

Lesson Plan  
Helping Young Children Understand Deportation  
Drs. Shu-Chen Jenny Yen and Guadalupe Díaz Lara  
California State University, Fullerton  
[syen@fullerton.edu](mailto:syen@fullerton.edu) and [gdiaz-lara@fullerton.edu](mailto:gdiaz-lara@fullerton.edu)

**Foreword:** When deportation happens, children from immigrant families feel scared and worried that their parents being taken away by ICE. Adults can help by reassuring them about their safety, answering children's questions honestly, and validating their feelings. This story contains information that may be abstract for children aged 3–5. Caregivers are encouraged to adapt the language and details to suit their child's age and understanding. For children aged 6–8, the focus shifts toward building an understanding of the reason for immigration and deportation.

**Objectives:**

1. Help young children **understand** immigration, legal status, and deportation
2. Help the child **identify** their feelings
3. **Empower** the child to engage in helping behavior to children whose parents were deported
5. **Reassure** parental unconditional love
6. **Prompt** actions and **instill** hope and responsibility

**Ages:** 3- to 8-Year-Olds

**Book:** *Why Are Parents Being Taken Away?* A social story about deportation by Drs. Guadalupe Díaz Lara and Shu-Chen Jenny Yen. Free download at <https://socialstorycenter.com/>.

**Procedures:**

1. *Introduction:* Begin by letting the child know that you will be reading a storybook about the deportation and why you will be reading the storybook
2. *Discussion starters:* Start the conversation by saying, "Today, we're going to talk about deportation." Ask the child if they know the meaning of deportation, if they have heard anything about it, or if they know someone whose parents have been taken away. Then explain why you are reading the story.
3. *Read the book:* Use a dialogical reading approach to engage the child in an interactive conversation while reading, rather than simply reading the book word-for-word.
  - **For children aged 3–5**, explain the language in an age-appropriate way to help them better understand the story. Explaining complex terms when needed.
  - Encourage the child's engagement by asking open-ended questions and commenting on the pictures or illustrations. With younger children, focus on discussing the pictures or photos to hold their attention.
  - Ask if the child can relate their own experiences to the pictures or text in the book.
  - Pause to discuss key concepts, such as immigration, citizenship, deportation, etc. These discussions help deepen the child's understanding and connection to the story.
4. After reading the book, choose **appropriate questions** for discussion:
  - a. For 3- to 5-year-olds
    - How do you feel after hearing the story? An emotions chart can be used to facilitate identifying emotions.
    - What can you do to feel better about how you are feeling?
    - What would you do if a friend's parents got taken away? How could you help them?
    - What would you like to say or do to people who teased children whose parents were taken away?
    - What do you think we can do to help families whose parents are not with them?
    - When you grow up, what do you think you can do help families who experience deportation?

## b. For 6- to 8-year-olds

- How did the story make you feel?
- What does immigration mean?
- What does deportation mean?
- What can you do to manage or express these feelings?
- What are some ways we can support children whose parents have been deported?
- When you grow up, what do you think you can do help families who experience deportation?

**Resources**

- Helping children cope with worry about their family and friends over deportations and ICE raids  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TIXsXxpq9o>
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Guiding caregivers: how to talk to a child about deportation or separation  
[https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/guiding\\_caregivers\\_how\\_to\\_talk\\_to\\_a\\_child\\_about\\_deportation\\_or\\_separation.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/guiding_caregivers_how_to_talk_to_a_child_about_deportation_or_separation.pdf)
- Migrant Clinicians Network: How to talk to a child worried about deportation  
<https://www.migrantclinician.org/resource/how-talk-child-worried-about-deportation.html>
- The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP): Our children's fear: Immigration policy's effects on young children  
<https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/our-childrens-fear-immigration-policys-effects-young-children-2/>
- Children Thrive Action Network Toolkit: Protecting immigrant families facing deportation  
<https://childrethriveaction.org/2025/01/protecting-immigrant-families-toolkit/>