

Paper Doll Campaign Toolkit

The Faith, Justice and Action Ministry at Oro Valley Church of the Apostles has begun a mailing campaign that advocates for children who are incarcerated in ICE detention. It has been our experience in talking about this issue with people that many simply do not know what is happening.

This project was inspired by the “Paper Dolls to Free Families” campaign developed by the *National Coalition to End Family and Child Detention*. The link to their campaign is below:
<https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/national-coalition-to-end-family-and-child-detention-launches-paper-dolls-to-free-families-campaign/>

Our campaign builds on this by including the actual words from the children experiencing ICE detention. By sharing their stories, we hope to help others “see these children into existence” make sure they are not forgotten, and seek their release.

Seeing children into existence

Our version of the campaign is about “seeing these children into existence” by sharing their actual words while being held in detention. We are writing the words that children in detention have used to describe their experiences right onto the paper dolls. We organized their words into 8 different categories as follows:

- 1) Children are confused and asking for help
- 2) Children want to leave detention
- 3) Children’s comments indicating the experience of trauma
- 4) How children feel in detention
- 5) How long children have been in detention
- 6) Children describe the conditions in detention – 1
- 7) Children describe the conditions in detention – 2
- 8) Children say, “We are not criminals.”

There are 10 quotes in each category that are numbered 1-10. (See the attached sheet for categories and quotes.)

Our Goals

- To live into our faith commitment by seeking justice and peace for all people;
- To relay what the children have communicated about the conditions in ICE detention;
- To share their words and stories with our elected officials so they advocate for these children; and
- To begin working to transform the current immigration system to one that embodies dignity, compassion and welcome.

Here are the materials you will need:

- 10" x 13" clasp envelopes
- 8 ½" x 11" cardstock in different colors so the dolls will be sturdy. (Avoid neon and dark colors.)
- Dark markers or pens
- A paper doll template cut out of cardboard using a gingerbread person shape that is approximately 8 ½" x 10 ½".
- The quotes from children in detention

How Do You Start?

Creating the Paper Dolls

- 1) Decide which elected officials you want to send the dolls to. (We decided to send them to our federal representatives and senators as well as our state legislators who represent the districts our congregation lives in. For our federal representatives, we will send the dolls to their local offices **and** their offices in Washington, DC as mailings sent to DC are documented. We added up all these addresses to see how many envelopes we would need for a mailing.)
- 2) Contact the local office of one of your federal representatives who has denounced ICE detention. Tell them about the campaign and let them know that you will be sending them a packet. Ask them to provide you with feedback about how to make this campaign most effective and stay in contact with them throughout the campaign. They might suggest some media opportunities.
- 3) Trace the paper doll onto the cardstock. We found we could easily cut 2 dolls at a time so we paired the traced doll with a piece of blank cardstock to cut 2 at once. You could also make copies of the doll using cardstock in your copy machine rather than tracing them all.
- 4) You will be creating a total of 80 dolls to send to each person over the course of several weeks. So, multiply 80 by the number of envelopes you'll send to get your total number of dolls. Each envelope will contain 8 dolls/ mailing. (13 envelopes x 8 dolls/envelope x 10 weeks = 1,040 total dolls for our church to make.) We cut out dolls at home and together at church.
- 5) Gather your group together to cut out the dolls and begin writing the quotes onto the dolls. Your first mailing will include the first quote in each of the 8 categories listed above, so you can figure out how many dolls you'll need to complete for that initial mailing.
- 6) Begin writing their words on the paper doll as legibly as you can in a dark marker or pen. (The different styles of handwriting are more impactful and authentic so don't try to make it perfect). When indicated, include the child's name and age on the doll.
- 7) If you like, you can embellish the dolls (draw a face, add hair, draw clothes, cut clothes from construction paper to glue on, etc.) The children's words are the most important part.

Copying the “Did You Know” Facts

- 1) There are 10 different “Did You Know?” fact sheets about children in detention. The facts are included on poignant artwork depicting children in detention that was created by Michelina Nicotera-Taxiera. Include one of these with each packet of paper dolls. (These fact sheets can also be posted on social media and shared with your friends around the country every couple of weeks.)

How the Campaign Works

Our goal is to create a sustained effort over time rather than have one “viral moment.” To do this you will make 10 different packets of 8 quotes each. We will be sending these to our elected officials **every other week over the course of 20 weeks**. (Or create your own time frame.) Every time elected officials receive a mailing, they will be reading new quotes. The first mailing will include all quotes labeled #1 from each category. The second mailing will include all quotes labeled #2 from each category – and so on.

We will also check the congressional calendar to see when our representatives are back in the state so that we can make an appointment to see them in person to ask about the mailings they have been receiving and engage them in conversation on this issue.

We will also send mailings to the people who are running for office.

Each packet will contain:

- A letter addressed personally to each representative (we have attached sample of the one our group wrote together, and then invited members of our congregation sign after reading it during church announcements)
- The 8 paper dolls with different quotes from #1 in each category.
- A copy of the “Did You Know?” fact about children in detention. The sources for each of the facts are included at the end of this toolkit. Here is the link to Michelina’s artwork that you have permission to use:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XG5SxXOW7Sodqm6lvAfLsy4kDZPMP8r7Fqk4qrxCFAC/edit?tab=t.0>

Your Letter

Some items your letter could include are:

- a fact about ICE detention,
- the request that they read and hear what the children are saying,

- a statement about how ICE detention trauma shortens lifespans,
- a statement that says that you, as people of faith, are not okay with these policies that hurt children,
- A request for them to take action to keep children out of ICE detention and not to separate them from their families or communities; and
- A request for them to respond to your group and tell you what action they will take.

(This last part is very important.)

Your subsequent letters can begin making positive suggestions of actions that do not include detention, separation of families, or separation from communities (deportation).

As a Side Note: We personally are avoiding the phrase “Abolish Ice” in our letter. It is an easy phrase for officials to discount or misinterpret and accuse us of not caring about national security. (As happened with *defund the police*.) Instead, we will try to emphasize some positive solutions like redirecting the new money that has recently been given to ICE to be used to fund migration with dignity rather than mass incarceration and deportation.

Keep separate copies of each letter on your computer so that you can use the same address and just change up the body of the letter for subsequent mailings.

Now - Put the packet into the 10” x 13” envelope, hand address it with your representative’s name and address, and mail it. Tell your church administrative assistant about what you are doing and ask that you be contacted when any responses are received.

Schedule

Create a calendar of who will be responsible for getting the mailings out every other week and ensure that you have enough paper dolls made for each mailing. Personalize the follow-up letters based on the feedback you receive from your elected officials. If there is no response, then comment that you have not yet heard back from them and that you are looking forward to knowing what action they will take.

Anyone Can Do This

We have crafted this campaign as people of faith but we feel that this approach can also be adopted for other groups who want to raise their voices such as:

- educators who are “champions” for children and families;
- community organizations who value the contributions of people who have immigrated in their communities; and
- industries that thrive because of the participation of newcomers in their workforce.

Share what you are doing with these groups in your community and others who you think would want to participate.

To Learn More

Refer to the information on the website of the National Coalition listed at the beginning of this document and the link below for the Children’s Defense Fund which has also

advertised the campaign. These groups have more specific information about child detention that you might want to highlight in mailings you send to your candidates.

<https://www.childrensdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Paper-Dolls-to-Free-Families-Toolkit>. Also check out We Choose Welcome and their No Kids in Detention toolkit at <https://www.wechoosewelcome.com/no-kids-in-detention>.

Other ideas

- Explore getting some media training so that you can learn how to bring the story to your local new outlets.
- Expand the mailings to local officials as well. Decisions about detention facilities are often made locally.
- Start contacting other churches of all faith traditions in your area. Set up personal meetings to share this project and invite them to join you. Find out what kind of justice activities they might be involved with. Share your resources and collaborate in ways that make sense to raise your voices as people of faith.
- Document what you are doing.

Here is the link to the 10 different “Did You Know” pieces of artwork by Michelina Nicotera-Taxiera:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XG5SxXOw7Sodqm6lvAfLsy4kDZPMP8r7Fqk4qrxCFAC/edit?tab=t.0>

What follows on the next pages are the first and second letters that we sent to our elected officials, the 8 categories of children’s words, and sample paper doll template.

First Letter:

Oro Valley Church of the Apostles
12111 North La Cholla Blvd.
Oro Valley, AZ 85755

Representative Juan Ciscomani
461 Canon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

May 24, 2026

Dear Representative Ciscomani,

Did you know that an average of 226 children have been held in ICE detention every day during the last year? (Marshall Project) The words on these paper dolls are from children who have been detained in ICE facilities. (ProPublica) Read them. Listen to them describe how they are treated in detention and hear their pleas for your help. What if this was a child you loved?

The trauma experienced by these Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) causes physiological changes that shorten children's lifespans by up to 20 years. (Dr. Harris) As your constituents and people of faith we are not OK with policies like this that hurt children on our behalf. Children should not be in ICE detention or forcibly separated from their families and communities.

We need your help to end these policies harming vulnerable people impacted by crisis migration. Please let us know what kind of action you will take on this matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

The Faith, Justice, and Action Ministry at OV Church of the Apostles

References:

- Marshall Project - <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2026/04/06/ice-kids-detention-over-6200-trump>
- ProPublica - <https://www.propublica.org/article/ice-dilley-children-letters>
- Adverse Childhood Experiences - <https://www.cdc.gov/aces/about/index.html> and Crisis Migration Adverse Childhood Events: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36626084/>
- Hear the Words of Detained Migrant Children - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ztUll-jpJU>
- How Childhood Trauma Affect Health Across a Lifetime: Dr Harris <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95ovlJ3dsNk>



ORO VALLEY
EPISCOPAL CHURCH *of the* APOSTLES

Oro Valley Church of the Apostles
12111 North La Cholla Blvd.
Oro Valley, AZ 85755

Representative Juan Ciscomani
461 Canon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

June 16, 2026

Dear Representative Ciscomani,

A few weeks ago, we sent you a letter that included paper dolls that had words of children being held in detention in the United States. We were hoping to hear back from you with ideas you have that would end policies that harm vulnerable people impacted by crisis migration.

This envelope contains new messages from children who have been detained in ICE facilities in our country. (ProPublica, NY Times) Read them. Listen to them describe how they are treated in detention and hear their pleas for your help. What if this was a child you loved?

The trauma experienced by these Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) causes physiological changes that shorten children's lifespans by up to 20 years. (Dr. Nadine Burke Harris) As your constituents and people of faith we are not OK with policies like this that hurt children on our behalf. Children should not be in ICE detention or forcibly separated from their families and communities.

We need your help to end these policies harming vulnerable people impacted by crisis migration. Please let us know what kind of action you will take on this matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,
The Faith, Justice, and Action Ministry at OV Church of the Apostles

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- ProPublica - <https://www.propublica.org/article/ice-dilley-children-letters>
- Adverse Childhood Experiences - <https://www.cdc.gov/aces/about/index.html> and Crisis Migration Adverse Childhood Events: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36626084/>
- Hear the Words of Detained Migrant Children - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ztUll-jpJU>
- How Childhood Trauma Affect Health Across a Lifetime: Dr Harris <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95ovlJ3dsNk>

On the following pages you will find the 8 different categories of quotes from children in detention that we developed. There are enough quotes to send out 10 different sets of paper dolls, each including 8 dolls. For your first mailing, include the #1 quote from each category. For your second mailing, include the #2 quote from each category – and so on. You will notice that the quotes in the category of We Are Not Criminals are repetitive. We just felt this was an important quote to include every time since we were all told that only dangerous criminals would be put into detention.

When we complete the paper doll campaign, we may decide to continue by sending other information related to children and families being held in ICE detention, family separation, or separation from communities through deportation.

Please let us know about how you might be using this campaign. You can contact the Faith, Justice, Action Ministry of our church in Oro Valley at the address you see on the letters – or – you can email Gale Hall at lilisquilt@gmail.com.

Category #1 - Children are Confused and Asking for Help

13-year old Gerson:

- 1) "God touch the hearts of those at ICE to let us out."

7-year old Mathias Ber:

- 2) "I am writing this letter so my story can be heard by you. I need your help."

14-year old Ariana from Honduras

- 3) "Arrests are happening when people don't even have any orders. Arrests are happening illegally."

14-year old Gaby from Columbia

- 4) "I haven't been able to see my friends and family since I got here."

Maria – 9 years old

- 5) "I am not happy. Please get me out of here."

Gustavo – 13 years old

- 6) "To this day, I don't know what we did wrong to be detained."
- 7) "I feel like I'll never get out of here. I just ask that you don't forget about us."

Susej – 9 years old

- 8) "Please, please. I have been here too long."

Gabby – 14 years old

- 9) "It's hell like. I really do want to go."

Deiver – 9 years old

- 10) "I want to leave and go to the spelling bee."

Category #2 - Children Want to Leave Detention

13-year old Gerson:

- 1) "I want to go home."

A 7-year old in detention

- 2) "I cry a lot. I want to get out of here."
- 3) "I want to go back to my school."

7-year old Mathias Ber:

- 4) "I cry a lot: I want to get out of here and go back to my school."

7-year old Diana Camilla Crespo Gonzalez

- 5) "I feel bad because I miss my friends and I miss my teacher and my house and my bed."

9-year old Valentina

- 6) "I want God to help us get out of here so we can be happy again and study together again as a family."
- 7) "Please help us and our parents get out of here. Thank you."

9-year old Susei

- 8) "I miss my school and my friends."
- 9) "My mom and I came to the US looking for a good and safe place to live, and my mom was looking for a good job."

Maria –

- 10) "When I arrived, every night I cried and now I don't sleep well."

Category #3 - Comments Indicating the experience of Trauma

General Comments:

1) "Since the day my mom and I got detained in Manhattan NY, my life was instantly paused."

2) "All kids are being damaged mentally."

7-year old Diana Camilla Crespo Gonzalez

3) "I lived in Oregon. We were detained in a hospital parking lot."

9-year old Valentina

4) "I feel like I've had the worst days of my life."

9-year old Susei

5) "Seen how people like me, immigrants are been treated changes my perspective about the US."

14-year old Ariana from Honduras

6) "I remind myself that once I go back to Honduras, a lot of dangerous things could happen to my mom."

7) "It is sad to hear that people's cases are being denied and are getting sent back to their country places where they are escaping from and are looking for protection and want to be safe."

Other comments from children:

8) "My sister and I hold up a blanket for one another so that no one can see us go to the bathroom."

9) "I was wet when I got here and was placed in a cage without being given dry clothes."

Scarlett – 14 year old

10) "I feel very bored and overwhelmed because I am locked up."

Category #4 - How Kids Feel in Detention

A 9-year old:

- 1) "I just want to go the United States to be with my grandparents and end this nightmare."

General Comments:

- 2) "I feel bad here. Bad because I can't see my pet Willi."
- 3) "I feel bad here because I can't eat what I want."
- 4) "I feel bad here because I can't see my friends at school and at home."
- 5) "I've never been separated from my siblings and it's honestly sad because they are little and they need their mom and sister."

A 13-year old:

- 6) "I feel locked up."

14-year old Ariana from Honduras

- 7) "Since I got to this center, all you feel is sadness and mostly depression."

14-year old Gaby from Columbia

- 8) "I haven't felt happy since I got here."
- 9) "I feel so much sadness and depression."

Maria

- 10) When I arrived, every night I cried and now I don't sleep well."

Category #5 - How Long Children Have Been In Detention

A 9-year old:

- 1) "My parents say it's been 4 months but for me and my little sister, it feels like a year."

7-year old Mathias Ber:

- 2) "I have been detained for 23 days with my mother and my 3-year old sister."
- 3) "I've been here too long."

9-year old Valentina

- 4) "I've been detained for a long time. My parents say it has been 4 months but for me and my little sister Jireth it feels like a year."

9-year old Susei

- 5) "I'm from Venezuela. I have been 50 days in Dilley Immigration Processing Center."
- 6) "I have been 2 years and 6 months in the United States, and I was happy with my friends in the school."

14-year old Ariana from Honduras

- 7) "I have been detained for 45 days and I have never felt so much fear to go to a new place as I feel here."

14-year old Gaby from Columbia

- 8) "I've been detained in the Dilley Immigration Processing Center for 20 days and I haven't been getting the education due to being here."

Other comments from children in detention:

- 9) "Sometimes when we ask, we are told we will be in here for months."
- 10) "We've been in the Dilley Immigration Processing Center for 7 months, it's not fair that ICE officers are not following the laws."

Category #6 – Children Describe the Conditions in Detention – 1

13-year old Gerson:

- 1) "We are all stuck in rooms that can only hold 12 people."

A 13-year old:

- 2) They don't have schools, doctors – all they have are nurses.

14-year old Gaby from Columbia

- 3) "The food is bad. I'm tired of almost the same thing."

Maria

- 4) "I am in a jail and I am sad and I have fainted 2 times here inside."

Other comments from children:

"There isn't water or soap to wash our hands after we use the bathroom."

- 5) "We have to ask for toilet paper if we want any."

- 6) "There is no room to move without stepping on the others."

- 7) "We had to sleep on the cold concrete floor. The lights are on all the time."

- 8) "There are no activities – only crying."

10) "Almost 3 days ago I got a fever. They moved me to a flu cell. There is no one to take care of you there. They just give you pills twice a day."

Category #7 – Children Describe the Conditions in Detention – 2

13-year old Gerson:

- 1) “They won’t let us go out to the playgrounds and parks.”

A 13-year old:

- 2) “Dad, there’s an agent here and he’s watching us.”

7-year old Mathias Ber:

- 3) “They don’t treat us well here.”
- 4) “There are many children here; we are being held captive.”

14-year old Ariana from Honduras

- 5) “Our rights are not being provided.”

14-year old Gaby from Columbia

- 6) “The officers have a bad manner of speaking to the residents – when they are asking anything the workers treat the residents unhumanly, verbally and I don’t want to imagine how they would act if they were unsupervised.”

Ariana

- 7) “Serious situations happen and the officers can’t take them serious enough. There are no consequences. They don’t care.”

Susej – 9 years old

- 8) “Honestly, I don’t feel good because there’s always an officer around like watching me.”

Other comments from children:

- 9) “I’m too scared to ask the officials for any more food.”
- 10) “We cannot sleep because every 15 to 20 minutes the guards are yelling something.”

Category #8 – Children Say, “We Aren’t Criminals”

13-year old Gerson:

- 1) “We are not criminals.”
- 2) “We are not criminals.”
- 3) “We are not criminals.”

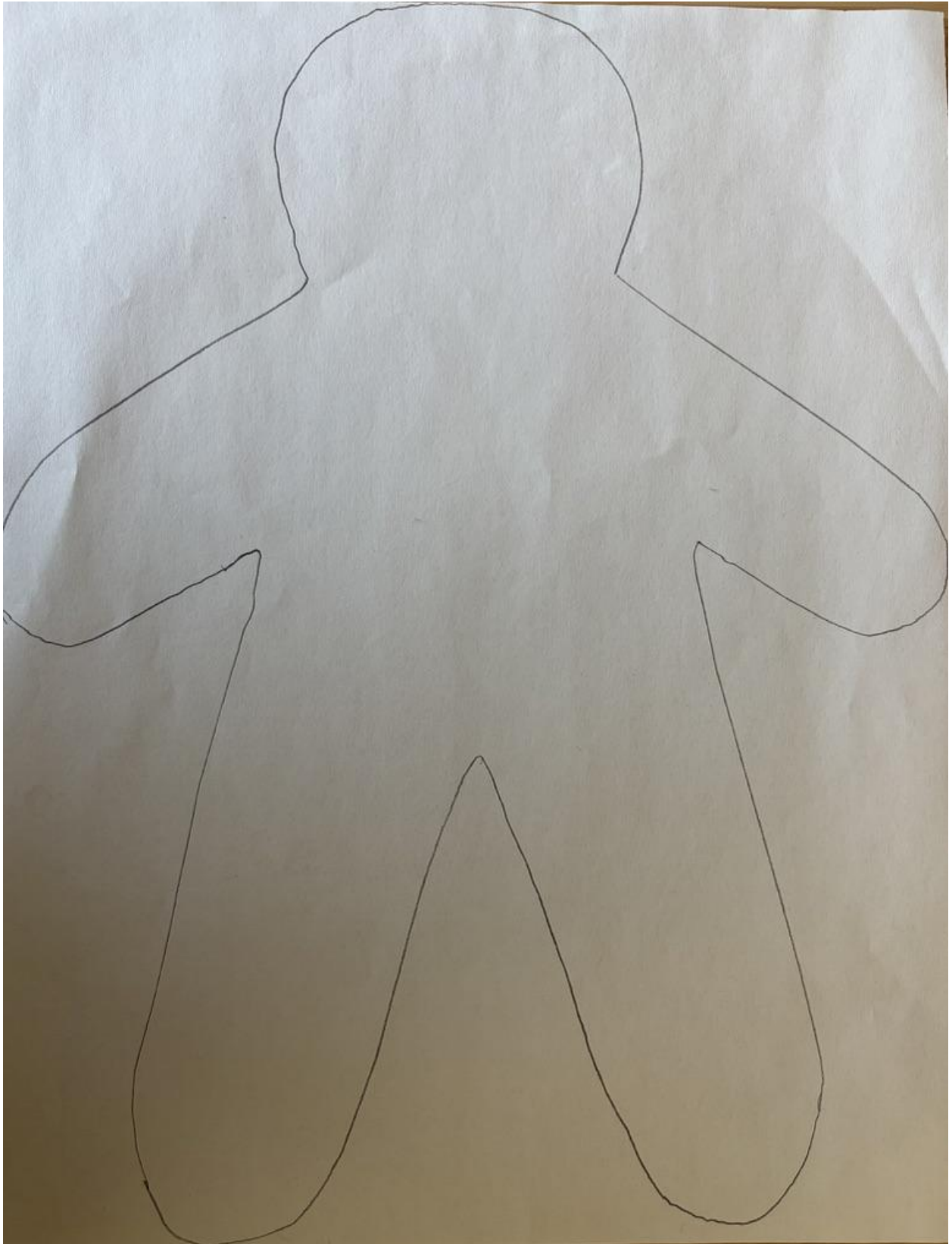
A 13-year old:

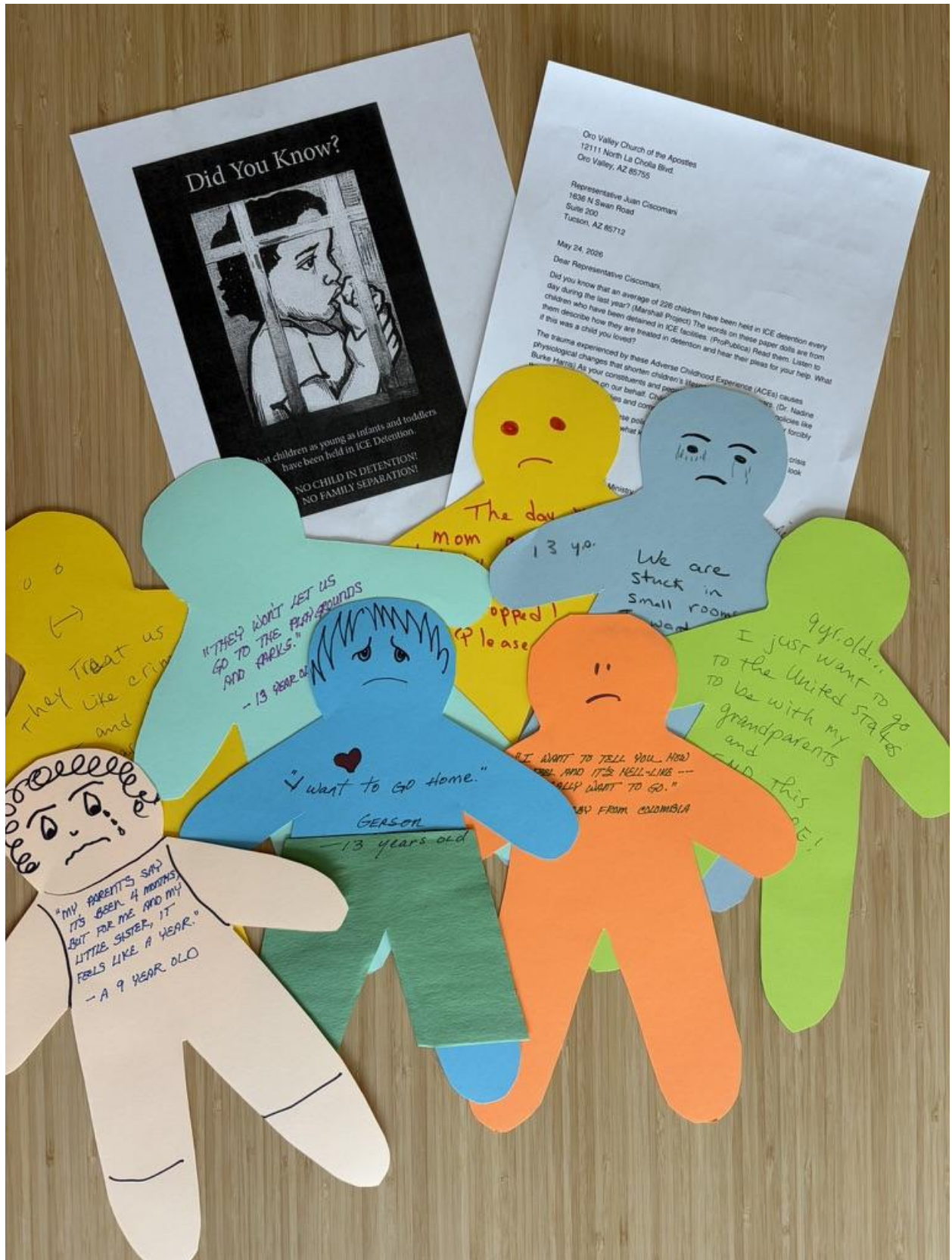
- 4) “I see how they treat us like criminals and we’re not.”
- 5) “I see how they treat us like criminals and we’re not.”
- 6) “I see how they treat us like criminals and we’re not.”
- 7) “I see how they treat us like criminals and we’re not.”

7-year old Diana Camilla Crespo Gonzalez

- 8) “We are not criminals. I’m a very pretty girl.”
- 9) “We are not criminals. I’m a very pretty girl.”
- 10) “We are not criminals. I’m a very pretty girl.”

Paper Doll Pattern





Did You Know?



Children as young as infants and toddlers have been held in ICE Detention.

**NO CHILD IN DETENTION!
NO FAMILY SEPARATION!**

Oro Valley Church of the Apostles
12111 North La Cholla Blvd.
Oro Valley, AZ 85755

Representative Juan Ciscomani
1636 N Swan Road
Suite 200
Tucson, AZ 85712

May 24, 2020

Dear Representative Ciscomani,

Did you know that an average of 226 children have been held in ICE detention every day during the last year? (Marshall Project) The words on these paper dolls are from children who have been detained in ICE facilities. (ProPublica) Read them. Listen to them describe how they are treated in detention and hear their pleas for your help. What if this was a child you loved?

The trauma experienced by these Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) causes physiological changes that shorten children's lifespan. (Dr. Nadine Burke Harris) As your constituents and people on our behalf, children and communities, we are asking you to take action to stop what is happening.

They Treat us like crims and

"THEY WON'T LET US GO TO THE PLAYGROUNDS AND PARKS."
- 13 YEAR OLD

"I want to go home."
GERSON
- 13 years old

The day Mom

13 yr

We are stuck in small rooms

9yr old... I just want to go to the United States to be with my grandparents and

"MY PARENTS SAY IT'S BEEN 4 MONTHS BUT FOR ME AND MY LITTLE SISTER, IT FEELS LIKE A YEAR."
- A 9 YEAR OLD

"I WANT TO TELL YOU HOW I FEEL AND IT'S HELL-LINE -- I REALLY WANT TO GO."
FROM COLOMBIA



Oro Valley Church of the Apostles
12111 North La Cholla Blvd.
Oro Valley, AZ 85755
Members in Pinal and Pima Counties

Representative Rachel Keshel
Arizona State Capitol Complex
1700 W Washington St
Phoenix, AZ 85007

May 24, 2026

Dear Representative Keshel,

Did you know that an average of 226 children have been held in ICE detention every day during the last year? (Marshall Project) The words on these paper dolls are from children who have been detained in ICE facilities. (ProPublica) Read them. Listen to them describe how they are treated in detention and hear their pleas for your help. What if this was a child you loved?

The trauma experienced by these Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) causes physiological changes that shorten children's lifespans by up to 20 years. (Dr. Nadine Burke Harris) As your constituents and people of faith we are not OK with policies like this that hurt children on our behalf. Children should not be in ICE detention or forcibly separated from their families and communities.

We need your help to end these policies. Please let us know what we can do forward to hearing from you.

Gaby
Age 14

"I want to tell you how..."

"I SEE HOW THEY TREAT US LIKE CRIMINALS AND WE ARE NOT!"
- A 13 YEAR OLD

"I want to go home. Please ICE let us out."
old.

"MY PARENTS SAY IT'S BEEN FOUR MONTHS BUT FOR ME AND MY LITTLE SISTER, IT FEELS LIKE A YEAR."
- A 9 YEAR OLD

"I just want to go to the United States to be with my grandparents and this n..."
- a 9 year old -

"THEY WON'T LET US GO OUT TO THE PLAYGROUNDS AND..."
old;

"all stuck that can a 12 people..."

**DID YOU KNOW?
DOCUMENTATION**

That 6200 children were booked in ICE detention since January of last year

"Immigration and Customs Enforcement has detained over 6,200 children during President Donald Trump's second term"

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2026/04/06/ice-kids-detention-over-6200-trump>

The Marshall Project April 6, 2026

"More than 6,300 children under 18, some as young as two months old, have been detained by federal immigration authorities during President Trump's second term."

<https://children thriveaction.org/2026/02/childrens-advocates-to-congress-there-is-no-appropriate-amount-of-time-for-children-to-be-detained/> CBS News May 31, 2026

That children as young as infants and toddlers have been held in ICE Detention

"More than 6,300 children under 18, some as young as two months old, have been detained by federal immigration authorities during President Trump's second term."

<https://children thriveaction.org/2026/02/childrens-advocates-to-congress-there-is-no-appropriate-amount-of-time-for-children-to-be-detained/> CBS News May 31, 2026

"There should be no question that a jail is the wrong place for a child. Just in the last two weeks, a toddler detained in Dilley nearly lost her life due to untreated respiratory illnesses and medical neglect in the facility." Wendy Cervantes, Director of Immigration and Immigrant Families at the Center for Law and Social Policy"

<https://children thriveaction.org/2026/02/childrens-advocates-to-congress-there-is-no-appropriate-amount-of-time-for-children-to-be-detained/>

Children's Advocates to Congress: There is no appropriate amount of time for Children to be in Detention
Children Thrive Action Network Feb 10, 2026

That some children have described the food in ICE Detention as being moldy and worm-filled and the water as undrinkable.

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2026/04/06/ice-kids-detention-over-6200-trump>

"Parents reported finding worms and mold in food and foul-smelling water."

The Marshall Project April 6, 2026

"Food contaminated with worms and mold, limited access to clean drinking water, inadequate medical care, these are a few of the allegations made by migrant families in recent court documents about their children's conditions while in ICE custody."

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/migrant-families-allege-children-held-by-ice-face-unsafe-and-unsanitary-conditions>

Migrant Families Allege Children Held by ICE face unsafe conditions.

PBS Jan. 20, 2026

That children often sleep on cement floors in ICE Detention with no room to walk between one another.

—“There were approximately 50 women and their children in the cell in Arizona...There was not enough room for everyone to lie down and some kids had to sleep near the toilet. If you got up, you would not have a space to sit when you came back. At times I was able to lie on the floor, but other nights it was so crowded that I had to sleep sitting up or kneeling.”—M.E.

—“I saw a “maximum capacity” sign outside the room that indicated forty people was the maximum number the cell could hold...Over time, more people arrived until there were close to sixty people in the cell. With that many people, there was no room to move and people were lying on the floor, including in the bathroom. “—J.C.C.O.

—“There were no beds in the cell and we were not provided any blankets or other bedding. My daughter tried to sleep on the bench and I sat up so that she could at least rest her head on my lap...I was not able to sleep at all because my daughter would have fallen off the bench if I had moved.”—B.C.L.

—“We were not able to sleep all night because of the cold. At one point my six month daughter did fall asleep briefly and I laid her down on the cold concrete floor. She was able to sleep a little bit but she was shivering from the cold as she slept. —G.F.G.

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Former%20Detainees%20Describe%20Horrific%20Conditions%20in%20CBP%20Detention.pdf>

“Former Detainees Describe Horrific Conditions in CBP Detention”

American Immigration Council

That ICE Detention Centers are a for-profit, multi-billion dollar industry that often uses cost-cutting, inhumane practices to maximize their profits.

“Two of Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) biggest contractors for building and managing detention centers have posted record revenue in 2025, as companies are expanding their facilities nationwide to hold more immigrants apprehended by the Trump Administration. GEO Group, which operates 19 facilities for ICE around the country, reported \$2.6 billion in total revenue in 2025, up 6% from \$2.43 billion in 2024. CoreCivic, which owns and operates at least ten ICE detention facilities, reported \$2.2 billion in total revenue in 2025, up 13% from \$1.96 billion in 2024.”

<https://time.com/7378284/ice-immigration-detention-contractors-record-revenue/>

ICE’s Largest Prison Contractors Hail New Growth Opportunities as Revenue Reaches All Time High. TIME Feb. 12, 2026

“When President Trump reopened Dilley in 2025, a for-profit company, CoreCivic, was given a contract worth \$180 million annually to run it. “

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/children-held-like-criminals-inside-ice-detention-center/>

Children Held Like Criminals inside ICE Detention Centers

CBS News May 31, 2026

That children often have no privacy in ICE Detention when they go to the bathroom and no soap to wash their hands afterwards.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ztUll-jpJU>

Hear The Words of Detained Children

NYT Opinion

*“In 2019, Mukherjee testified before Congress about the degrading conditions at immigrant detention facilities housing children, who she interviewed in person. None of the children had access to soap, she said, and some had not had not bathed for days. **More recently**, she has *written* and *spoken* about Dilley, a place she calls a “hellhole.” Children live in squalid conditions and also endure threats from officers, who say they’ll separate them from their families” —Elora Mukherjee a clinical professor of law at Columbia Law School and director of the Immigrants’ Rights Clinic*

<https://imprintnews.org/top-stories/worms-bugs-and-mold-conditions-for-detained-immigrant-children-worsen-under-trump/271341>

Worms, Bugs and Mold: Conditions for Detained Immigrant Children Worsen Under Trump
The Imprint Youth and Family News Feb 25 2026

—“There was no waste bin in the cell so the trash was piled in the corner of the room. Toilet paper was thrown on the floor. The odor was awful because some kids had diarrhea and the mothers did not have soap to wash their hands after cleaning them or changing their diapers. The cell was cleaned once a day but we still had no way to wash our hands”. —M.E.

—“The cell was very dirty for our entire time there. There were diapers, toilet paper and other trash strewn around the bathroom area when we arrived. No one came to clear the cell and the smell was terrible. We were not able to clean because there was no trash can.” —G.F.G.

—“it was impossible to really wash your hands or clean yourself after using the toilet, The conditions became disgusting with so many people packed into a cell in this way”. —N.G.P.

Former Detainees Describe Horrific Conditions in CBP Detention

American Immigration Council

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Former%20Detainees%20Describe%20Horrific%20Conditions%20in%20CBP%20Detention.pdf>

Former Detainees Describe Horrific Conditions in CBP Detention Terrible.

American Immigration Council

That the average age of children in ICE Detention is 7 years old.

“Half of the families interviewed were detained for over two months at Dilley (Immigration Processing Center) with some held for 180 days. The median age for detained children was 7 years old, the report found” <https://www.borderreport.com/border-report-tour/border-report-live/report-alleges-inhumane-coditions-at-migrant-detention-facility-for-families/>

Border Report April 14, 2026

That children often do not have school, activities or the ability to even go outside while in ICE Detention.

—We are all stuck in rooms that hold 12 people. They won't let us go out to the playgrounds and parks. -Gerson

—*“He said classes included kids from mixed age groups, and each class allowed only 12 students and lasted for just one hour. Slots were assigned on a first-come-first-served basis. Children would line up, hoping to get in. The staff leading the class would distribute handouts and worksheets to those who made it inside.”*

<https://www.propublica.org/article/life-inside-ice-dilley-children>

Children Describe Life Inside Dilley

Propublica, Feb 9, 2026

“Children are allowed to go to school for one hour a day, which consists of one hour where they are doing worksheets and coloring. “

The Imprint Youth and Family News Feb 25 2026

“School takes place just one hour daily for each age group and typically constitutes drawing, painting and worksheets, but little real teaching.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/28/ice-detention-texas-Children>

Children Left Short of Clean Water and Sleep

The Guardian Sept 28, 2025

That the average time children spend in ICE Detention is 6 months.

Under Trump, kids' average stay in federal custody is nearly six months — up from a month under Biden. Lengthy stays are leading some children to lose hope.

<https://www.propublica.org/article/ice-detentions-immigrant-kids-family-separations>

ICE Sent 600 Immigrant Kids to Detention in Federal Shelters This Year. It's a New Record.

Propublica Nov 24, 2025

That ICE Detention keep the light on 24/7 leading to sleep deprivation and mental health deterioration

The lights are on 24/7, making it really difficult for everyone detained there to sleep.”

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/children-held-like-criminals-inside-ice-detention-center/>

“Children Held Like Criminals in Ice Detention

CBS News May 31, 2026

“Children, especially, are suffering sleeplessness because the lights are never switched off, while officials slam doors, walk in and out frequently and speak loudly on walkie-talkies all night.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/28/ice-detention-texas-Children>

Children Left Short of Clean Water and Sleep
The Guardian Sept 28, 2025

Border Patrol agents overcrowd the holding cells. Border Patrol agents keep the temperatures so low that the cells are known as “hieleras” —the Spanish word for “icebox.” Because there are no beds, individuals must sleep on hard benches, the concrete floor. The lights in the cells are left on all night and Border Patrol agents regularly wake the cell’s occupants up throughout the night. Individuals are unable to wash their hands after using the toilet or eating because there is no soap or towels in the cells; they also are not allowed showers, no matter how many days they are detained. Border Patrol agents do not provide mothers enough diapers for their infant children or women with a sufficient supply of sanitary napkins. There often are not enough toilets and toilet paper is not restocked when needed.

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Former%20Detainees%20Describe%20Horrific%20Conditions%20in%20CBP%20Detention.pdf>

Former Detainees Describe Horrific Conditions in CBP Detention Terrible.
American Immigration Council