to the United States (Franco, 2018 and Metzler et al., 2016; Nurius et al., 2015). While family separation issue have quieted down, the crisis-facing immigrant children and families has intensified and spread (Roth et al, 2020).

School nurses, who are the frontline, need the skills necessary to meet the complex mental and physical health concerns of immigrant children (Clausson & Cowell, 2019). The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that immigrant children should have access to care that mitigates harm and trauma, promotes well-being and supports their health (Linton, et al, 2017). School nurses practice ethically, which is demonstrated by showing compassion and respect for all people and advocating for the rights, health, and safety of children and youth (ANA & NASN, 2017).

Adopted: August 2019

Renewed: December 2020

References

- American Nurses Association and National Association of School Nurses. (2017). *School nursing: Scope and standards of practice* (3rd ed.). Silver Spring, MD: Authors. Page 61.
- Clausson, E. K., & Cowell, J. M. (2019). Migration, School Nursing, and School Health Services. *Journal of School Nursing, 35*(5), 315. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uta.edu/10.1177/1059840519866531>
- Franco, D., (2018) Trauma Without Borders: The Necessity for School-Based Interventions in Treating Unaccompanied Refugee Minors. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 35*, 551-565. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-018-0552-6>

Linton JM, Griffin M, Shapiro A.J. (2017) AAP COUNCIL ON COMMUNITY PEDIATRICS.
Detention of Immigrant Children. *Pediatrics*. 139 (4) DOI: 10.1542/peds.2017-0483

Metzler, M., Merrick, M.T., Klevens, J., Ports, K.A. & Ford, D.C. (2016). Adverse childhood experiences and life opportunities: Shifting the narrative. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 72, 141-19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.10.021>

Nurius, P.S., Green, S., Logan-Greene, P., & Borja, S. (2015). Life course pathways of adverse childhood experiences toward adult psychological well-being: A stress process analysis. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 45, 143- 153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.03.008>

Roth B.J., Grace, B.L., Seay K.D. (2020) Mechanisms of Deterrence: Federal Immigration Policies and the Erosion of Immigrant Children’s Rights, *American Journal of Public Health* 110, (1) 84-86. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2019.305388

Suggested citation: National Association of School Nurses. (2020). *Safe and humane treatment of refugee and immigrant children* [Position Brief]. Silver Spring, MD: Author.

All position briefs from the National Association of School Nurses will automatically expire 18 months after publication unless renewed and recommended for position statement or other NASN document development.

www.nasn.org
National Association of School Nurses
1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 925
Silver Spring, MD 20910
1-240-821-1130