

## **Supporting Families Facing Risk of Deportation**

The Texas Association of School Psychologists stands with immigrant students and families and with educators and community members speaking up, particularly in light of the violent escalation of immigration enforcement in Minnesota. Fear and family separation harm student well-being and learning. Schools must remain safe and welcoming spaces for all students, regardless of immigration status.

We encourage members and community partners to contact their elected representatives and advocate for policies that protect families and schools. [5calls.org](https://5calls.org) is an easy way to make your voice heard.

The deportation of a parent or caregiver is widely recognized as a traumatic experience for children. Young children are especially vulnerable because their brains are rapidly developing and highly sensitive to stress. Exposure to trauma during early childhood has been linked to changes in brain development, including areas responsible for attention, memory, language, emotional regulation, and higher-level thinking. These changes can affect how children learn, manage emotions, and experience safety in their environment (Society for Research in Child Development [SRCD], 2025; Conway et al., 2020).

Research consistently shows that traumatic experiences increase the risk for mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress. When trauma is repeated or prolonged, it can interfere with a child's ability to regulate emotions, cope with stress, and respond adaptively across emotional, behavioral, and physiological systems (SCRD, 2025; Conway et al., 2020). The forced separation from a parent due to deportation has also been identified as a significant situational crisis associated with elevated suicide risk and long-term emotional distress (SCRD, 2025; Garcia Joslin et al., 2015).

When children lose a caregiver to deportation, they are not simply experiencing change. They are experiencing loss, fear, and instability at a time when they most depend on adults to keep them safe.

As school psychologists, these impacts fall squarely within our professional purview. Our ethical responsibility is to support the emotional and physical wellbeing of every student in our schools and communities, consistent with National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Guiding Principle I.3 related to fairness, equity, and justice (NASP, 2020). We are also duty bound to uphold the rights of all students and families, particularly those who are most vulnerable to harm.

In alignment with NASP Guiding Principle IV.1, school psychologists play a critical role in promoting healthy school, family, and community environments. This includes engaging in practices that ensure students and families feel valued, connected, supported, and safe (NASP, 2020). Recognizing the trauma associated with deportation is not a political stance. It is a

professional obligation rooted in our training, ethics, and commitment to child wellbeing. Our response must prioritize care, compassion, and systems that support healing and protection.

Attached you may find these resources helpful:

### Navigating Conversations with Students and Offering Support

Do	Don't
Provide statements of validation to students expressing a variety of emotions (e.g., “It is normal to feel [inset emotional label] when faced with fear and uncertainty in the community/neighborhood”).	Make statements that promise that, “Everything will be okay.” Ask about the student (or family’s) immigration status.
Remind students that there are many mental health professionals at school to help.	Provide legal counsel to students or families.
Assist families in developing a <a href="#">preparedness plan</a> /continuity plan in the event that a family member and/or caregiver is detained/separated from a child.	Provide legal counsel to students or families.
Provide trauma-informed outreach and flexibility to connect with families and students.	Implement punitive/disciplinary interventions.
Establish a safe space or space for decompression for students to access while at school.	Implement punitive consequences for students communicating a need for emotional decompression.

Additionally, the following points are important when holding discussions with students:

- **Lead With Listening And Empathy:** When a student or parent/caregiver raises concerns, begin by giving them space to share their feelings and perspectives. Your role is not to solve the issue or interpret the news; it is to create a calm, open space where they feel heard and understood.
- **Prioritize Emotional And Physical Safety:** If a student says they have been personally affected, gently ask whether they feel safe at school. If they express that they do not, invite them to share what would help. This ensures our response is grounded in their lived experience.
- **Redirect Stereotypes Or Misinformation:** If a student repeats something harmful or stereotypical they’ve heard, redirect the conversation with care: “Sometimes the way news gets discussed can create stereotypes. At school, we focus on understanding and respect.” The goal is not to debate, but to protect dignity and reinforce a sense of belonging for all students, and particularly those who are facing minoritization.

## Organizational Resources

### Resources from NASP:

#### [Supporting Immigrant Families and Upholding Their Rights](#)

This blog summarizes the key legal protections of students, including those that are undocumented, and specific actions school psychologists can take to support immigrant students and their families.

#### [Students Who Are Displaced Persons, Refugees, or Asylum-Seekers](#)

This position statement and related policy and practice recommendations affirm that schools are essential to the provision of supportive services to children who are displaced persons, refugees, or asylum-seekers.

#### [Supporting Marginalized Students in Stressful Times: Tips for Caregivers](#)

This NASP handout provides caregivers with practical, trauma informed strategies to promote safety, emotional regulation, belonging, and resilience for marginalized students during times of social stress, uncertainty, and fear

### Resources from TASP:

#### [Protecting Students' Privacy and Confidentiality](#)

Ways School Psychologists can advocate for student confidentiality and privacy

#### [When Families Have to be Apart](#)

A trauma informed social story designed for practitioners to support students experiencing stress, fear, or uncertainty related to deportation.

#### [Cuando las familias tienen que estar aparte](#)

Una historia social con enfoque informado en trauma, diseñada para que profesionales apoyen a estudiantes que enfrentan estrés, miedo o incertidumbre relacionados con la deportación.

## Texas Family Resources

### Legal and immigrant support organizations

- [RAICES \(Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services\) – Legal and social services for immigrants and refugees in Texas](#) – Offers legal representation, social support programs, and advocacy.
- [American Gateways – Central Texas immigration legal services and advocacy](#) – Provides low-cost and pro bono immigration legal assistance, education, and rights information.
- [Texas Immigration Law Council – Protects and promotes rights of immigrants and refugees in Texas](#) – Works on policy strategies and rights protection statewide.
- [ACLU of Texas – Border and Immigrant Rights Advocacy](#) – Legal advocacy focused on defending immigrants' civil rights in courts and public policy.
- [Justice For All Immigrants – Immigration legal services in Houston and San Antonio](#) – Delivers affordable legal services and education for immigrants and families.
- [FIEL Houston – Immigrant-led civil rights advocacy in Houston](#) – Advocates for fair laws and access to education for immigrant youth and families.

References:

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Minnesota School Psychologists Association. (2026, January 1). *Statement of solidarity and resources*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IwhBuAW2lo839gYT46zHmYRyS8MS9Ck/view>

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