
Media Contact:

Diane C. Feirman, CAE
877-668-AGPA (2472)
dfeirman@agpa.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AMERICAN GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR TRUMP ADMINISTRATION
TO STOP POLICY OF SEPARATING CHILDREN FROM THEIR PARENTS**

New York, June 19, 2018— In concert with the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the U.N. Human Rights Office, the American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA) is calling upon the Trump Administration to stop its policy of separating children from their parents after crossing the U.S. border from Mexico. The removal of children from the necessary attachment to their parents threatens them physically and psychologically. This dangerous violation of children's human rights equates to legislating atrocity.

The American Group Psychotherapy Association represents over 2,000 mental health professional members including psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers, as well as mental health, family, and pastoral counselors. AGPA is committed to supporting the dignity and psychological safety of every individual without discrimination regarding race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sex, age, or disability. Central to our mission is a belief in the power of groups to treat mental illness, heal the scars from traumatic events, and enhance the well-being of adults and children in their families, schools, corporate settings, and communities.

The family unit is paramount to the regulation of stress in the face of violence, exile, and life threat. Without the physical, psychological, and social bonds of connection, research consistently demonstrates that children cannot regulate the stress that results from traumatic events. Attachment to parents is the most basic and effective regulator; this relationship is a lifeline. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network specifically lists immigration and parental deportation as traumatic separations. The imposed rupture of the parental bond is a traumatic assault of the child and puts the child at dire risk. The mandate to DO NO HARM has been shattered. We have owned the injustice and damage done by separating Native American children from their families and sending them to boarding schools. We look with shame at the Japanese internment camps, and we remember with horror the deadly separation of parents and children during the Holocaust.

We can't forget, nor can the world.

In the face of a government policy that makes common practice the violation of children's right to be with their parents, we are registering alarm and underscoring the need for a change in the Administration's Policy. To continue this harmful practice is to ignore what mental health practitioners and researchers have long established: attachment is fundamental to all other positive outcomes for human beings. Its disruption has long-standing and irreversible impact and violates all that we know about mental health.

About AGPA

The American Group Psychotherapy Association is the foremost professional association dedicated to the field of group psychotherapy, operating through a tri-partite structure: AGPA, a professional and educational organization; the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health, its philanthropic arm; and the International Board for Certification of Group Psychotherapists, a standard setting and certifying body. This multidisciplinary association has over 2,000 members, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, clinical mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, pastoral counselors and creative arts therapists, many of whom have been recognized as specialists through the Certified Group Psychotherapist credential. The association has 21 local and regional societies located across the country. Its members are experienced mental health professionals who lead psychotherapy groups and various non-clinical groups. Many are organizational specialists who work with businesses, not-for-profit organizations, communities and other "natural" groups to help them improve their functioning.

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