



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

Family Reunification

Families seeking a better life in the United States are being detained at the southern border and, from the April start of the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" immigration policy until recently, were being separated from their children as parents are criminally prosecuted.

At this time, the County does not believe that any children have reached Montgomery County and no local response has been requested. The County is prepared to take all necessary steps to keep children safe if they arrive in Montgomery County. If appropriate, this may require placing them in foster families or with extended family or friends.

Ending the Trump administration's policy of family separation does not mean the administration will end the detention of children in inappropriate settings. The best and safest place for children is with their families and in their communities. The Executive Order can be viewed [here](#). CNN published an article explaining what the Order includes and doesn't include. You can view the article [here](#).

Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh sent a letter to the Department of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services requesting the status and location of immigrant children who have been relocated to Maryland facilities. The letter can be viewed [here](#).

How Can I Help?

The following are some organizations seeking to help families and provide protection for those seeking asylum.

References to the following organizations providing assistance is for the information and convenience of the public, and inclusion does not constitute an endorsement by the Montgomery County Council. These organizations have not been vetted by the Montgomery County Council.

[Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project](#) works to prevent the deportation of asylum-seeking families fleeing violence. The group accepts donations and asks people to sign up for volunteer opportunities [here](#).

[South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project](#) is providing free legal services to asylum seekers detained in South Texas.

[RAICES](#) is a nonprofit that provides free and low-cost legal services to immigrant children, families and refugees in Texas. It's accepting donations and volunteers at its website. In addition, the [#postcards4families campaign](#) will donate \$5 to RAICES for every postcard kids write to help the separated immigrant children.

[YWCA](#) is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. The organization is encouraging individuals to take part in the Rally Against Injustice and Cruelty on June 30 and is accepting [donations](#).

[The CARA Project](#) is currently recruiting attorneys, law students and paralegals with experience in asylum work. The group asks [volunteers](#) to be fluent in Spanish or willing to work with an interpreter.

[Kids In Need of Defense](#) partners with major law firms, corporations and bar associations to create a nationwide pro bono network to represent unaccompanied children through their immigration proceedings. [Volunteers](#) don't need to have immigration law experience.

The El Paso-based [Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center](#) provides legal representation to immigrants who might not be able to afford it otherwise. It's accepting [volunteers](#) and [donations](#).

[The Austin Bar Association Civil Right and Immigration Section](#) is coordinating training for pro bono attorneys to handle credible fear interviews for asylum seekers.

[Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley](#) shelters immigrants who've recently been released from U.S. Border Patrol custody.

[American Gateways](#) provides legal services and representation to separated parents. It's currently seeking [volunteers](#) to represent detained parents who've been separated from their children.

[Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services](#) is the largest provider of free and low cost immigration services in West Texas and says it's the only organization in El Paso serving unaccompanied children.

[Justice for Our Neighbors](#) provides free and low-cost legal services to immigrant individuals and families in Texas.

[The Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights](#) is looking for more child advocates to visit the immigrant children inside the detention centers weekly and accompany them to immigration proceedings. It is also [raising money](#) for advocates who will deal specifically with family separation cases.

[Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service](#) is [raising money](#) to provide immigrant children "immediate shelter and beds, medical services, counseling and therapy to help them deal with the trauma of family separation."

[Together Rising](#) is [collecting money](#) that'll go to advocacy groups that are working to reunify immigrant children with their families.

[Comfort Cases](#) is [raising money](#) to provide backpacks to the separated immigrant children. Each case will contain items such as blankets, pajamas, toiletries, a stuffed animal, a book, a journal and art supplies.

[Tahirih Justice Center](#) is providing free legal and social services to immigrant women and girls fleeing gender-based violence.

[Circle of Health International](#) has staffed a clinic caring for refugees and asylum seekers immediately upon their release. Their McAllen clinic is currently seeing upwards of 100 patients a day.

[The Office of Refugee Resettlement](#) requires that all people who want to foster one of the unaccompanied immigrant children be fully licensed by their state. If you are not already licensed, the agency recommends contacting organizations such as United States Conference of Catholic Bishops or the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services.

If you are an attorney, you can sign up to provide pro-bono services [here](#). Volunteers are also needed at Sacred Heart Church, [NETA](#), [ProBAR](#), and the [Texas Civil Rights Project](#), if you are in Texas or are willing to travel there.

If you wish to speak out publicly and encourage Congress to use its oversight authority to ensure separated families are quickly reunited, and oppose detention of children in inappropriate settings:

- the ACLU has a call tool specifically for [Senators](#).
- the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) has a call tool that directs calls, tweets, Facebook posts, and emails to all [Members of Congress](#).

If you have further questions, U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen's office is available to assist you. You may contact his office at 301-545-1500.

You can also [join and support a mass mobilization on June 30th in Washington, DC and across the country](#). You may join a march on Washington and Families Belong Together rally led by MoveOn and others. Public advocacy actions will be planned across the country. You can also refer to the Families Belong Together Guide on How to Help for details about different actions around the country, including the June 30 demonstration outside the White House.

You may continue speaking out on social media to raise awareness about the administration's cruel policy. Sample tweets can be found [here](#).