

Family Separation Response Task Force

Frequently Asked Questions

Q What is the Family Separation Response Task Force?

A On Jan. 27, 2025, Governor Bob Ferguson signed **Executive Order 25-04** to support children whose parents or caregivers are detained or deported. The Task Force will recommend policies and actions to help these children and their families.

The Task Force is made up of representatives from:

- The Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF)
- The Governor's Office
- The Washington State Patrol
- The Office of Refugee & Immigrant Assistance
- The Attorney General's Office
- Other state partners

Q How is the Task Force helping children and young adults?

A The task force is working to create a clear process for what happens when a child is separated from their family due to detainment or deportation. To do this, they will work to:

1. Understand the current process
2. Identify available resources for families
3. Make policy recommendations to improve support services

Q What has the Task Force accomplished so far?

A The task force held its first meeting on Feb. 11, 2025, and now meets every three weeks. They are currently gathering information on existing policies and procedures.

A key goal is to create a list of resources to help families access legal aid, mental health services, and other supports. This information will be posted on the Family Separation Response Task Force webpage at:

<https://dcyf.wa.gov/EOTaskForce>.

Q What happens when a parent is detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)?

A When ICE detains a parent, they first check with the family to determine if there is a relative or friend who can care for the child.

ICE only contacts DCYF if:

- The parents cannot find a safe person to care for the child.
- There are concerns about the person who is chosen to care for the child.

In these cases, ICE will notify local law enforcement, and the child will be placed in protective custody with DCYF.



Q What is DCYF’s role when a parent has been or is in the process of deportation?

A DCYF does not automatically get involved in cases of deportation. DCYF becomes involved if the parents can’t find an appropriate caregiver or there are clear signs of child abuse, neglect, or risk of serious harm.

Q What happens when a child arrives to the U.S. alone (unaccompanied)?

A DCYF does not currently handle cases of unaccompanied children.

If a child is picked up by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, they are transferred to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

From there:

- The child is placed with the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).
- The ORR finds a sponsor to care for the child.
- The child is connected to services and the immigration court process.

Q How many children in Washington state have been impacted by the detention or deportation of a parent?

A DCYF does not track child and family data regarding immigration status.

Q What information, if any, does DCYF share with ICE?

A DCYF does not provide information to ICE without a court order or judicial warrant, or the parent has signed a release of information that states what information can be shared.

Q How do I stay up to date about the work being done by the Task Force?

A Please visit the Family Separation Response Task Force webpage at <https://dcyf.wa.gov/EOTaskForce> to get information and resources, and to sign up to receive email updates.