



UNACOMPANIED MINORS CROSSING THE BORDER

STATEMENT

We, the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph Leadership Council, compelled by the Gospel and by our heritage to be responsive to the “dear neighbor” without distinction, call upon President Obama and Congress to ensure the protection and care of the unaccompanied minors who are coming to our borders fleeing from extreme violence and poverty in their home countries. We believe that a just protection policy must:

- Respect the dignity and humanity of unaccompanied minors and recognize the trauma of their migration journey.
- Provide legal representation for all unaccompanied migrant children.
- Refrain from practices that unnecessarily restrict children’s liberty with regard to detention.
- Ensure children are treated with respect and invest in their access to justice and long-term integration for those with a claim to refugee protection.
- Increase funding levels to the Office of Refugee Resettlement, which are currently inadequate to meet the immediate need.
- Evaluate children so that possible victims of trafficking and persecution are referred for appropriate services.
- Protect children by mandating follow up once released from federal custody.
- Remove barriers to accessing services for all vulnerable migrant children granted immigration status.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN & FAMILIES

These are children and families who have experienced such dreadful violence at home that they have no choice but to escape, literally running for their lives, and travelling to a strange country. The needs and rights of these children and families much be ensured; refugee protection and care must be in the best interest of each child. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 58 percent of unaccompanied minors “raise potential international protection” claims and may have a viable claim to refugee protections under international law.

—Adapted from
LCWR Statement on
Children Crossing Borders

TALKING POINTS

- The surge in the number of families with children and children traveling alone arriving on our border is a humanitarian crisis that demands compassionate response.
- This humanitarian crisis is a result of “push factors” that force children and families, many of them traumatized, to flee from their homes and communities as they have endured extreme violence.
- Place children in the least restrictive setting appropriate to their ages, address any special needs and improve access to legal services for unaccompanied children in federal custody
- Proposals that expedite removal proceedings and undermine child safety and due process should be rejected.
- President Obama and Congress need to address the root causes in home and transit and continue to collaborate internationally with the countries (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) forcing children to flee.
- Enact a comprehensive immigration policy that:
 - Unites families
 - Includes the DREAM Act
 - Provides a realistic path to citizenship
 - Provides an effective worker program
 - Shortens applicant backlogs for permanent residence.

ACTION STEPS

- Urge Congress to protect the unaccompanied minors.*
- Provide hospitality to recently arrived families and children.*
- Monetary Donations can be sent to any of the various groups who are responding to this need.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Unaccompanied Children Advocacy Resources*
- Children on the Run*
- Myths and Facts on Central American Migration Crisis*
- 10 Ways to Welcome the Children at our Border*
- Central American Refugees Flee Violence*

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You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your God.

Matthew 5:14-16

