



## Inhumane Border Separations Trigger Maternal and Child Health Crisis

### *Statement from Expecting Health, an initiative of Genetic Alliance*

Washington, D.C., June 20, 2018 — Consistent with our core values around support and quality information throughout the parental experience, Expecting Health is extremely alarmed and unequivocally opposed to the current policy of separating families at the United States border. Deep scientific evidence around traumatic shock, social determinants, and the importance of bonding supports our knowledge of the negative health outcomes for women and their children. Rooted in the philosophy that parenting should be empowering and actionable—not fearful and confusing—we recognize the dire ramifications of removing children from their caregivers, including the potential for lifelong and generational developmental, mental health, and medical needs. Research shows that experiencing intense psychological trauma even results in a genetic impact on a person’s future children. Epigenetic changes resulting from these traumatic separations will have lasting and irreparable effects.

Andrea Goodman, Expecting Health’s Director of Engagement, stated, *"As maternal and child health experts, we are all too familiar with the intrinsic need for children to be physically connected to and protected by their parents, and this forced separation and deviation from their normal will greatly disrupt their health and wellbeing, both immediately and over time. These practices are outright unethical and dangerous."*

Further, these practices are unlawful and conflict directly with our family-centered values. Seeking asylum is legally protected both domestically and internationally. Many of the families who are being devastatingly separated are seeking safety for their children, leaving violent situations out of their control.

Expecting Health continues our efforts towards reducing the impact of social determinants on health and fully denounces this border separation policy. The practice violates fundamental human rights and comes with lifelong, negative outcomes for families. We stand with the American Public Health Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, Zero to Three, along with other colleagues, and fully endorse their statements in strong and unified opposition.

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#### About Expecting Health

*Expecting Health was founded by a group of women with a simple idea: families deserve and should expect more—more support, more guidance, better health. We believe that all new and expecting families deserve accessible, timely, and science-based information to make the best decisions for their health and the health of their children. Rooted in 32 years of community programs and representing national voices and family-centered experiences, Expecting Health shares science-based and policy-informed information that reflects the lived experiences of individuals and families. For more information, visit [www.ExpectingHealth.org](http://www.ExpectingHealth.org).*