

Illegal Immigration Crack Down Tears Families Apart

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Photo courtesy of The Source. [/caption]

Summary: A report that almost 1,500 immigrant children were lost in the system sparked outrage online.

Over the weekend, a report that the federal government had lost almost 1,500 immigrant children sparked online outrage, and a government official fueled the fire more when he stated that they were not responsible for the kids after they were released from their care.

Steven Wagner, a top official with the Department of Health and Human Services, said, "I understand that it has been HHS's long-standing interpretation of the law that ORR is not legally responsible for children after they are released from ORR care," according to [CBS News](#).

Wagner testified during a Senate committee hearing last month that 1,475 children who had crossed the US-Mexico border unaccompanied had gone missing after being placed with adult sponsors. The Health and Human Services Department argued that once the kids were placed in foster care they were no longer the responsibility of the government.

Wagner said that sometimes the kids are placed with relatives who don't respond to HHS contact attempts or that they intentionally go missing to hide from the government. The DHS said that approximately 85% of sponsors of unaccompanied minors are family members.

Despite this detail, liberals and conservatives online were fuming that the children were missing, and some reports stated that some children were given to human traffickers and used as young workers.

"These kids, regardless of their immigration status, deserve to be treated properly, not abused or trafficked," Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, said. "This is all about accountability. We've got these kids. They're here. They're living on our soil... And for us to just, you know, assume someone else is going to take care of them and throw them to the wolves, which is what HHS was doing, is flat-out wrong. I don't care what you think about immigration policy, it's wrong."

According to the [Chicago Tribune](#), the almost 1,500 missing children had not been ripped away from their parents but instead had come to this country by themselves. However, some children *are* being taken away from their parents after crossing the border illegally, and Attorney General Jeff Sessions said that he would prosecute every adult who crossed the border illegally, even asylum seekers.

"If you cross the border unlawfully ... then we will prosecute you," Sessions said in May. "If you smuggle an illegal alien across the border, then we'll prosecute you. ... If you're smuggling a child, then we're going to prosecute you, and that child will be separated from you, probably, as required by law. If you don't want your child separated, then don't bring them across the border illegally. It's not our fault that somebody does that."

With Sessions' zero tolerance policy regarding immigration, children who cross with their illegal immigrant parents will be separated from their families as the adults are charged with crimes. Unaccompanied minors are taken by Immigration and Customs Enforcement to Health and Human Service's Office of Refugee Resettlement within 48 hours because children are not allowed in criminal jails.

White House Chief of Staff John Kelly said that family separation is a "deterrent" to immigrants wanting to cross the border illegally.

"Let me step back and tell you that the vast majority of the people that move illegally into the United States are not bad people," Kelly told NPR in May. "But they're also not people that would easily assimilate into the United States into our modern society. They're overwhelmingly rural people in the countries they come from - fourth-, fifth-, sixth-grade educations are kind of the norm. ... They're coming here for a reason. And I sympathize with the reason. But the laws are the laws. But a big name of the game is deterrence."

While it is no secret that the Trump administration has been cracking down on illegal immigration, opponents have expressed that this recent enforcement is inhumane.

"This is the worst thing I've seen in 25-plus years of doing this civil-rights work," Lee Gelernt, the deputy director for the American

Civil Liberties Union's Immigrants' Rights Project, said on MSNBC. "They're already traumatized from having to flee their countries, and then they're taken away. The medical evidence is overwhelming we may be doing permanent trauma to these kids, and yet the government is finding every way they can to try and justify it."

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What do you think of the government's stance on illegal immigration? Let us know in the comments below.

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