

CALIFORNIA ACADEMY of CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY

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Urgent Call to End ICE Raids to Protect the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children and Families

The California Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CALACAP), the statewide umbrella organization representing the four regional councils of child and adolescent psychiatrists in California, is deeply alarmed by the escalating mental health crisis resulting from increased immigration enforcement actions. Recent raids targeting individuals regardless of legal status and invasive operations in public spaces such as parks and places of worship have caused widespread fear and toxic stress among families. These actions discourage families from seeking essential healthcare and attending school. Such enforcement disproportionately impacts Latinx communities and other marginalized groups, worsening systemic inequities.

As child and adolescent psychiatrists, we emphasize our ethical responsibility to advocate for the mental health and developmental well-being of children and families. Research demonstrates that the trauma associated with forceful separation of families, contributes to elevated biomarkers of stress and worsened outcomes across multiple domains of health, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress symptoms. The erosion of designated safe spaces—such as churches, clinics, and schools—has only intensified this crisis, removing critical protective environments for children and families.

We are witnessing a surge in severe psychiatric symptoms among youth and caregivers, including panic attacks, sleep disturbances, concentration difficulties, emotional distress, coupled with complete withdrawal from public spaces and necessary services. This level of social isolation, as starkly evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, poses a profound risk to child development and long-term mental health. This ongoing trauma not only harms individual children but also perpetuates intergenerational fear and silence.

CALACAP firmly rejects policies that criminalize based on immigration status or ethnicity. We advocate for safe, stable, and supportive environments that promote healthy development. We call on policymakers at all levels to cease harmful enforcement actions that threaten mental health and to adopt a public health approach focused on protecting families, fostering healing, and prioritizing human dignity over punishment.

Sincerely,



Ijeoma Ijeaku, MD, MPH, DFAPA
CALACAP President

Sources:

Page KR, Polk S. Chilling Effect? Post-Election Health Care Use by Undocumented and Mixed-Status Families. *N Engl J Med*. 2017 Mar 23;376(12):e20. doi: 10.1056/NEJMp1700829. Epub 2017 Mar 8. PMID: 28273008.

Stafford AM, Tanna A, Bueno KM, Nagy GA, Felsman IC, de Marchi S, Cholera R, Evans K, Posada E, Gonzalez-Guarda R. Documentation Status and Self-Rated Physical Health Among Latinx Young Adult Immigrants: the Mediating Roles of Immigration and Healthcare Stress. *J Racial Ethn Health Disparities*. 2023 Apr;10(2):761-774. doi: 10.1007/s40615-022-01264-z.

Resources:

- ICE Raids: [U.S. Citizen Children Impacted by Immigration Enforcement](#)
- Amer Immig Council 6/24/21; [Immigration Raids Add to Absence Crisis for Schools](#)
- NYT 6/16; [Repercussions of a Raid: Health and Education Outcomes of Children Entangled in Immigration Enforcement](#)
- J Policy; [ICE Agents Are Allegedly Caught Urinating Outdoors at a School \(L.A.\)](#)