

Helping Immigrant Families Re-unify

Many immigrant families face prolonged separations that can affect the relationship between parents and their children.

This happens when one parent or both relocate to the United States to establish a new life before bringing the entire family. The children are left in the homeland with caretakers, usually relatives, until their parents send for them. Often, several years pass before families reunite.



Organizations aware of the impact that separation and reunification can have on immigrant children can better assist them and their parents.

Researchers have found that during the separation children might feel abandoned, which can lead to despair and detachment. Adolescents may act aggressive or more independent.



When children are reunited with their parents they may experience conflicting emotions. Challenges children face during reunification include:

- ▶▶ Missing those who cared for them as well as other relatives and friends.
- ▶▶ Feeling withdrawn around their parents.
- ▶▶ Experiencing difficulty trusting others.
- ▶▶ Having an increased need for psychiatric services if the separation was long-term.
- ▶▶ Accepting their parents as authority figures.
- ▶▶ Seeing their parents as strangers.
- ▶▶ Struggling to accept a parent's new relationship or stepchildren.

Service providers who recognize and address the challenges of immigrant family separation help children and their parents adjust, grow stronger and move forward.



2016 Virginia Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention
No permission is needed to duplicate this page for educational purposes.
1-800-552-7096 Virginia Child Abuse Hotline (language line available)
800-Children (800-244-5373) Parent Helpline