



New Mexico Occupational Therapy Association
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Mexico Occupational Therapists Call for Inclusion in Detention Facilities

New Mexico Occupational Therapy Association Statement on Forced Child Separation and Family Detention at the Southern Border

Albuquerque, New Mexico - Occupational therapy's distinct value is to improve health and quality of life through facilitating participation and engagement in occupations: the meaningful, necessary, and familiar activities of everyday life (American Occupational Therapy Association 2019).

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) has identified Children and Youth as a key practice area for the 21st century. Pediatric occupational therapy practitioners support societal needs by providing developmentally supportive services to infants, toddlers, children, youth, and their families, in a variety of settings (AOTA, 2019).

Short and long-term effects of parental separation and stressful environments have been well documented across disciplines. Seminal research in this area includes the work of John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth, Allan Schore, Jack Shonkoff, and others. As clinicians dedicated to the promotion of occupation, health and wellbeing across the lifespan, the New Mexico Occupational Therapy Association cannot support, and calls for the end of, the current administration's immigration policy of forcible separation, and/or detention of parents and children at the southern border. Separating children from their parents, and/or detaining families, contradicts everything we stand for as clinicians – protecting and promoting the successful occupations and neurodevelopment of children and their families.

In addition, for as long as this policy exists, we call for the government-sponsored placement of occupational therapists in these pediatric and family detention centers, in order to ensure an environment supportive of occupation, neurodevelopment and overall wellbeing.

“We can and must remember that immigrant children are still children; they need our protection, not prosecution” (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2018).