

Week of Action to End Child Detention: June 9-16

From June 9-16, communities across the country will take a unified stand against child detention as part of our week of action. We hope you will join us by organizing or attending an event in your area.

Here are three ways you can organize an event:

1) Plan a letter-writing event to Congress.

It's important that we urge Congress to do everything in their power to shut down Homestead detention center and work to end child detention.

Organize a letter-writing event for children and/or adults in your community!

- We invite children and youth of all ages to write letters to Congress. The voices of young people are powerful and important – and can help influence Congress to do what's right. Download our letter-writing toolkit for children at migrantjustice.afsc.org/letters
- Attendees at your event can also contact Congress online by visiting: migrantjustice.afsc.org/email-Congress. Or use our sample email to write a letter of their own.

2) Deliver letters to Congress.

Organize your family, friends, and other community members to hand-deliver letters to your members of Congress in your district. Take photos of your delivery. Share them on social media. On Twitter, use the hashtag #EndChildDetention and tag @afsc_org.

3) Plan another type of creative action.

Coordinate a vigil, march, educational event, or other action to raise awareness and generate support for ending child detention.

This guide offers more resources for planning and promotion.

Don't forget: Register your event at migrantjustice.afsc.org!

How to design a powerful action

- 1) Ensure that your action serves as a platform to hear from those who best understand our U.S. immigration system: immigrants. If you can't schedule a speaker from the immigrant community, you can read aloud testimonies from immigrants or broadcast recordings like these "I am an immigrant" clips from AFSC's 67 Sueños (facebook.com/67suenos).
- 2) Inspire and connect participants. Music, chanting, grounding exercises, candle lighting all build a sense of community. If your group isn't faith-based, connect to your shared values. If you are from a faith tradition, ground the event in scripture or prayer. Find some examples here: afsc.org/welcoming-the-stranger-readings.
- 3) Include speakers and visuals to communicate clearly our demands and name key decision-makers, including local lawmakers, we want to influence. We want all members of our audience – event attendees, media, elected officials, social media followers, and others – to understand the depth of our conviction and what we're asking them to do.
- 4) Call specifically on your congressional representatives and senators to respond to our shared demands and concerns, whether your solidarity action is at their office or elsewhere.
- 5) Choose a location that connects with key decision makers directly (a congressperson's local district office, the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) field office) or with the people you're trying to reach (a busy street corner, your city council building, or a faith community).

Here are some forms your action could take:

- Rally and/or march.
- Vigil. (More resources: afsc.org/vigil-toolkit)
- Jericho walk. (More resources: afsc.org/resources/jericho-walk-guide)
- Posada.
- Fast for justice. (More resources: afsc.org/fast-for-immigrant-justice)
- Organized visits to the office of your lawmaker or other key decision-maker.
- Street theater, art projected onto a building, or other creative acts.
- Blessing or ritual for migrants inside a detention center or at the border.

Here are some tips and questions to help you start planning your action:

Clarify the strategy: What do you want to call attention to with this action? How does this support your campaign or movement goals?

Know the history: What has your group (or other groups) done before to address the issue? How can you build on the history to escalate your tactics?

Identify the opportunity: Why now? What is the Action Opportunity? Is there a new development on your issue or change in the political climate that you can take advantage of?

Find allies: Who are your existing allies in this work? Who should be involved? Who is also impacted by this issue?

Pick a target: Who is the decision-maker? Who can help you pressure that decision-maker?

Develop action demands: What do you want from your target? What would a “win” look like? Make sure these are realistic, measurable, strategic, and accountable to the impacted community.

Assess your resources: What skills does your group have? How many people will participate? How much money and supplies do you have access to?

Choose a tactic: Make sure it will move you towards achieving your campaign goal and action demands. What exactly will people do? Why will it put pressure on your target? Why is it perfect for this moment?

Determine your audience: Who specifically do you want to mobilize with your action? Is it the public? Consumers? Shareholders? Government Officials?

Decide the tone: What will the action feel like? Will the action be jubilant, angry, solemn, or calm? How will the tone impact the target and audience? Do you want to invite or repel them? How will the tone impact your group?

Focus your message: How do you make complicated issues understandable? Keep it short and simple. The message should reflect the tone and clearly communicate your demands. Refer to our talking points at the end of this document.

Create visuals and audio: What will your action look and sound like? What imagery do you need to create? How will you amplify your voices and sound? How will the visuals and audio support your tone and convey your demands?

Choose the location: Where will this action take place? What does that location look and feel like? Is it a community-based location or is it the decision-maker’s territory? Are people familiar with the location?

Scout the location: How will your action logistically take place at the location? How will people get there? What goes on there in the course of a day? Is there security on site?

Make an action plan: Think through the action from start to finish. Assign action roles, make a time schedule, list supplies and equipment needed, finalize logistics. Make backup plans just in case!

Practice the action: Over and over. Then practice some more.

Perform the action: Be flexible, stay true to your action goals and demands, and be safe – eliminate unnecessary risk.

Celebrate! Acknowledge your successes, even if your action demands were not met. Recognize new leadership and congratulate new members.

Debrief the action: What were the action highlights? Where was there room for improvement?

Follow up: Reach out to participants and members – keep them updated. Make calls to media – get the story out. Provide jail support if necessary and keep track of ongoing legal issues.

Spread the word!

Now that you've decided what you're doing and when, it's time to invite others to join you.

Register your event at: migrantjustice.afsc.org. You can share the event page you create, and people in your community will be able to find your event when they visit the site.

Day of Action Checklist

Materials to have on hand

- ___ Banners, posters
- ___ People assigned to carry banner
- ___ Communicate to members any plans to march together
- ___ Just in case box ready to go
- ___ *Contents of box: packing or duct tape, scissors, stapler, huge markers, extra paper*
- ___ Fully charged phone and numbers for important people along march route

Roles

- **Emcee:** Welcomes attendees, introduces speakers, and facilitates program.
- **Opening prayer, blessing, or meditation:** The person should pray from their own faith tradition, connecting the values of their faith to the situation. It's helpful for the person to start by stating their faith tradition and inviting others to join them and explaining they'll pray from their own tradition and to use words that are inclusive.
- **Security/peacekeepers:** Keep people on the sidewalk or designated areas; isolates provocateurs from the event attendees; liaises with police if they appear.
- **Marshalls:** Keep event participants focused on the event and direct the movement of the group.
- **Press point person:** Greets press, gets their contact information, explains the program to the press, and then directs them to people to be interviewed.
- **Documenting:** Takes pictures/video
- **Song/Chant/Activity Leaders:** A couple of people who can confidently (not necessarily the best singers but have confidence) sing the song or chant the chant first and then lead attendees.

Shut Down Homestead Detention Center talking points

These talking points were prepared by the American Friends Service Committee for the campaign to shut down the detention center for immigrant children in Homestead, Florida. These points are designed to keep us consistent and on message but can be adapted to your personal voice and local context.

Due to public pressure, a large detention camp in Tornillo, Texas was closed down in January 2019, and while the majority of the children were quickly reunited with their sponsors (as they should have been months earlier), many were transferred to a growing detention center for children in Homestead, Florida (about 30 miles south of Miami), which is now the largest - and only mega - “emergency influx” detention center for migrant children in the U.S.

We demand that the Office of Refugee Resettlement:

- Shut down Homestead detention center immediately.
- Reunite children with their sponsors as quickly as possible.
- Pledge to never again open or operate an emergency influx center.
- Terminate the information sharing agreement with the Department of Homeland Security so that children’s sponsors can come forward without fear of enforcement.

Topline messages

The Homestead detention center is a prison for children. As of January 2019, Homestead housed 1,350 teenaged migrants who are surrounded by tall fences covered in mesh screens, under constant watch by guards, and not permitted to leave.

Detaining young people is extremely harmful. The American Academy of Pediatrics says even short periods of time in detention can cause psychological trauma and poses long-term mental health risks.

Homestead detention center must be shut down immediately. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) must not use emergency influx shelters like Homestead that bypass critical protections for immigrant children.

AFSC calls for an immediate end to the detention and deportation of immigrants. We work to keep families, communities, and loved ones together.

Supporting points

Homestead detention center circumvents the law. Because it is classified as an “emergency influx shelter,” those detained at Homestead are not protected by the Flores agreement, which limits how long children can be detained and sets strict standards for the conditions in which they can be detained. This loophole leaves vulnerable young people unprotected from the harms of indefinite, inhumane detention.

Conditions at Homestead detention center are bad and getting worse. Right now, children sleep in military-like dorms and rooms that can hold 70 to 250 children. Whenever detention capacity is expanded rapidly, it leads to worse conditions and worse contracts.

Homestead residents are deeply concerned about the lack of local oversight and accountability at the detention center. Because the center is on federal land, it has none of the usual oversight by state agencies, so it is unclear whether the center provides children with adequate education and mental health support.

Homestead detention center is the only for-profit detention facility housing migrant children. It's been estimated that Homestead is costing taxpayers \$500,000 a day to operate, and companies are benefiting. Comprehensive Health Services (CHS), which was acquired by Caliburn International Corp. last year, is one of the largest government medical contractors in America and manages Homestead. Its contract with the government could net the company as much as \$190 million for a four-month period.

Expanding capacity for child immigrant detention facilitates some of the worst of ICE's abuses against children and their parents such as family separation, the criminalization of parents who cross the border, and using children as bait to detain adults who apply to sponsor them.

Expanding ORR detention capacity for children means more people will be detained overall. We have seen time and again that the existence of additional bed space encourages increased enforcement and detention.

This administration is manufacturing the need to detain children. Policies like family separation and the criminalization of parents have caused an increase in the numbers of "unaccompanied" children. The administration needs to stop criminalizing parents and sponsors and instead support family reunification.

The people of Homestead don't want an economy based in the abuse of children. Instead of investing in suffering and despair, our community wants investment in jobs that bring sustainability and resources to Homestead.

Homestead is yet another example of the egregious human rights abuses facing children and adults alike in detention. This is why we must end immigrant detention and instead implement just and humane immigration policies that keep families and communities together.