



September 2018

Family separation

This is a guide for ELCA members to learn more about what we are doing as an organization on family separation and immigration policies.

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Resources explaining family separation and the executive order

- President Trump signed an [executive order on June 20, 2018](#), that addresses family separation by ordering the detention of families together. The order also mandates the Department of Defense and other agencies to find or build family-detention facilities. Family detention is inhumane and costlier than community-based alternatives to detention. This executive order also continues the administration's zero-tolerance policy, which will lead to further family separation when parents are criminally prosecuted.
- As of Aug. 31, 2018, approximately 500 children were still separated from their parents. Some of these children have parents who have been deported to their countries of origin.
- There have been multiple reports of abuse at some shelters. The Salvadoran government reported [three cases of children who were separated from their parents](#) and abused.
- Congress has introduced multiple pieces of legislation addressing family detention. Some, such as the Protect Kids and Parents Act (S. 3091), expand family detention and seek to bypass a court agreement, known as the [Flores Agreement](#), which limits how long children can be put in detention.
- [Multiple reports have documented](#) the lingering trauma for children who were separated from their parents and have been put in detention. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service ([LIRS](#)) [has written at length](#) about the consequences of detention and its alternatives and has been a leader in advocating for community-based alternatives to detention.
- There is NO law mandating that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) separate families at the border. The decision to do so falls solely on the administration, though Congress could pass policies that end this practice.

How has the ELCA opposed family separation?

- The [ELCA has provided emergency funds to LIRS](#) to help reunify families and provide ongoing care.



- Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton asked interfaith leaders to stand with her against family separation at the border. [Find the statement here](#). In total, 21 interfaith leaders signed this statement.
- Bishop Eaton visited a child detention facility on July 28 and will continue to raise the issue.
- [ELCA Advocacy](#) continues to call for the administration to end family separation and has met with members of Congress.
- [ELCA AMMPARO](#) commits to walking alongside children and families fleeing their communities, the same families that are being separated. Congregations can become a welcoming congregation and join the movement as a church.
- ELCA Advocacy has met with members of Congress and participated in ongoing actions to stand against family separation and detention. It posted a blog explaining [family separation and other immigration policies](#) and led [an interfaith video](#) calling on people to act now.
- ELCA Advocacy sent out an action alert advocating that Congress not increase funding for family detention: [People should urge Congress to support a budget that keeps families together](#).
- The ELCA, through the AMMPARO program, has seen cases of family separation since 2017. We have worked together with LIRS and other organizations to flag those cases for official complaints.

What has the ELCA done to oppose family detention?

- Through LIRS and its advocacy office, the ELCA has historically stood alongside vulnerable children. LIRS and ELCA bishops visited a family detention center requesting that the administration stop family detention.
- ELCA staff and members have visited several family detention centers and advocated for the end to the practice.
- Read the June 30, 2014, statement against family detention [here](#).
- ELCA Advocacy sent an action alert to reach out to President Obama to oppose family detention in July 2015. This action is no longer online.
- Lutheran leaders toured a detention facility in 2015 and spoke strongly against the practice – [read about it here](#).

How can people advocate?

- ELCA Advocacy put out an action alert on the DHS budget and family separation: [People should urge Congress to support a budget that keeps families together](#).
- The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations has an action alert defending asylum: access it [here](#).
- Sign as women of faith, clergy and laypeople: [Click here](#) to call upon DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen to stop separating children from their parents at the border.
- Call members of Congress: Dial 866-940-2439 to connect to your two senators and one representative to let them know you value the need for families to stay together. Ask them to seek solutions that address the root causes of violence that are causing parents and children to need to escape, especially from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. Ask them to request that the administration stop detaining families, and share Scriptures that influence your values. [Find your officials here](#).



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

- The Interfaith Immigration Coalition has developed a toolkit to [address family separation and detention](#).

How can you walk alongside these migrants through the ELCA?

- Follow [ELCA.org/advocacy](https://www.elca.org/advocacy), [facebook.com/ELCAAdvocacy](https://www.facebook.com/ELCAAdvocacy) and [facebook.com/ELCAammparo](https://www.facebook.com/ELCAammparo).
- Join [the ELCA Action Center](#).

Where can I learn more?

- ELCA Advocacy posted a blog explaining [family separation and other immigration policies](#).
- Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) [put together a timeline on how this administration has stripped protections for children](#).
- The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a FAQ on family separation and the reports of lost children that can be found [here](#).
- Listen to the hearts of moms who were separated from their children in this [video clip](#).
- For those interested in a border immersion experience, [here is the link to more information](#).

Where should I donate?

- Lutheran Churches at the Border works with families released at the border. Please consider donating to:
 - [peacelutheranlc.com](https://www.peacelutheranlc.com): Give online. Select "Hospitality for Refugee Families" from the fund list.
 - Cristo Rey Lutheran Church: [facebook.com/cristorey1010/](https://www.facebook.com/cristorey1010/).
- [ELCA AMMPARO](#), which accompanies children and families in the U.S., in transit and in their countries of origin.
- [ELCA World Hunger](#), which supports the work of [LIRS](#).