



American College of  
Emergency Physicians®

ADVANCING EMERGENCY CARE 

# POLICY STATEMENT

Approved January 2021

## *Separation of Children from Family/Guardians*

Revised January 2021

Originally approved June  
2019

In order to ensure protection of minor children who might need to be separated from family/guardians, the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) supports the following concepts:

- ACEP encourages emergency physicians to strongly and publicly voice their disapproval of national, state, or local policies that unnecessarily separate minor children from their parents without evidence or strong suspicion of child abuse or neglect.
- The risks to the child of remaining with family/guardians should be serious, imminent, and clearly identified.
- Established legal and administrative procedures for separation from family/guardians should be disclosed transparently and applied consistently and justly.
- If separation is determined to be necessary, it should be for the briefest duration possible and provided in a manner that minimizes emotional and physical stress to the child to help avoid the residual psychological harms of separation.
- A process for reunification with family/guardians, placement of the child with other family caregivers, or other permanent solution should be outlined in advance of the physical separation.
- Sick and/or injured children should receive prompt and thorough medical evaluation and treatment when indicated.
- The care of the separated child should be clearly documented and available for independent review at the family/guardians' request.
- All care of the separated child should adhere to applicable local and constitutional law and respect the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.