The American Psychological Association (APA) supports practical, humane immigration policies that highlight the needs of immigrants and their families. While APA recognizes the need to balance immigration policies with national security and public safety, immigrants are disproportionately likely to experience stress and other mental health concerns which can be exacerbated by harmful public policies, particularly those that enforce family separation. The APA bases its immigration policy on the research that proves that separating families is not good for the mental health of individuals involved.

Immigrants are at increased risk of psychological harm due to the stressors of fleeing their home country and acculturating to new lives in the United States. Research shows that immigrants experience unique stressors related to the psychosocial upheaval that led them to flee their home countries, the often traumatic journey to the United States, and the ongoing stress of starting a new life away from their family and culture. Once they arrive, they are often marginalized from mainstream American society which can lead to prejudice, discrimination, and ultimately additional stress.

Living under the threat of deportation is particularly stressful and can lead to serious health issues. Deportation is also a significant concern of newly arrived undocumented immigrants. Living in an environment of chronic insecurity and threat with limited access to supports can lead to complex emotional trauma. Research demonstrates that immigrants who fear deportation are much more vulnerable to heart disease, asthma, diabetes, depression, anxiety, and post-trau-
matic stress disorder, and their children are more likely to experience psychological distress, academic difficulties, and disruptions in their development.

**Family separation is especially harmful**

Children and families who are separated as they seek to enter the United States experience significant psychological consequences. Data suggests that the longer parents and children are separated, the greater the reported symptoms of anxiety and depression are for children. Sustained parental separation also predicts ongoing difficulty trusting adults and institutions, as well as reduced educational attainment. These negative outcomes of separation reflect the disruption of the parent-child relationship—a relationship that is a central part of healthy psychological development and a protective source of resilience for children exposed to trauma.

APA RECOMMENDATIONS

- APA supports legislation that protects “Dreamers” by providing a path to citizenship for undocumented youth who were brought to the United States through no fault of their own.
- APA supports immigration policy that keeps families together.

4 American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012
11 American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012
12 Lustig et al., 2004
15 Chaudry et al., 2010
16 Dreby, 2012

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