

Study of Children with Parents Detained and Deported in Worksite Enforcement Raids

The Urban Institute and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) have embarked on a study to assess the number of children with detained and deported parents and the potential impact of parental separation on these children. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been stepping up worksite enforcement in the last few years with several high profile raids of major employers, which have resulted in the arrest, detention and eventual deportation of a few thousand unauthorized workers. These raids have highlighted an important social and moral issue that has thus far escaped much attention: the impact of the raids on the children of workers who are arrested, detained and deported.

There are a growing number of media stories about the children of the workers who were arrested in recent DHS raids, but these stories and responses by communities and elected officials are largely based on anecdotal evidence. While the number of adults arrested, detained and deported in the recent raids is more well known, there are no hard numbers or other solid evidence about how many children have been affected and how they have been affected. Even more important are the long-term implications for these children, whether they remain in the United States (presumably without at least one of their parents), or return to their home countries alongside their deported parents.

The lack of hard evidence concerning the fate of these children leads to several critical research questions:

- How many arrested, detained and/or deported immigrants have children? How many children have parents who have been arrested, detained, and/or deported? How many of these children are U.S.-born citizens?
- Of children whose parents have been arrested, detained and/or deported, how many return to home countries with their parents? How many remain in the United States with a parent or another caregiver?
- What are the immediate impacts of parental arrest, detention and deportation on children? How do they cope with separation from parents? Do they remain in school? Who become their caregivers?
- What are the longer-term impacts of parental deportation? How do children who leave the United States with their parents fare over the long run? What are the implications for children who remain in the country without one or more of their parents?

- How are public and private social service agencies and other community institutions responding to the needs of children whose parents were arrested, detained and/or deported? What types of services are they providing to children and their new caregivers? What challenges are there in both providing and accessing needed services?

In order to address these questions, Urban Institute researchers are visiting several communities where DHS raids recently took place. We plan to speak with immigration attorneys, faith-based organizations, other immigrant-serving community organizations, immigrant community leaders, state and local government agency staff, employer representatives, and where possible, caregivers of children whose parents have been arrested, detained and/or deported. We are conducting our field research in Spring 2007 and publishing a report in collaboration with NCLR in Summer 2007.

The main goal of our research is to bring hard evidence about children whose parents have been arrested, detained and/or deported to the communities affected as well as to policymakers nationally. We hope that this research will help social service providers and community groups and leaders better respond to the raids, inform the broader public and elected officials about the implications of the raids, and influence the design of policies to take into account the well being of these children in the future.

Confidentiality of Our Research

It is important to note that all of our conversations during these site visits will be kept completely confidential. The Urban Institute is a private research organization whose studies involving contact with individuals are subject to review and approval by the Institutional Review Board, a body that evaluates studies to ensure that no persons will be harmed by the research and that appropriate confidentiality measures are taken. In addition, none of the funding from this study comes from the federal government, so we are not obliged to submit any study information to the government.

To maintain confidentiality, none of the comments from an interview respondent will be shared with any other respondent or any person or entity outside of the research team. The study report will not associate any comments with any individual person. We will also not be asking about—nor are we interested in learning about—immigrants' legal status during our conversations. In fact, for the individuals directly affected by the raids, we do not need to collect any personal identifying information.