



## Press Room

# Nation's Health Officials Very Concerned About the Public Health Impact of Family Separations at the U.S.-Mexico Border

ARLINGTON, VA (June 19, 2018)—Michael Fraser, chief executive officer of ASTHO, issued the following statement today in response to the current federal actions to separate children from their families at the U.S.-Mexico border.

"Our nation's health officers are extremely concerned about the policy of separating children from their families at the U.S.-Mexico border. All children should have the opportunity to thrive in safe, stable, and nurturing environments. Separating children from their parents exposes them to one of the most serious adverse events imaginable. We know this can have a lasting, long-term impact on the developing brain and the future social and emotional health and well-being of these children.

As a non-partisan, consensus-based association of state and territorial public health leaders, ASTHO supports efforts to prevent adverse childhood experiences and encourages policies that promote the health of children and families. Relationships developed in early childhood are the foundation for lifelong health and, as our colleagues from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Public Health Association have noted, these separations interrupt these bonds and may lead to serious consequences for children who do not heal from this trauma. We are very concerned that this policy will have serious long-term, deleterious effects on children who are not reunited quickly with their caregivers and we call upon the President and Congress to resolve this matter immediately.

Partners and stakeholders from various perspectives and political affiliations agree that the time is now to change the family separation policy. In all cases, any adverse consequences of policy must always be balanced by a good that is equal or greater. On that basis, there is little justification for the harm that this practice is inflicting. There are surely more humane ways to resolve immigration policy and enforce our nation's immigration laws than separating parents and children.

ASTHO urges the Administration and members of Congress to reconsider the current policy in the interest of protecting and promoting the health and well-being of families."

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*ASTHO is the national nonprofit organization representing the public health agencies of the United States, the U.S. territories and freely associated states, and the District of Columbia, as well as the more than 100,000 public health professionals these agencies employ. ASTHO members, the chief health officials of these jurisdictions, are dedicated to formulating and influencing sound public health policy and to ensuring excellence in public health practice.*