



## **FROM LACK OF LEGAL REPRESENTATION TO MALTREATMENT: REPORT REVEALS WHAT HAPPENS TO UNDOCUMENTED, UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN REMOVED FROM U.S.**

Austin, Texas—*A Child Alone and Without Papers*, released today by the Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPPP), reveals what happens to more than 43,000 undocumented, unaccompanied children removed annually from the United States and repatriated to their home countries. Policy analysis and interviews with adults and children in the system revealed the U.S. often compromises children's rights, safety, and well-being, contrary to international law and U.S. child welfare standards.

"The U.S. treats undocumented, unaccompanied children with a shocking lack of concern. Our domestic child welfare system has shaped international standards on child treatment, but we have not extended our standards to this vulnerable population. Policymakers should act swiftly and forcefully to prioritize the welfare of all children in U.S. custody," report author Amy Thompson said.

Inadequate policies lead to maltreatment of children in official custody. Insufficient systems miss opportunities to identify children caught in trafficking. In the United States, no uniform process deals with undocumented, unaccompanied children in custody, including whether they can access an attorney, the length of detainment, and treatment while in custody. These inadequacies can lead to the maltreatment of these children by authorities. Further, the system makes children responsible for triggering protective services, an impossible burden for most given a child's limited development and inexperience with U.S. systems and culture.

During repatriation to countries of origin, lack of coordination among country-of-origin agencies and inadequate policies and procedures put children at risk. Studies in Mexico and Honduras revealed a lack of structures to prevent maltreatment or to ensure application of child welfare standards, allowing authorities to return children to dangerous situations, including into the hands of traffickers or onto the street.

To view a short summary of CPPPP's findings and recommendations, the full report and background materials, visit [www.cppp.org/repatriation](http://www.cppp.org/repatriation).

*CPPPP is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan, nonprofit policy institute committed to improving public policies to better the economic and social conditions of low- and moderate-income Texans. We pursue our mission through independent research, policy analysis and development, public education, advocacy, coalition building, and technical assistance. To learn more, visit [www.cppp.org](http://www.cppp.org).*