

## DEC Statement on Continuing Maltreatment at the Border

November 2019

Over a year ago, the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) joined over 100 national disability organizations to express our concern about the welfare of the children who had been separated from their families and were in the custody of the Office of Refugee. As an organization, we are committed to advocating for policies and practices that improve outcomes for young children with disabilities and know that conditions for families and children at the border impedes children's positive outcomes. Our position statement on child maltreatment states, "all young children deserve the opportunity to safely develop physically, socially, and emotionally within their family and community". Similarly, our position statement on promoting the health, safety, and well-being on young children states, "advocacy efforts should focus on public regulations and policies for supporting the provision of services for all young children in safe and healthy environments". As such, we think this is an important time to reiterate our commitment to advocating against policies

that hinder opportunities for children to safely develop with their families and receive services in safe and healthy environments.

**“All young children deserve the opportunity to safely develop physically, socially, and emotionally within their family and community.”**

*Division for Early Childhood  
Position Statement on  
Child Maltreatment, 2017*



It is incomprehensible that the situation at the border has not improved but has become far worse and more intolerable. As details continue to emerge about the conditions of the children being held in custody at the border, DEC must reaffirm our commitment, with others, to oppose the separation of children from their and parents, as well as the continued maltreatment of these children which by any definition is child abuse.

Research in child development, especially in brain development is clear. The trauma resulting from separation of these children from their families will create long lasting negative impact and puts these children at significant risk for social, emotional, physical and other developmental delays and disabilities. Children who are denied what would reasonably be considered safe and appropriate care, children who are denied even the most basic of necessities, are children at-risk for disability. Children who are denied a close and loving relationship with a trusted adult are children at-risk for disability. These conditions are particularly devastating for children already experiencing a delay or already diagnosed with a disability.



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We continue to have unanswered questions as to the steps being taken to adequately shelter, care for, provide for emotional and physical well-being, and protect these children who are in the custody of our government. We continue to have unanswered questions about the steps being taken to address the multiple medical and developmental needs of these children.

We insist that those who care for these children's medical and developmental needs have the expertise to do so, especially our very youngest children, especially children who experience developmental delays and disabilities.

DEC is adamant that the practice of separating children from their parents must be stopped and we insist that every effort must be made to protect the health, safety, and well-being of children being held at the border.

**“The practice of separating children from their parents must be stopped and we insist that every effort must be made to protect the health, safety, and well-being of children being held at the border.”**

*Division for Early Childhood  
November 2019*



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