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New Evidence Brief Shows Long-Term Effects of Child-Family Separation

Press Release | Society for Research in Child Development

PRESS RELEASE

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Statement of the Evidence

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Parent-child separation has long-term effects on child well-being, even if there is subsequent reunification. After being separated, reunited children can experience lasting difficulty with emotional attachment to their parents, self-esteem, and physical and psychological health, according to a new brief released by the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD). The brief, written by scholars of SRCD's Latino Caucus, emphasizes that for some children, time does not appear to fully heal these psychological wounds.

“While U.S. Immigration has halted the practice of separating families at the border, it remains unclear if or when reunification will occur for families separated prior to the implementation of the new policy,” said Linda Halgunseth, a co-author of the brief, Chair of the Latino Caucus, and Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies, University of Connecticut. “Detaining families indefinitely also is detrimental for children’s long-term adjustment.”

According to the brief, *The Science is Clear: Separating Families has Long-term Damaging Psychological and Health Consequences for Children, Families, and Communities*, parent-child separations lead to a host of long-term psychological, social, and health problems that are not necessarily resolved upon reunification. Policymakers must now turn to the reunification of these families and the ongoing well-being of the children who have been separated from their caregivers.

To speak with one of the experts below directly, please contact Jill Braunstein, Director of Communications Society for Research in Child Development at 202-800-0677 or by e-mail at jbraunstein@srcd.org.

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The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) advances developmental science and promotes its use to improve human lives. Established in 1933 by the National Academy of Sciences, SRCD is an interdisciplinary scientific organization with members from more than 50 countries.