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Parents as Teachers Opposes Rule Impacting Immigrant Children

August 23, 2019 (St. Louis, MO) – In response to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s extensive regulatory change to the 1997 Flores Settlement Agreement that provides long-standing safeguards protecting babies and parents entering into the United States, Parents as Teachers National Center (PAT) made the following statement:

“As an organization that promotes the health, safety, and well-being of families with young children, Parents as Teachers National Center strongly opposes this new rule because it jeopardizes the well-being of immigrant families. Changes would allow the federal government to hold children and families for the duration of their court proceedings or indefinitely, and allow detention centers to “self-certify” that their jails are safe for babies and children. We are appalled that protections under Flores are being eliminated,” stated Constance Gully, president and CEO of Parents as Teachers National Center.

“There is a common misperception that babies and children are too young to be affected by events around them, but research shows that even a short time in detention or separation from families is harmful to a baby’s brain. We have seen the reports about facilities that place children in an environment of confinement, deprivation of stimuli, and developmentally inappropriate and often harsh treatment, all of which cause severe stress for both the children and their caregivers. Incarceration of children is traumatic and causes damage to developing children that may follow them throughout their lives.

The Flores Settlement is a humane response to a difficult situation and should not be amended as proposed” Gully concluded. “Babies should never be locked-up. Any regulation that allows young children to be detained, let alone indefinitely, is fundamentally inconsistent with what child development and health experts recommend.”

About Parents as Teachers

Parents as Teachers (PAT) builds strong communities, thriving families and children that are healthy, safe and ready to learn by matching parents and caregivers with trained professionals during a child’s earliest years in life, from pregnancy through kindergarten. PAT’s internationally recognized, evidence-based home visiting model is backed by 35 years of research with proven outcomes for children and families and currently serves 188,000 families in 50 U.S. states, 115 Tribal organizations, five other countries and one U.S. territory. Parents as Teachers National Center is headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri. PAT affiliates operate in various settings, including health departments, hospitals and schools, faith-based and non-profit organizations. For more information, visit parentsasteachers.org or Twitter @NatlPAT.