

Statement on the Department of Homeland Security's Family Separation Policies

Considerable attention has been paid to the plight of children at the Southern border and the New York Times recently reported that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) had confirmed that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has separated more than 700 children from their parents since October 2017, including more than 100 children under age four.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has adopted a "zero tolerance" policy toward individuals apprehended at the border, which calls for the prosecution of all migrants entering the United States outside of ports of entry and the resulting forced separation of many children from their families.

The new policy establishes that for parents and caregivers who are processed in the criminal court system and held in federal jails, their children will be classified as unaccompanied minors and housed in shelters awaiting placement with a US-based adult who can assume their care. If the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) cannot locate a US-based adult able to care for the child, the child will stay in federal custody, separated from family, indefinitely.

According to media reports, the number of children in HHS custody has grown by nearly 2,000 over the past month alone, shelters for migrant children are reportedly at 95 percent capacity, and HHS is preparing to add potentially thousands of beds in the coming weeks to accommodate the rising number of detained children.

Separating children from their families in this manner is inconsistent with American family values. Many of these families are fleeing violence in their home countries, and it is inhumane to punish them for seeking safety and invoking their right to seek asylum in the US. By adopting a policy that forcibly separates immigrant families, DOJ and DHS fuel the climate of hostility experienced by many immigrants and refugees residing here, which causes many to feel alienated and avoid contact with government agencies, which impacts public safety.

Glenn Hendricks
Mayor

Larry Klein
Vice Mayor

Jim Griffith
Councilmember

Gustav Larsson
Councilmember

Nancy Smith
Councilmember

Russ Melton
Councilmember

Michael S. Goldman
Councilmember

The Department of Homeland Security's family separation policies are inconsistent with the City of Sunnyvale's City Values; we are a community that emulates the spirit of all American ideals. Particularly:

- Valuing our individual experiences and supporting and protecting people of any race, religion, ancestry, ethnicity, ability, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity;
- Honoring cultural and religious traditions; and
- Valuing and embracing the diverse backgrounds, race, nationalities, ancestries, and ethnicities.

The City of Sunnyvale and the Conference of Mayors registers its strong opposition to separating children from their families at the border. We call on the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice to immediately reverse these destructive policies and allow families apprehended to remain together to the extent possible, to help avoid the heartbreak and irreversible trauma of forced separation.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors and the City of Sunnyvale urges Congress to act immediately to ensure that the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security are prohibited from this wholesale separation of children from their families at the border.

Glenn Hendricks
Mayor

Authorized by a unanimous vote of the City Council on June 26, 2018