

CALL TO ACTION: Children at the Border - April 2021

The Early Childhood Education Profession is once again outraged by conditions and circumstances impacting children along the border:

- **At this moment, over 16,000 unaccompanied children are in custody**
- **These children are placed in detention facilities – a perpetuation of “kids in cages”**
- **The facilities are overcrowded, with unsafe conditions for any young child**
- **As a national crisis, we see no clear plan or solution for uniting children with families**

As early childhood education professionals committed to the welfare and well-being of all children, we feel compelled to respond to the plight of thousands of refugee/immigrant children and adolescents along the southern border of the United States.

We begin by affirming our shared professional principles:

- The safety and well-being of ALL children are basic human rights.
- Children and families belong together
- Children, from infancy to the teen years, cannot be used as political pawns

We commit to being informed with real facts, hard data, and the historical roots of the current crisis; it is my individual responsibility to stay current on this developing crisis:

- We acknowledge the factors that have triggered this recent wave of migration – causes that include extreme poverty, lack of educational opportunity, political persecution, environmental degradation, drug-fueled violence, abuse of women, and the role of our government in the economics and politics of other countries.
- We recognize the desperate circumstances that push parents to send their children alone across an international border to our country.
- We seek to understand the diverse personal, regional, group, and political perspectives that fuel the debate about immigration in the United States.
- We honor the long history and contributions of migrants and refugees to the development of the USA and acknowledge the need for essential workers in our farms, factories, service jobs, hospitals, and professions
- We reject the notion that Children and families who want to become part of the USA are a national threat or a wave of criminals or COVID carriers

We pledge to take action to address this crisis, individually and together as professionals. As educators, we will:

- Create and use talking points, based on accurate information, for conversations with family members, friends, co-workers, people of faith, politicians and others

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- Expand collaboration and partnership with organizations and others who share our concerns and passion
- Contact elected representatives at all levels of government to urge them to act positively and creatively to implement short- and long-term humane solutions that benefit children and families caught in this crisis.
- Support leaders who seek greater communication and collaboration, and who focus on solutions that benefit children and families in their native countries and address the root causes of migration.
- Call for immigration policies that achieve a sensible legal entry process, and paths to asylum, legal residency, and citizenship
- Recognize the complexity of the situation while also calling for an orderly and humane process that respects children and family life
- Be realistic that a “political process” is not a quick or easy fix; know that it will take time and the determined will of citizens and elected officials
- While recognizing the current difficulties and hardships, keep in mind the long-term benefits and contributions of immigrants to our nation
- In every step, fight xenophobia and arguments that foster division in communities and the nation

. As early childhood educators, we are steadfast in our fundamental, universal call to “do no harm to a child.” As American citizens we take responsibility to uphold basic rights and humane treatment for all children and families. As individuals and professionals, our joint voices and actions are a force for the greater good. We do this out of a sense of professional responsibility, personal compassion, and human respect.

At this time, voices and action are urgently needed. [The Latino Interest Forum at the National Association for the Education of Young Children – NAEYC](#) – created this action statement in solidarity with the Black Caucus, People of Color Caucus and other ECE organizations. Join this coalition and pledge to concretely address a crisis that impacts thousands of children and families.

Please share this statement with others as awareness and action surges. You are encouraged to shape this statement to best fit individual and organizational messages and action steps. Stay informed and vigilant. ACTION is work. Continue to be outraged until children are safe and secure. Together we can impact the lives of children and families along our borders.

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