

Legislation Proposal

Family Case Management Program

MAP

Mitty Advocacy Project



Abstract

We propose the re-implementation of the Family Case Management Program (FCMP).

- FCMP assigns a caseworker to each asylum-seeking immigrant family.
- Families should be allowed to live in the U.S., outside of detention centers, while attending court hearing and check-ins pertaining to their asylum case. This creates an alternative to detention that keeps families together.
- The program was implemented under the Obama presidency and it had only a 2% abscondence rate.

Youth Perspective

The concept of individuals of our age being trapped in detention centers is truly shocking. No one should be subject to such conditions. Alternatives to detention provide more compassionate and ethical methods to manage immigrants and migrant families. By being forced to reside in these detention centers, families are being deprived of the freedom granted to them by the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. They would get their chance to live a life beyond prison thus rejuvenating hope among these marginalized communities.

Catholic Perspective

The Catholic Church teaches that justice should be rehabilitative and reasonable. It is unjust for any individual to be detained within a center for months on end due to rampant court backlog. Our current detention system, which detains upwards of 45,000 people, is constantly beyond capacity, leading to the severe mistreatment of those detained. This type of punitive justice is not proportional to the actions of immigrant families, who struggle to come to the United States in search of safety and opportunity.

As Catholics, we also believe in the importance of family as the fundamental building block of society. Governmental institutions, including our detention systems, must support, protect, and respect families as such

The Problem

Though laws iterate that people can only live in the squalid detention centers for up to 40 days, people are detained for far longer due to significant resource shortfalls and chronic disregard for detention facilities. Detention centers, which a report from the DHS called “dangerously” overcrowded and threatening to the health and safety of detainees, do not comprise a viable alternative to long-term solutions. Additionally, even with the end of formal zero tolerance policies that entrench family separation, a prolonged solution to care for immigrant families is yet to materialize.



MAP'S Solution

We propose the re-implementation of the Family Case Management Program. This program assigns a caseworker to each immigrant family to help with access to services such as healthcare and attorneys. This also allows them to live together as families in the US, outside of detention centers. It was initially implemented under the Obama presidency and repealed under the Trump presidency.

Immigrants who are eligible for this program include those who are most vulnerable, such as pregnant and nursing women and families with young children. Assigning caseworkers to families allows them access to a variety of resources that make it easier for them to settle in, such as transportation and rights and responsibilities education.

The program had extremely low rates of abscondence at just 2%, and had a 100% attendance rate for court hearings according to the Inspector General report on it. It was also cost efficient—costing about \$36 a day per family according to the Associated Press, in comparison to the cost to maintain detainees in detention centers at \$99.45 per day per detainee. We estimate that this cost would be similar today because the program would be the same as it was when originally implemented.

The program was repealed because of its cost in comparison to other alternatives to detention, such as the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program, and because ICE stated it resulted in low rates of removal of immigrants from the U.S. The removal rate was about half of other alternatives to detection. However, the success of a program should not be measured by its rate of removal, but rather how ethically and effectively it manages immigrants. This program is ethically better because it allows families to stay together.