

Trauma and Immigrant Families

Laura Valdéz, Chief Program Officer
East Bay Agency for Children
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Three Kinds of Responses to Stress



Brief increases in heart rate,
mild elevations in stress hormone levels.



Serious, temporary stress responses,
buffered by supportive relationships.



Prolonged activation of stress
response systems in the absence
of protective relationships.

Childhood Toxic Stress

CHILDREN EXPOSED TO TOXIC STRESS CAN EXPERIENCE PHYSIOLOGICAL CHANGES THAT ADVERSELY AFFECT THEIR HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR LIFE

HERE TODAY, HERE TOMORROW



Toxic Stress:

"The excessive or prolonged activation of the physiologic stress response systems in the absence of the buffering protection afforded by stable, responsive relationships."

- American Academy of Pediatrics

Overactivation of the stress management system can change the architecture of the brain, disrupt metabolic regulatory systems, and alter the genome.



These changes trigger a cycle of chronic stress, compromise cognitive and behavioral functioning, and lead to chronic disease.

Adolescence & Adulthood



Childhood

Economic hardship
Incarceration of a parent
Abuse
Neglect
Divorce/separation
Parental mental illness
Parental substance abuse



Problems with:
Learning
Memory
Impulse control
Regulation of emotion
Depression
Asthma
Cancer
Heart disease
Autoimmune disease

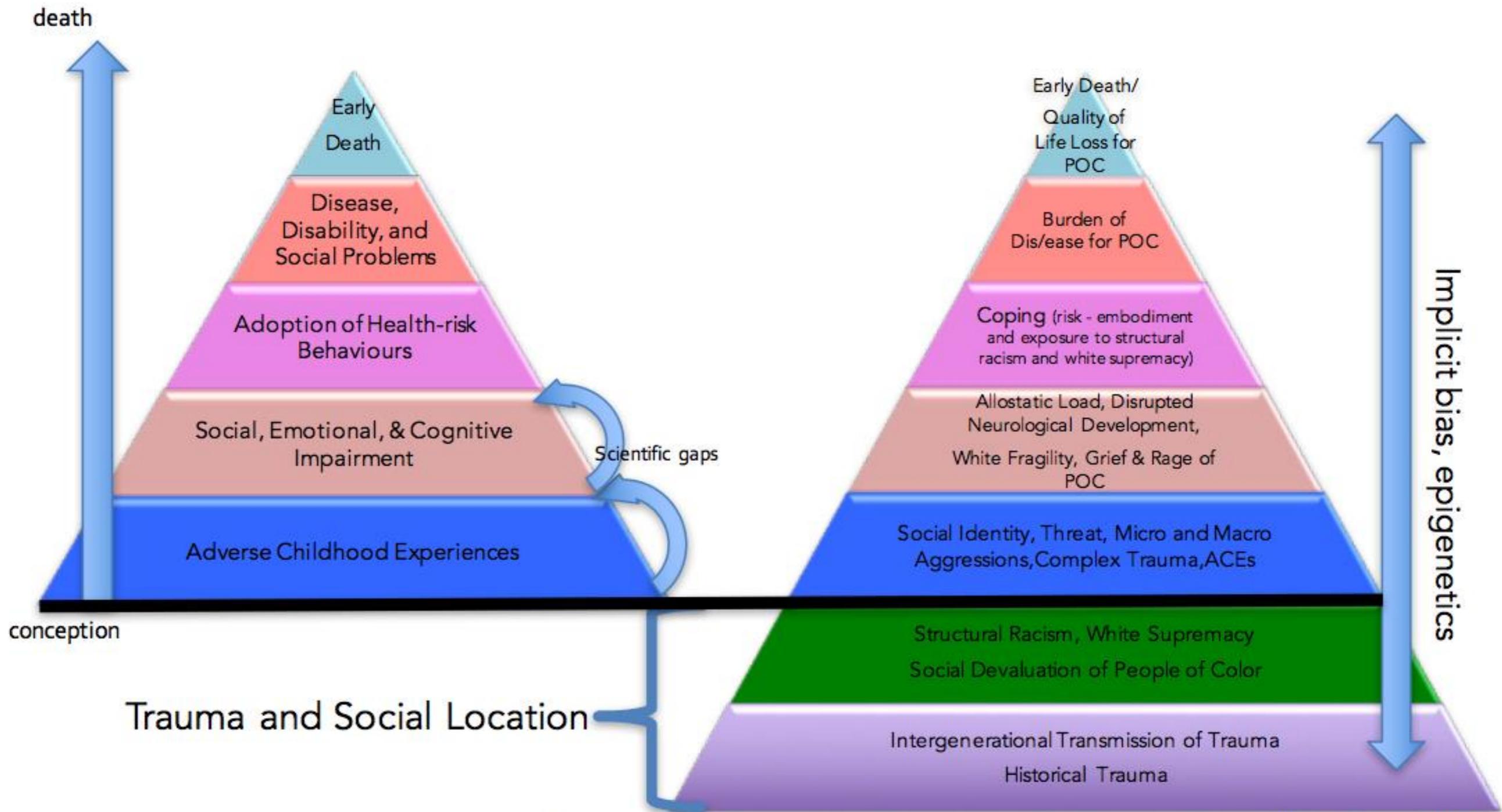
Racing ACEs

if it's not racially just, it's not trauma informed

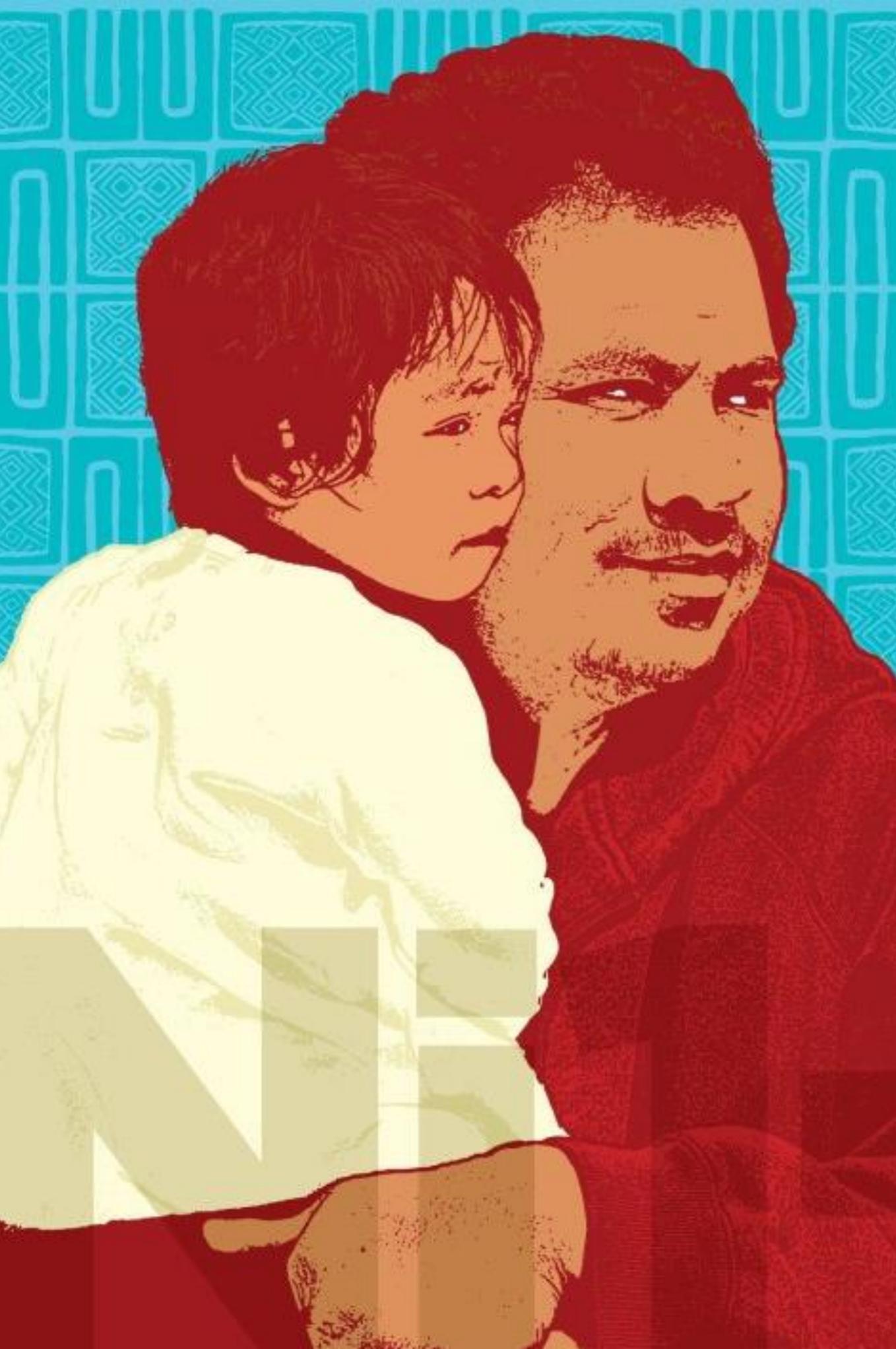


Adverse Childhood Experiences*

Historical Trauma/Embodiment of Oppression



*<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/pyramid.html>



Migration Trauma and Migration Stress

Many immigrant families encounter multiple challenges and difficulties throughout the immigration process. Some families may experience multiple levels of migration trauma. **Peri-migration trauma** refers to psychological distress occurring at **four points of the migration process**:

1. Events before migration (e.g., extreme poverty, war exposure or torture);
2. Events during migration (e.g., parental separation, physical and sexual assault, theft of the money saved to immigrate with, exploitation at the hands of a human smuggler, hunger, or death of traveling companions);
3. Continued rejection and suffering while seeking asylum (e.g., chronic deprivation of basic needs);
4. And survival as an immigrant (e.g., substandard living conditions, lack of sufficient income or racism).

Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development.

For young children who perceive the world as a threatening place, a wide range of conditions can trigger anxious behaviors that then impair their ability to learn and to interact socially with others.

Research tells us that fears are not just passively forgotten over time. They must be actively unlearned. Fear learning can occur relatively early in life, whereas fear unlearning is only achieved later, when certain structures in the brain have matured. Consequently, **early fear learning can have a significant impact on the physical and mental health of a young child** that can take years to remediate.

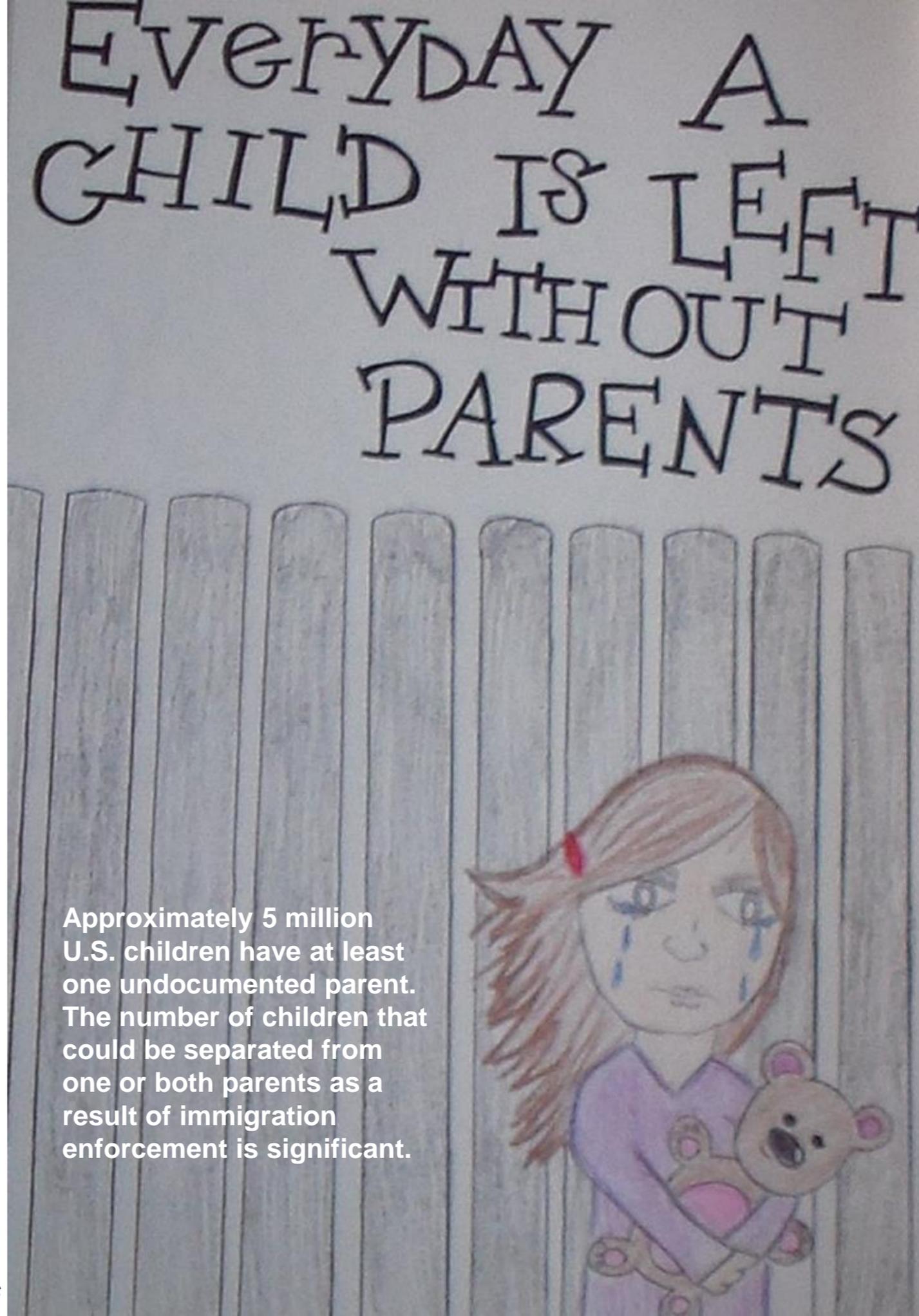


Artwork by Melanie Cervantes, Not1More Deportation

Research consistently shows that **immigration enforcement actions** have a harmful impact on the health, **safety, academic performance** and overall well-being of children, including U.S. citizens living in mixed-status families.

According to a 2010 report by the Urban Institute, **children who witnessed parents or family members apprehended in a home raid were much more likely to experience** symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder than children whose parents were arrested in other settings, including **greater changes in sleeping and eating patterns and much higher degrees of fear and anxiety, significant behavioral changes and increased absenteeism.**

Artwork by Angy Rivera, Parentless



TIME's 100 Most Influential People

Jeanette Vizguerra



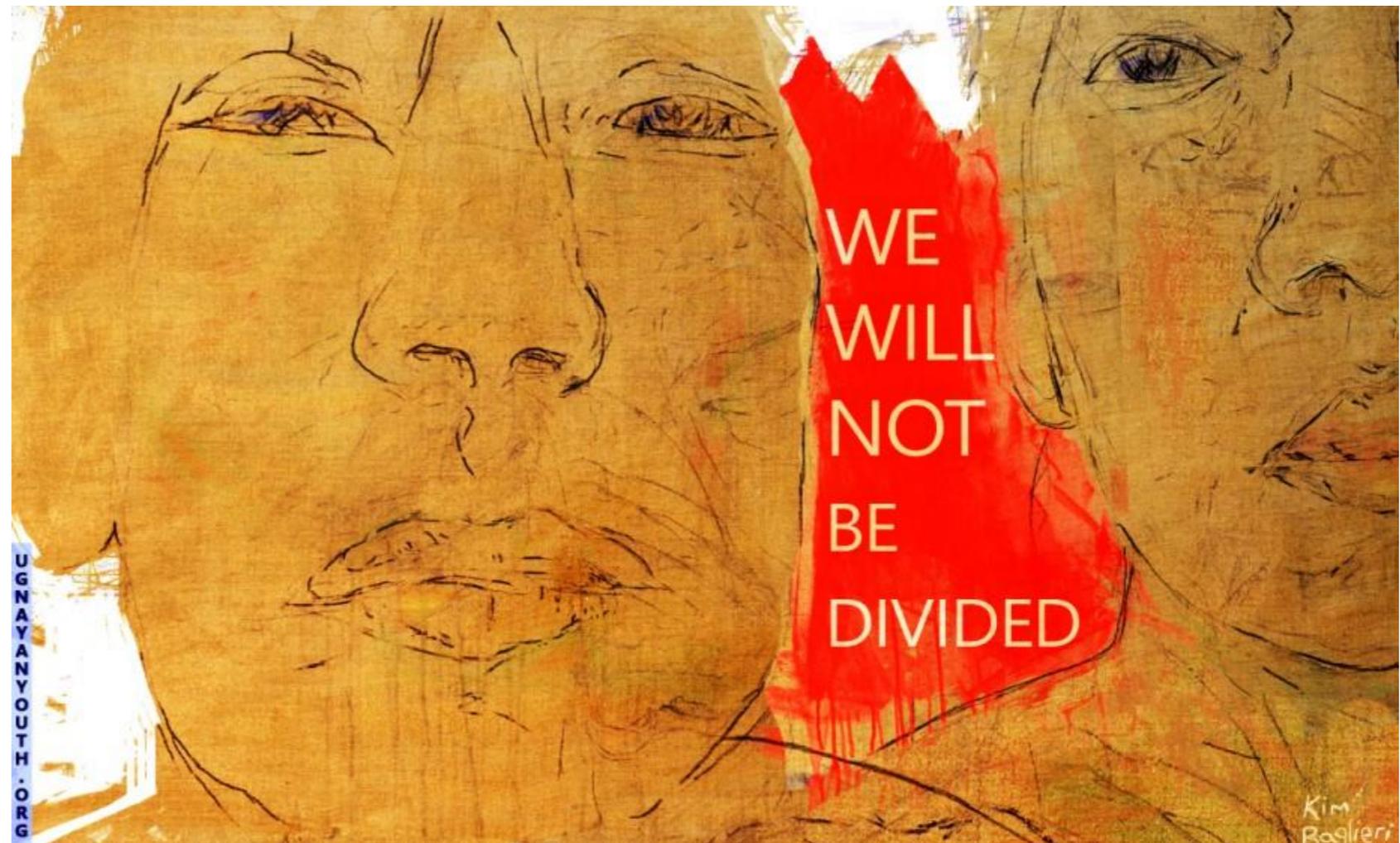
Jeanette Vizguerra leaves sanctuary, May 12, 2017. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)

"The hardest thing for Jeanette Vizguerra about spending 86 days in church sanctuary was being away from her children at night. And the hardest thing now that she's out is knowing that so many other people do not have the reprieve that she received on Thursday."

ICE Deportation Priority: Children & Families

The recent intensification of immigration enforcement activities by the federal government **increasingly add stressors to families with undocumented members and puts children at risk of family separation, economic hardship and psychological trauma.**

These intensified enforcement activities include deportation of immigrants who have committed crimes; door-to-door operations to arrest immigrants with deportation orders; and large-scale raids of suspected undocumented immigrants' worksites. ICE has now eliminated the practice of halting deportations because of pending amnesty legislation, "private immigration bills."



Artwork by Kim Baglieri, We Will Not Be Divided

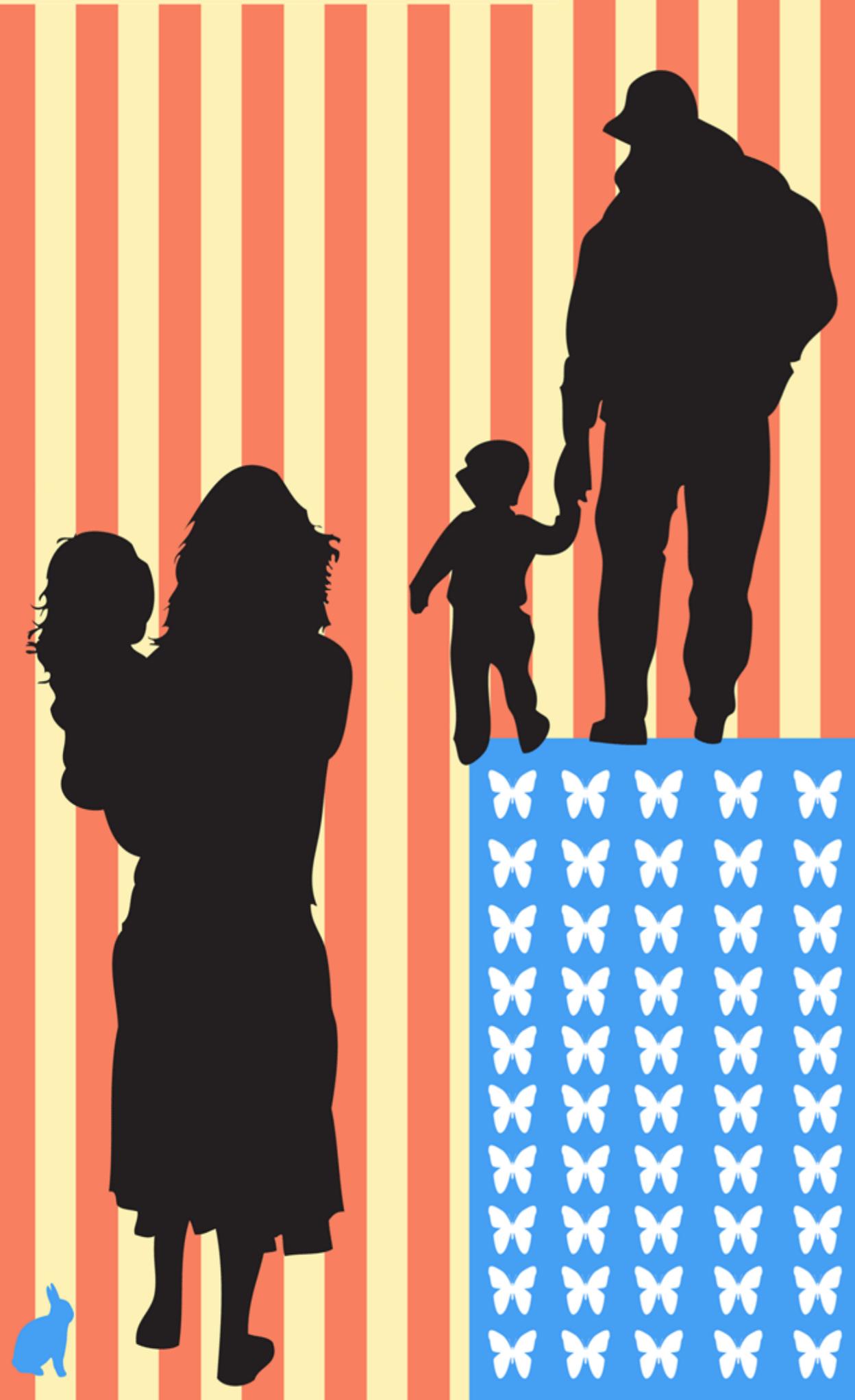


**detener la
deportación
ahora**

**stop
deportation
now**

Processing and detention procedures make it difficult to arrange care for children when parents are arrested. Many arrestees unknowingly sign voluntary departure papers and are deported before they can contact their families. Detained immigrants have very limited access to telephones to communicate with their families, and many are moved to remote detention facilities outside the states in which they were arrested.

After the arrest or disappearance of their parents, children experience feelings of abandonment and show symptoms of emotional trauma, psychological distress and mental health problems. For families, the combination of fear, isolation and economic hardship induce mental health problems such as depression, separation anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicidal thoughts.



Research has identified a common set of factors that predispose children to positive outcomes in the face of significant adversity.

- 1. Facilitating supportive adult-child relationships;**
- 2. Building a sense of self-efficacy and perceived control;**
- 3. Providing opportunities to strengthen adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities; and**
- 4. Mobilizing sources of faith, hope, and cultural traditions.**

Protective Factors that Promote Resiliency

PROTECTIVE FACTORS THAT PROMOTE RESILIENCY

INDIVIDUAL

Temperament

Individual temperament or sense of humor



Understanding

Ability to make sense of their experiences

Relationships

Ability to form relationships with peers



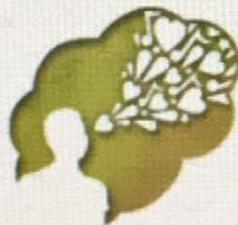
Mastery

Opportunities to experience mastery



Expression

Opportunities to express feelings through words, music, etc.



Conflict Resolution

Development of conflict resolution & relaxation techniques



Culture

Strong cultural identity

FAMILY

Role Models

Adults who role model healthy relationships



Supportive Relationships

Positive child-caregiver relationships

Health

Healthy caregivers



Networks

Relationships with extended family members and others



Stability

Stable living environment

COMMUNITY



Access to Services

Basic needs, advocacy, health



School

Positive school climate and supports



Mentors

Role models & mentors, i.e. coach, faith leader

Neighborhood Cohesion

Safe & connected communities



Trauma-informed care was developed in response to the growing recognition of the impact of traumatic experiences on the lives of vulnerable children and their families.

While not designed with one specific system in mind, the trauma-integrated model is based on acknowledging the pervasive impact of direct and indirect exposure to violence and other traumatic stressors which can serve, with some adaptations as a platform on which effective and culturally responsive services for immigrants and refugees can be built.

Essential elements of trauma-informed services

- Maximize the child's sense of safety;
- Assist children in reducing overwhelming emotion;
- Help children make new meaning of their trauma history and current experiences;
- Address the impact of trauma and subsequent changes in the child's behavior, development and relationships;
- Coordinate services with other agencies; staff should also be familiar with existing networks of services familiar to and trusted by immigrants, such as ethnic community-based organizations, faith-based organizations;
- Support and promote positive and stable relationships in the life of the child;
- Provide culturally responsive support and guidance to the child's family and caregivers in their primary language; and
- Manage professional stress and vicarious trauma.





Support & Advocacy

- Support, advocate and organize for the defense and protection of immigrants and refugees from deportation, detention, harassment, discrimination and exclusion.
- Advocate to stop raids and halt deportation proceedings. Make public statements denouncing ICE raids.
- Advocate for Comprehensive Immigration Reform with Elected Officials. Encourage elected officials to advocate for parents, children and youth in removal proceedings.
- Advocate that school districts pass a “Safe Zone” resolution, like LAUSD’s that forbids immigration enforcement agents from going on campus without approval from the superintendent and a thorough review of order and clearance from the district’s law office.
- Ensure children, youth and families have access to counseling and support groups.
- Support immigrant rights movement organizing and capacity building.
- Challenge the racist and xenophobic narrative of division, distrust and hate.

- Visibility is important. Have banners and posters in English and other languages spoken at the school that articulate that the school supports immigrant student/parents affirming.
- Widely distribute “Know Your Rights (KYR)” materials and host KYR workshops.
- Work with immigrant parents to develop a family immigration raid emergency plan, “Family Preparedness Plan.” Provide legal advice for immigrant families especially given the challenges for mixed status families. ILRC offers plans in English, Spanish and Chinese.
- Provide training to community members who wish to serve as an “Immigration Resource Advocate” in their apartment building, neighborhood, church/faith group or school campus.
- Provide “Immigration Resource Advocates” with a list of resources, such as the names of mental health providers, social workers, pro bono attorneys and local immigration advocates and organizations.