



American ideals. Universal values.

FACT SHEET: AUGUST 2018

Family Incarceration: Explained

What are “Family Residential Centers?”

In response to the increasing numbers of women and children requesting asylum at the southern border in the summer of 2014, the U.S. government massively increased family detention, which put children behind bars with their parents. So-called “family residential centers” were designed to detain families during the initial stages of the asylum process and establish eligibility for parole and bond.

In 2018, President Trump, too, began an effort to increase family incarceration. This effort escalated in response to weeks of public outcry against his administration’s policy of separating family units at the U.S.-Mexico border. In signing an executive order on June 20, 2018, the president asked Attorney General Jeff Sessions to request modification to the Flores settlement agreement that would increase the amount of time that children can be held in detention facilities.

These “residential centers”—as described by asylum seekers who have spent months inside—are prisons. Families do not have the freedom to move around; children spend little to no time outside; food is often expired or rotten; the water makes them sick. Detainees are kept under secure conditions, surrounded by guards, instilling constant fear and anxiety in children and their families.

Family incarceration has been criticized by a wide array of voices, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Bar Association, 178 representatives of the House and 35 senators, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and numerous faith groups.

Where are Families Currently Being Detained?

All three facilities are not currently state-licensed childcare facilities, as required by the Flores agreement.

Berks Family Residential Center

- A 96-bed facility in Berks County, Pennsylvania

Karnes Residential Center

- An 830-bed for-profit facility in Karnes City, Texas

South Texas Family Residential Center

- A 2,400-bed for-profit facility in Dilley, Texas

