

Docs: kids to suffer under Trump's tough immigration policies

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(HealthDay)—U.S. pediatricians are taking President Donald Trump to

task after he issued executive orders Wednesday that—the doctors said—will make the country a much less welcoming place for immigrant children.

Not only will refugee [children](#) be harmed by the new policies, but children of immigrants already living in the United States will become frightened for their family's safety, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

"Children do not immigrate, they flee," AAP President Dr. Fernando Stein said in a statement. "They are coming to the U.S. seeking safe haven in our country, and they need our compassion and assistance.

"Far too many children in this country already live in constant [fear](#) that their parents will be taken into custody or deported, and the message these children received [Wednesday] from the highest levels of our federal government exacerbates that fear and anxiety," Stein added.

Trump's orders ban Syrian refugees indefinitely from entering the country. He also banned all refugees for 120 days, and threatened to pull federal funding for "sanctuary" cities—jurisdictions that try to shield undocumented immigrants from deportation. He also called for the hiring of 5,000 new border patrol agents, according to *The New York Times*.

He also ordered construction of a massive wall between the United States and Mexico, although Congress would have to approve funding for such a wall, estimated by some to cost \$15 billion.

Stein said these moves create a climate of fear that young children can't absorb without repercussions.

"No child should ever live in fear," he said. "When children are scared, it

can impact their health and development. Indeed, fear and stress, particularly prolonged exposure to serious stress—known as toxic stress—can harm the developing brain and negatively impact short- and long-term health.

"Immigrant families are our neighbors, they are part of every community, and they are our patients," Stein added. "The executive orders signed today are harmful to immigrant children and families throughout our country. Many of the children who will be most affected are the victims of unspeakable violence and have been exposed to trauma."

One North Carolina pediatrician said she has witnessed the effects of fear on [immigrant children](#) in her practice.

"I had a child I took care of in clinic a few months ago who came in complaining of headaches," Dr. Julie Linton, co-chair of the AAP's Immigrant Health Special Interest group, told *NBC News*. "He said he was told in school that his parents would be sent away, and that's when his headaches started.

"What I see when I have these families in front of me is fearful parents with fearful children striving to have a better life, to have a safe life, and to have a hopeful life," she said.

More information: Visit the [American Immigration Council](#) for more on immigration laws.

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