



You're
Welcome
Here.

December 8, 2014

Dear Representatives of our public jurisdictions and other community organizations:

We, the undersigned, knowing that unauthorized immigrant youth is not a new issue in Alameda County and its respective cities, incorporated and unincorporated, and that there has been an unprecedented number of unaccompanied children crossing the US border, commit to working with each other to try and address the needs of this vulnerable population. We believe that if we collaborate together and coordinate our efforts, that we will have a better opportunity to use our limited resources in the most efficient manner to address the legal, health/mental health, educational, and other service needs of these children and their sponsoring families.

While this issue is urgent and immediate, it is also likely to be ongoing due to the political and social context in these children's countries of origin. We understand that a number of these children are coming from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, but there are a number coming from Mexico and other Central American countries as well. Even though some agencies suggest that two-thirds of the unaccompanied children may be in school, we, in the community that works directly with these youth know that the estimated number is lower. We understand that we need to engage all of our networks to try and identify these children and their sponsoring families to get them needed services as soon as is possible. We also understand that the children that are not in school should be encouraged to enroll in school.


We have organized ourselves and welcome other organizations to coordinate with our collaboration to address the needs of these children in the following areas:


- Legal Advocacy and Support
- Health/Mental Health
- Education
- Social Services
- Policy

We look to our public representatives, public policy makers, and public and private foundations and funders to also work together to identify available resources to support our efforts, particularly in Southern and Eastern Alameda County (Tri-Cities and Tri-Valley areas). Due to the multiple jurisdictions, the lack of available information that is not centralized, and the distance between each jurisdiction, our work becomes more complicated to try and identify these children and sponsoring families.

We understand that what we are attempting to do may become complicated and that the coordination of our services may seem limited, but it is our obligation as community members (and organizations) to ensure that all of the members, including the most vulnerable members of our community, be served.

Sincerely,


The Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring
Senior Minister


Dr. Herbert Graw
Moderator

The Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring