



American Medical Women's Association  
The Vision and Voice of Women in Medicine since 1915

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AMWA Denounces Policy of Separation of Children From their Families at Southern Border.

"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore, Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

This Statue of Liberty's magnanimous greeting is the welcome refugees and immigrants have been hearing for years and is part of the reason many of our forbearers came to the United States seeking a better life. The inhumane policy of separating families at the borders of the US, the "golden door" now seems to be the gateway into a detention center.

This policy is causing undue distress to families already facing severe emotional trauma. The American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) strongly denounces the practice of separating families who are attempting to seek refuge in the United States. The psychological impact of leaving one's birthplace due to devastation, violence, economic hardship, or many of the various reasons families leave the life that they know to seek a safer, better way of life for themselves and their families, is compounded by separation imposed once crossing our border.

AMWA recognizes that the psychological and physical trauma to both parents and children will have significant consequences and a costly impact on their future as well as our future as a nation. As women physicians, we understand that the bond between parent and child is unique and strong. Parents do whatever is necessary to protect their children, even if that means moving to another country. As physicians, we realize the psychological trauma imposed by this forced separation can be lifelong and manifest in very physical ways. Those involved can develop depression, anxiety, abdominal pain, poor concentration, and engage in self-harm. The impact of this policy can also be more immediate: one young father committed suicide after his child was taken from him.

One parent was told "He is fine — he has clothes, shoes and his own bed, we are taking good care of him". There is more to caring for a child than providing clothes or shoes. A parent gives a child love, support, guidance, and resilience. The best people to care for the child in most instances are their own parents and/or family. This is also not a summer camp where kids have anticipated the separation and the events are encouraged. This is a detention camp which does not improve the security of our borders.

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The cost to families, as well as to society, of this policy is unmeasurable and will lead to permanent separation in many cases. The American Medical Women's Association asks that all those seeking refuge within our borders be kept together for their protection and well-being. In this way, the trauma separation can be avoided and the adverse physical and psychological stresses be lessened without endangering the safety of the citizens of the United States

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