



CREATING GLOBAL HEALING, HEALTH & HOPE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLIC RELEASE 6/20/2018 12:29:05 PM CST

EMDRIA STATEMENT ON FORCED FAMILY SEPARATION -

The EMDR International Association (EMDRIA) is a mental health professional society whose members focus on the treatment of trauma. Our members are trained in a therapy that has demonstrated effectiveness with PTSD and other disorders that have a basis in trauma. Because of our expertise in identifying and treating trauma, we have intense concern and opposition to the US government's policy and practice of separating minor children, including toddlers, from their parents as a part of a "zero-tolerance" immigration policy.

Our organization does not purport to be experts in immigration policy. However, there is one issue of which we are certain: forced separation of parents and children, or of families more generally, is an inhumane treatment that by definition inflicts trauma on individuals—especially children—who experience it. As a public health matter, we find the practice to be inexcusable and unacceptable. Our colleagues at the American Academy of Pediatrics have clearly stated the known effects of forced separation and trauma on children, which range from neurological development to attachment and emotional well-being problems. We know that children who experience trauma, especially through forced separation from parents, and particularly if it is prolonged, have later health problems and earlier mortality rates than those who have stable contact with their parents.

EMDRIA has signed on to several petitions and statements along with over 200 other health organizations. However, we feel compelled to issue our own statement in strong opposition to the current procedure of separating children from their families. We urge in the strongest language possible that the administration reverse its recent policy, and find the means and mechanisms to keep families together who in many cases are fleeing violence and trauma in their countries of origin. It is never right to act such that those who are fleeing violence and trauma and seeking refuge experience more trauma and force separation of loved ones.

Our members stand ready to serve those who are harmed by this process as we can find opportunity and access. We make that offer with sadness, because we believe the traumatic experiences have been inflicted needlessly. We hope that the damage to the most innocent among us, children, might at least be minimized in scale by a change of practice by the administration.