COUNSELING PARTNERS OF LOS ANGELES

How to Help Your Family Cope with Deportation Fear & Anxiety

In this newsletter:

Learn how to cope with anxiety and other mental health issues in this tumultuous, anti-immigrant climate.

Living With Chronic Stress

Many families, no matter their legal or immigrant status, often find themselves in chronic stress, fear, and anxiety of being deported or separated from loved ones. This prolonged stress can exacerbate preexisting mental health conditions and lead to symptoms that look like Post Traumatic Disorder, including flashbacks, hypervigilance, and intrusive thoughts. Children are not immune to this stress, as the fear of losing a parent or their school community looms large, leading to behavioral issues, academic problems, and even separation anxiety and depression.

In this newsletter, we will go over ways you and your family can cope with the anxiety and unknown caused by deportation fear. Read on for tips to stay grounded during this unprecedented time, and for important information about your rights.

Effects on Children

Children encounter significant challenges when a family member is deported or when they experience related fears. These challenges can include economic difficulties, unstable housing, food insecurity, and separation from parents. Additionally, children may exhibit behavioral changes such as altered eating and sleeping patterns, along with emotional responses like increased crying, anxiety, anger, aggression, withdrawal, and an intensified sense of fear.

Effects on Parents & Adults

Adults indicate that deportations and the looming threat of them within the community take a significant emotional toll. They frequently encounter feelings of sadness, fatigue, hopelessness, anxiety, fear, mistrust, and hypervigilance. Issues such as nightmares and fluctuations in weight are also prevalent. The ongoing anxiety and psychological stress surrounding the fear of deportation—whether for themselves, family members, or community members—are linked to increased cardiovascular risk factors.

So How Do I Help My Family Cope?

THERE IS SUPPORT TO HELP YOU DEAL WITH IMMIGRATION AND DEPORTATION-RELATED FEAR, ANXIETY, AND OTHER MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES.

1. Seek out professional help (see page 3). Mental health therapy may be new to you, but having the confidential support of a professional to whom you can confide may aid tremendously. See the next page for resources.
2. Connect with support groups (Reach out to your school's principal to see if CPLA can help with one
3. Lean on your support system
4. Take advantage of online resources
    a. Child Mind Institute
    b. Headspace
    c. Calm
5. Know your legal rights (see pages 4 and on for a more detailed breakdown of your rights).

https://www.communitypsychology.com/effects-of-deportation-on-families-communities/

Where Can I Get Help?

CRISIS SUPPORT

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (U.S.): Accessible 24/7 for anyone in a mental health crisis. Contact 988 or text “HELLO” to 741741 for immediate assistance.
- Crisis Text Line: A free and confidential service available around the clock for those in crisis. Simply text “HELLO” to 741741 to reach a trained crisis counselor.
- SAMHSA Helpline: Provides support for individuals and families dealing with substance abuse or mental health challenges. Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) for free, confidential help.

MENTAL HEALTH THERAPY

Receive confidential support and assistance from a trained mental health professional

- List of therapists who specialize in undocumented and immigration issues: https://unitedwedream.org/our-work/undocuhealth-wellness/mental-health-directory/
- Free or Low-Cost Counseling in multiple languages: https://openpathcollective.org/
- Support groups for children who have experienced the effects of deportation: https://rainbows.org/find-a-group/

OTHER SUPPORT FOR IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

- The National Immigration Law Center provides advocacy and resources for immigrants, including access to mental health support services: https://www.nilc.org/
- Immigrants Rising offers Wellness Support Groups: These virtual sessions last for six weeks, allowing undocumented individuals to share their experiences and receive support: https://immigrantsrising.org/supportgroups/
- A Guide to Navigating the U.S. Healthcare System as an Immigrant: Immigrants may encounter obstacles in accessing healthcare; however, this guide offers valuable tips for navigating the U.S. system and locating mental health services: https://www.boundless.com/blog/how-to-navigate-the-u-s-healthcare-system-as-an-immigrant/

CPLA also has parent counseling and coaching. We provide FREE virtual counseling to parents of children attending our partner schools. Reach out to parents@counselingpartnersofla.org

https://www.boundless.com/blog/mental-health-resources-for-immigrants/

THINK ABOUT MAKING A FAMILY PREPAREDNESS PLAN.

It's crucial for immigrant families to prepare for the possibility of stricter immigration policies, all while avoiding unnecessary panic. Mixed-status families, in particular, face the risk of separation if any members are undocumented. Parents should be aware that they cannot be deported before a hearing before a judge. However, it's wise to have a childcare arrangement and an emergency plan ready in case parents are taken into immigration custody. Families should ensure their emergency contacts are current, so their wishes regarding their children's care can be followed if a parent is detained or deported. The ILRC offers a family preparedness plan that can assist in these situations. For more information, families can visit https://www.ilrc.org/family-preparednessplan.

OTHER RESOURCES

- Know Your Rights flyers & red cards (https://www.ilrc.org/red-cards)
- Referrals for legal services (https://www.immigrationlawhelp.org)
- Anti-fraud brochures (https://www.ilrc.org/anti-fraud-flyers)
- Family preparedness toolkits (https://www.ilrc.org/familypreparedness-plan)
- Immigration options flyers (https://www.ilrc.org/immigrationoptions-undocumented-immigrantchildren)

You have constitutional rights:

- DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR if an immigration agent is knocking on the door.
- DO NOT ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS from an immigration agent if they try to talk to you. You have the right to remain silent.
- DO NOT SIGN ANYTHING without first speaking to a lawyer. You have the right to speak with a lawyer.
- If you are outside of your home, ask the agent if you are free to leave and if they say yes, leave calmly.
- GIVE THIS CARD TO THE AGENT. If you are inside of your home, show the card through the window or slide it under the door.

I do not wish to speak with you, answer your questions, or sign or hand you any documents based on my 5th Amendment rights under the United States Constitution.

I do not give you permission to enter my home based on my 4th Amendment rights under the United States Constitution unless you have a warrant to enter, signed by a judge or magistrate with my name on it that you slide under the door.

I do not give you permission to search any of my belongings based on my 4th Amendment rights.

I choose to exercise my constitutional rights.

These cards are available to citizens and noncitizens alike.

Example of what's written on a "red card"

Know Your Rights

1. **You have the right to remain silent**
    a. According to the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, you are not obligated to speak with an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent, respond to their inquiries, or sign any documents if they request. If you choose to speak, immigrant rights organizations suggest asking to consult with a lawyer or requesting to see an arrest warrant that includes your name.
2. **You have the right to leave an interaction with ICE**
    a. If an officer stops you, you can inquire whether you are being arrested or detained. If the answer is no, you have the right to walk away from the interaction with ICE, as stated by Informed Immigrant, an organization dedicated to immigrant resources.
3. **You have the right to refuse a search**
    a. You can decline to consent to a search by ICE officials by stating: “I do not consent to being searched.”
4. **You do not have to open your door if ICE knocks**
    a. Under the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, you are safeguarded against “unreasonable searches and seizures.” This means ICE officials cannot search you or your home without your consent or a warrant signed by a judge.
5. **You are not required to sign documents presented by ICE**
    a. Numerous organizations advise consulting an immigration lawyer before signing any documents, as you typically have the right to a hearing with a judge to contest your deportation.
6. **You have the right to hire a lawyer**
    a. Under the Sixth Amendment, you have the right to seek legal counsel for your immigration proceedings. If you are arrested or detained by ICE or Border Patrol, you may hire a lawyer, although the government is not obligated to provide one. If arrested by the police, you are entitled to a government-appointed lawyer.
7. **You have the right to take photos in public during an interaction with ICE.**

For more information:

https://borderlessmag.org/2025/01/17/know-your-rights-immigration-custom-enforcement-deportation-trump/