

# Advocacy Statement

Advancing Health Justice for the Mobile Poor

## CHILDREN CROSSING THE BORDER

The Migrant Clinicians Network (MCN) holds the position that immigrant children fleeing violence in their home countries must receive priority consideration for their safety and health. In our current advocacy statement, MCN states:

***We support the humane treatment of immigrant, migrant, and undocumented populations being held in detention; specifically, the provision of basic and necessary health care needs that prevents the endangerment and loss of life.***

Conditions described in the press underscore the critical need to improve basic living conditions and provide health care. We are grateful for our colleagues providing services along the US/Mexico border and commend their initiative and humanity. Action is required to prevent the further endangerment and loss of life for immigrant children. We believe the following steps are now necessary:

1. Obtain sound, up to date information that accurately describes circumstances of the arrival, apprehension, detention, care and return of immigrant children.

It is incumbent upon our civil society to be well informed of actions taken by our government and the governments of neighboring countries. MCN is not a primary source of information on immigrant children but serves as a conduit for accurate information by identifying reliable sources of reporting. Please visit these sites for current information:

▶ **Children on the Run**

Study conducted by UN High Commissioner for Refugees in March 2014. Interviewed 404 kids and found most eligible for protection here (about half due to violence from crime or state actors, and about 20% from home violence)

▶ **How US Foreign Policy Created an Immigrant Refugee Crisis on its own Southern Border**

Humanistic article that uses the story of a mother and daughter crossing the border to explain how US policies have fueled violence and immigration.

▶ **Debunking 8 Myths about why Central American Children are Migrating**

Breaks down myths such as- this is due to "lax enforcement," that it's solely a response to gang violence, that it just started recently, etc.

▶ **Child migrants at Texas border: an immigration crisis that's hardly new**

Article from The Guardian on how the crisis of unaccompanied minors crossing in Texas is not new. Has other good background information.

▶ **'Flee or die': violence drives Central America's child migrants to US border**

Another Guardian article- puts a human face on the hard conditions of violence and poverty in Honduras and elsewhere in Central America.

▶ **Testimony of Most Reverend Mark Seitz, Bishop of the Diocese of El Paso, Texas, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops On Unaccompanied Children to the House Judiciary Committee June 25, 2014**

Addresses unaccompanied child migration as a humanitarian crisis.

2. Articulate your concerns and position to your legislators and policy makers so that they are informed of the desires of their constituents.

Clear statements supporting the provision of safe living conditions and basic health care coupled with continuing supervision of these minors by those who receive them must be delivered to decision-makers. This minimal level of human responsibility to child welfare must not be ignored or refused because of larger abstract concerns related to immigration.

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3. Support efforts to bring basic and necessary health care to vulnerable immigrant children

Several organizations are deploying clinicians to communities along the US/Mexico border to provide basic health care services to immigrant children detained in inadequate facilities awaiting administrative processing. Directed donations of supplies or money are needed but are best sent in response to well organized efforts

4. Support or provide foster care for immigrant children without family support as they await review in the immigration system. Care of these children is a humanitarian need that transcends political affiliations. There is an urgent need for families to host these children in the foster system rather than to keep them in makeshift detention centers. Your local foster care agency will have current information on the needs in your area. Those who are not able to foster can send tangible gifts to foster families through appropriate foster agencies serving these children. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) are two of the larger providers of foster care management for this population.