

News Release webpage: <https://governor.wa.gov/news/2025/gov-bob-ferguson-creates-rapid-response-team-support-children-facing-separation>

Gov. Bob Ferguson creates rapid response team to support children facing separation

January 27, 2025

Executive Order brings agencies, schools together to support kids separated from parents or caregivers

OLYMPIA – Gov. Bob Ferguson created a rapid response team today aimed at reducing harms caused by President Donald Trump’s immigration enforcement policies which, if implemented, will destabilize families and harm children who are separated from their deported or detained parents or primary caregivers.

Mass deportation was a centerpiece of Trump’s campaign. His [campaign website](#) lists “Carry out the largest deportation operation in American history” as second on his list of priorities. Several Day 1 executive orders involved immigration, including [“removing promptly all aliens who enter or remain in violation of federal law,”](#) and calling for [“the total and efficient enforcement” of “immigration laws against all inadmissible and removable aliens.”](#) Trump has directed the Department of Homeland Security to [expand its use of “expedited removal,”](#) which allows immigration officers to deport some people without a hearing. On Jan. 23, his [press secretary announced](#) “The largest massive deportation operation in history is well underway.”

At an event hosted by OneAmerica at El Centro de la Raza, Ferguson signed [Executive Order 25-04](#) directing the immediate creation of a Family Separation Rapid Response Team in the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). The team will recommend policies and actions for addressing family separation and the lasting effects on children.

If implemented, mass deportation policies will significantly harm kids with undocumented parents. These children are often American citizens.

The team will include professionals within DCYF, Washington State Patrol, the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance, the Attorney General’s Office and representatives of the Governor’s Office. Members of the team will consult with regional and local experts on immigration and child welfare. Additionally, they will develop policies aimed

at supporting children who experience family separation through the deportation or detention of their parents or caregivers.

“My administration will do everything possible to address the harms caused by a mass deportation and detention program,” Ferguson said. “That includes making sure kids who are torn away from their parents have someone to care for them and uninterrupted access to their education.”

Ferguson ordered the rapid response team to hold its first meeting by Feb. 14. The team will:

- Review agency policies and procedures to identify any changes that can assist in responding to the separation of families. This includes situations where a large number of children in the same geographic area may be separated from their parents or caregivers at the same time.
- Identify policies or procedures that may help support children of deported or detained parents and lessen, to the extent possible, the lasting impacts resulting from such separation, in consultation with immigration and child welfare experts.
- Meet with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and local school districts to develop strategies for mitigating disruption to the education and development of children whose parents are deported or detained.
- Create proactive lines of communication between DCYF, OSPI and local school districts to permit quick and responsive action when prompt cooperation is needed to support the child, including if a child’s parents are taken for deportation or detention while the child is at school.
- Work with state universities, colleges, community colleges and Running Start to ensure and support robust pathways to higher education for children who experience the trauma of having their parents or primary caregivers deported or detained.

The Family Separation Rapid Response Team will be in regular contact with the Governor’s Office to share its findings and recommendations as work progresses.

Media Contacts

Brionna Aho

Communications Director
brionna.aho@gov.wa.gov
360-628-3843



STATE OF WASHINGTON
— OFFICE OF GOVERNOR BOB FERGUSON —

EXECUTIVE ORDER 25-04

**PROTECTING IMMIGRANT FAMILIES
AND RESPONDING TO FAMILY SEPARATION**

WHEREAS, Washington is an inclusive and welcoming state that embraces the diversity of all its residents, families, and communities; and

WHEREAS, Washington families of all backgrounds and cultures contribute greatly to the well-being and richness of our State and local communities; and

WHEREAS, Washington values the bonds within families and between family members, especially between children and their parents or primary caregivers; and

WHEREAS, the separation of immigrant families through forced deportation or detention causes harm and instability in our communities, schools, workplaces, and places of worship; and

WHEREAS, the deportation or detention of a child's parents or primary caregivers may result in the child facing significant challenges in completing their education, and may also have deeply harmful effects on the child's general health and welfare; and

WHEREAS, when a child's parents or primary caregivers are deported or detained, the child may experience unique hardships in temporary or long-term out-of-home care, including in relation to their culture, heritage, language, and the lasting trauma of family separation.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bob Ferguson, Governor of the state of Washington, by the power vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes of the state of Washington, do hereby order and direct the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to immediately form a Family Separation Rapid Response Team to explore recommended policies and actions for mitigating—to the extent possible—the harm, trauma, and other lasting effects on children who experience family separation through the deportation or detention of their parents or primary caregivers.

DCYF shall consult with the Governor's Office on promptly identifying the members of the Rapid Response Team, which shall consist of professionals from within DCYF; at least one representative from each of the Washington State Patrol, the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance, and the Governor's Office; and members of other state agencies as appropriate.

The Rapid Response Team shall hold its first meeting no later than February 14, 2025, and shall meet with urgency and as frequently as necessary to develop effective strategies for addressing these harms.

The Rapid Response Team's duties shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Reviewing agency policies and procedures to identify any suggested changes in practice that may assist in responding specifically to instances of family separation, including situations in which a large number of children in a specific geographic area may experience family separation at the same time;
- Consulting with immigration and child welfare experts to discuss potential policies or procedures specific to children of deported or detained parents or primary caregivers, with a focus on helping to support the child's unique circumstances and lessening to the extent possible the lasting harm resulting from the separation of immigrant families;
- Meeting with representatives of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and local school districts to develop strategies for mitigating disruption to the education and development of children whose parents or primary caregivers have been deported or detained;
- Creating proactive lines of communication between DCYF, OSPI, and local school districts to permit quick and responsive action if, for example, a child's parents or primary caregivers are taken for deportation or detention while the child is present at school, or other circumstances exist warranting prompt agency intervention and cooperation to support the child;
- Working with state universities, colleges, community colleges, and Running Start to ensure and support robust pathways to higher education for children who experience the trauma of having their parents or primary caregivers deported or detained;
- Providing regular updates to the Governor's Office on the Rapid Response Team's progress and policy recommendations; the effect of deportations on DCYF's work; and any proposals for additional partnerships or inter-agency collaboration that may help to support children who experience family separation through the deportation or detention of their parents or primary caregivers; and
- Delivering its first report to the Governor's Office no later than April 30, 2025, with subsequent reports provided every three months or at other intervals agreed upon with the Governor's Office. The Rapid Response Team shall work to ensure its reports are made accessible and available to members of the public in multiple different languages.

The Rapid Response Team members shall meet and carry out their duties for a period of at least one year, or until February 1, 2026, with the duration and scope of the Rapid Response Team being subject to extension and amendment as necessary by agreement of the Governor's Office and DCYF.

This Executive Order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law. Provisions of this Order are not intended to alter any existing collective bargaining agreements. This Order is not intended to confer and does not confer any legal right or entitlement and shall not be used as a basis for legal challenges to any rule or any other action or inaction of the governmental entities and employees subject to it.

This Order shall take effect immediately.

Signed and sealed with the official seal of the state of Washington on this 27th day of January, AD, Two Thousand and Twenty-Five, at Olympia, Washington.

By

/s/

Bob Ferguson
Governor

BY THE GOVERNOR

/s/

Secretary of State