



## We're Committed to Excellent Care for Our ORR Youth

Our country, built on the bedrock ideals of freedom and welcome for all, is outraged and heartsick over the recent no tolerance policy that has separated children from their families at our southern border.

Friends of Youth joins caring people from shore to shore in standing firmly and strongly against this policy. We've been heartened by the community-wide expressions of support for immigrant families and children, particularly as we've been serving unaccompanied, undocumented immigrant youth for the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) since 2008.

Because our nation cares deeply about children, programs like ours are getting intense scrutiny. We welcome that attention. It gives us the chance to tell you how we are taking care of our youth, and how committed we are to them.

At Friends of Youth, we serve unaccompanied youth through therapeutic group care or foster care homes. We are not a shelter program; youth are placed with us because they need our help to address mental health and behavioral issues, including the impacts of trauma, trafficking, and violence in their lives-- things that that they are fleeing in their home countries.

Our program is fully bilingual, as most of the youth we serve speak Spanish as a first language. We provide a safe and supportive environment for each child in our care. An Individual Service Plan guides the case management process, addressing legal services, medical care, medication management, mental health care, individual/group counseling, family reunification and release services, education and vocational training, recreation and leisure, behavior management, transportation and specialized treatment as indicated. All services are sensitive to the age, gender identity, culture, religion, dietary needs, language, and individual needs of each youth.

We have our own school, responsive to the educational needs of the children in our care.

One of our youth, who came to us just three months ago with no writing or reading skills, is thriving in our school and expressed deep gratitude for our support.

Recently a media report implied that our program, which is accredited, licensed by the State, and staffed by committed and accomplished professionals, might not be a safe and caring place for the youth in our care.

We emphatically disagree.

We cherish each youth in our care, and bring our compassion, love, skill, and knowledge to walking with them out of trauma and to a bright future in America.

America, where all immigrants are welcomed by a "mighty woman with a torch, whose flame is the imprisoned lightning, and her name, Mother of Exiles". \*\*

\*\*Emma Lazarus, The Mighty Colossus, inscribed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty.

Terry Pottmeyer

President & CEO

Friends of Youth