



## Prolonged Detention of Undocumented Migrant Children

**Washington, DC** (Sep 7, 2018) Following is the statement of International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation President Kevin J. Connors in response to the proposal from the Homeland Security Department to allow for the prolonged detention of undocumented migrant children:

“We are gravely concerned by the Homeland Security Department proposal to hold children in detention for the full duration of their migration proceedings.

Detention is a traumatic and frightening experience for all children. Law currently requires children to be released with a parent if possible within 20 days of detention.

The indefinite detention of children in immigration detention has been shown to profoundly compromise the mental health of children and their families. Neuroscience has shown that when infants and small children are left alone they experience this aloneness as pain. As they are too little to run or fight to protect themselves, neurobiologically they very quickly move to freeze or dissociation. When a child is dissociating they are fighting to survive and not growing and developing as a safe and secure child does.

Indefinite immigration detention causes severe psychological distress in children, resulting in depression, anxiety, self-harm and attempts at suicide. Their long-term outcomes are profoundly impacted by the disruption of their psychological development, family relationships and education.

The treatment of children throughout immigration proceedings should always be humane and in their best interests.”

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### **About ISSTD**

*The International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation represents mental health professionals who specialise in treating complex trauma and dissociation. The ISSTD's membership includes more than 1250 clinicians and researchers. The ISSTD seeks to advance clinical, scientific, and societal understanding about the prevalence and consequences of complex trauma and dissociation.*

### **For more information, contact:**

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