

# Human Rights Watch

## Children's Rights

**<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/25/migrant-kids-are-being-traumatized-not-treated-mental-health-needs>**

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Held down, injected, drugged this is how immigrant children in need of mental health support, but detained in government facilities, are being treated, according to a [lawsuit filed in a California court](#) in April.

Children at the [Shiloh Treatment Center](#) in Manvel, Texas, were allegedly prescribed as many as 10 different shots and pills at a time and told they would never leave the center if they refused to take the medication. One plaintiff declared that staff members at Shiloh provoked the children to make them angry and justify giving them injections.

Another complaint, [filed on behalf of five immigrant children in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles](#) in June, alleges that the policies of the Office of Refugee Resettlement are causing grave harm to children. It accuses the agency of detaining children in excessively restrictive conditions, forcibly medicating children and failing to reunite children with their families.

Lucas, a 12-year-old from Guatemala, is one of the plaintiffs. He is detained at the Shiloh center. According to his older sister, who lives in Los Angeles, when he was in Guatemala, Lucas was a happy and talkative child. However, his detention and the fear of not being reunited with his family have made him depressed. He was placed on psychotropic medication and transferred to Shiloh. The staff told him he won't be released until they assess him as psychologically sound.

This is just one more scandal tarnishing the image of Donald Trump's great America. But this one struck me the hardest.

I don't know what it's like to be an immigrant kid, to travel alone to an unfamiliar country or be separated from my family at the border. But I know what it's like to experience forced psychiatric treatment as a child.

I spent much of my teenage years in psychiatric wards. It starts with the hands of strangers all over you, holding you down. You are stripped and given an injection. You feel like you're losing control, being locked up in your own body.

Overmedication of children with mental health conditions or other disabilities is common in institutions. Human Rights Watch has documented such [practices in Russia](#), Serbia and Brazil, where our researchers have frequently found children lying like zombies in the middle of noisy facilities. In most cases, the purpose of overmedication seems to be discipline and convenience for the staff, rather than treatment.

This is not to say that children in Shiloh and other facilities don't have mental health needs. Of course they will be traumatized and require treatment. How else would you feel if you had to flee violence in your home country and ended up detained alone in a foreign land?

But forced psychiatric treatment is not help. These children need to be freed and reunited with their families, rather than being forcibly injected with psychotropic drugs. I know the damage it causes. No child should ever have to endure that.

Human Rights Watch / ACLU Joint Submission Regarding the United States Record Under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Asylum Seekers Abused in the US and Deported to Harm in Cameroon

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