



## **American Psychoanalytic Association Demands U.S. End Psychological Warfare Against Migrant Children and Families**

**New York, NY – August 22, 2019** – Since first raising concerns in 2015 about the long-term mental health consequences of anti-immigrant and refugee rhetoric and then the mental health impact of U.S. immigration policies, the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsAA) now demands an end to the U.S. government’s campaign of “psychological warfare”.

According to APsAA, speeches at campaign rallies and the current language and policies of the Department of Homeland Security—child separations, workplace raids and arrests, inadequate detention centers, and changing rules for seeking asylum—are all part of a plan to cause psychological trauma.

“It has become clear that the current administration uses cruel language, policies, and abuse with the objective of deterring immigrants and asylum seekers,” said Lee Jaffe, president of APsAA. “This psychological warfare has increased hatred, divisiveness, and violence towards immigrants and instilled fear, anxiety, and mental anguish for those living in the U.S., whether they are American citizens or not.”

New [research](#) supports a direct link between racism experienced in childhood with life-threatening illnesses later in life. Additionally, [research](#) by psychoanalysts Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham dating back to World War II showed that separating children from their parents had more damaging consequences than exposing them to the ravages of war. In previous [position statements](#) and [press releases](#) the Association also warned that inflammatory rhetoric could lead to violence as well as increased risk of mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, PTSD and suicide.

“The recent mass shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, TX and other hate crimes can be linked to this vitriolic climate,” said Jaffe. “Furthermore, the raids, deportations, and zero-tolerance separation policies have all contributed to trauma and toxic stress which impairs a child’s capacity to learn, and overall health across their lifespan.”

This influential group of mental health professionals is calling for an end to anti-immigrant rhetoric from elected leaders, demanding that Congress and the administration enact sensible reforms to our immigration laws including protections for our DREAMERS, immediately reunite separated families, speedily process claims for asylum, provide adequate holding facilities, and assist those who have been psychologically damaged with access to mental health services.

The American Psychoanalytic Association is the oldest and largest professional organization for psychoanalysts in North America, representing 3,000 members, 32 approved training institutes, and 38 affiliate societies throughout the United State. Visit [apsa.org](http://apsa.org) for more information.

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