

MAIN MOTION

1 That Council approves the following 2019 APA Immigration and Refugee Policy Statement:

2 **2019 APA IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE POLICY STATEMENT**

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4 **Immigrants and refugees are at risk of psychological harm**

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6 Immigrants and refugees experience harm both from the difficult journey to the United States that
7 brings with it exposure to sexual assault, human trafficking, and other forms of violence, and from the
8 ongoing stress from starting a new life away from family and culture, as well as prejudice and
9 discrimination received from those in the United States (American Psychological Association, 2010,
10 2012; Betancourt, T. S., et al., 2017; Betancourt, et al., 2012); Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; El Baba &
11 Colucci, 2018; Hodes & Vostanis, 2019; Kim, 2011); Lindert, et al., 2009; Lusk, M., McCallister, &
12 Villalobos, 2013; Lustig, et al., 2004).

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14 In the Child and Adolescent Mental and Behavioral Health Resolution (APA, 2019), the American
15 Psychological Association affirmed that *toxic stress* (prolonged exposure to trauma and the biological
16 stress response) impacts early brain development (APA, 2018b; Center on the Developing Child, 2014;
17 Shonkoff & Gardner, 2012) and that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have a profound impact on
18 later adult health outcomes (Felitti et al., 1998). Subsequent research has clarified that this lifelong
19 effect is due to significant changes in the nervous, endocrine and immune systems from prolonged
20 exposure to the stress response (Danese & McEwan, 2012). In short, health across the lifespan is
21 impacted by early childhood experiences (Conti & Heckman, 2013; Halfon & Hochstein, 2002; Halfon,
22 Wise, & Forrest, 2014). Research also shows that the impact of environmental risk factors can be
23 lessened or even prevented (Masten, 2014), (Center on the Developing Child, 2015; Leslie et al., 2016).
24 Moreover, reducing environmental risk factors has the potential to promote emotional health early in
25 the life cycle (Center on the Developing Child, 2015).

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27 **The fear of deportation causes stress and can lead to serious health issues**

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29 Research has found that the fear of deportation and the perceived impact of the vulnerability on the
30 family are associated with reports of poorer emotional well-being and academic performance for
31 children (Brabeck & Xu, 2010). Another study found that the fear of deportation and harassment from
32 law enforcement correlated with lack of access to health services (Martinez et al 2015). Raids and
33 deportation are traumatic experiences resulting in fear, isolation and depression for children, who are
34 mostly U.S. citizens (Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Lusk, McCallister, & Villalobos, 2013).

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36 **Family separation and child detention are especially harmful**

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38 Research has consistently demonstrated the negative impacts of family separation and child detention
39 on immigrant and refugee mental health (Miller, Hess, Bybee, & Goodkind, 2018; Society for Community
40 Research and Action, 2016). One study of children in schools found that those who had experienced
41 longer separations from their parents also reported more signs of depression and anxiety than those
42 who had not experienced long separations (Suárez-Orozco, Bang, & Kim, 2010). Other negative
43 outcomes for children associated with separation from their parents include housing instability, food
44 insecurity, interrupted schooling, poorer academic performance, and adverse behavioral/emotional

45 responses (Chaudry et al 2010). Sustained parental separation also predicts the ongoing natural
46 response of difficulty trusting adults and institutions, as well as reduced educational attainment
47 (American Psychological Association, 2012).

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49 **Therefore, APA reaffirms its 1998 resolution on Immigrant Children, Youth, and Families and APA**
50 **Multicultural Guidelines (2017). Further, consistent with the ethical principle that psychologists**
51 **respect the human rights, dignity and worth of all persons and peoples (American Psychological**
52 **Association, 2017). APA supports practical and humane immigration policies that consider the well-**
53 **being of immigrants and refugees, and particularly families, including the provision of appropriate**
54 **medical, mental health and social services. APA also calls upon the federal and state governments to**
55 **provide sufficient funding to ensure appropriate health and social services are provided.**

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