

Six Principles for Child Welfare Agencies and Juvenile Courts

1. There must be a primary governmental response to unaccompanied child immigrant victim cases (abuse, neglected, abandoned, and otherwise victimized) through a “child’s best interest”-focused child welfare system, not through a law enforcement, criminal justice, or delinquency system.
2. Child welfare agencies and juvenile courts must not hesitate to initiate jurisdiction and services to immigrant children & families, regardless of immigration status, and they must promptly accept or order care and custody of those children when necessary for their safety and well-being.
3. A critical child welfare function, family reunification, must include prompt diligent efforts to match separated immigrant children with missing parents & family members.
4. Child welfare agencies and juvenile courts must assure prompt and well-informed decision-making regarding whether children would be safe and adequately cared for if they were repatriated, if repatriation is determined appropriate.
5. Child welfare agencies and juvenile courts must provide culturally-sensitive support to immigrant children and families, and they must be fully empowered to make binding decisions in accord with accepted family preservation and permanency planning principles.
6. Child welfare agency lawyers, children’s lawyers, guardians ad litem, other child advocates, and juvenile court judges must ensure initiation of state judicial intervention to permit separated or unaccompanied children to remain in-country when necessary for their safety, permanency, and well-being.

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