

FAMILY REUNIFICATION



The separation of family members due to immigration can cause difficult and painful situations for both the immigrants and the ones who stay behind.

WHY DO PEOPLE IMMIGRATE?

- Political Instability – War
- Economic Instability – Lack of employment, inability to financially support the family
- Educational Opportunity – schooling and opportunities for their children

As they seek a better future for the family, parents often immigrate first and are forced to leave their children behind. This experience is very painful not only for the parents but also for the children.

When Parents Immigrate

PARENTS:

- They generally work long hours.
- They try earning as much money as possible, so their children can immigrate too.
- If they are undocumented, they try to legalize their immigration status.
- They keep in touch with family members by phone or letters and send them money.
- They generally yearn for their loved ones.

CHILDREN:

- Children are generally looked after by grandparents or a close relative.
- Kids are confused; they do not understand why they were abandoned.
- Occasionally, they can be abused by the person who takes care of them.
- They may feel sad, mad and resentful.

Family Reunification

After the separation process, many families manage to reunify. Successful reunification will require a deep and clear understanding of what this process means for both parents and the children.

YOUR CHILD IS GOING TO NEED TIME TO ADAPT. WITH LOVE, PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING WE CAN MAKE THIS PROCESS A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE!

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FAMILY REUNIFICATION

UNDERSTANDING THE REUNIFICATION PROCESS

As immigrant parents, it is important to be aware that the reunification with our children is a process for which we need to prepare.

As parents, we know that the best decision was to migrate to be able to give our family a better future. However, our children may not think the same, and we need to be prepared to let them express these feelings.

FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE REUNIFICATION PROCESS:

- Children's age when the parents migrate. It is important to understand that if the parents left their child when he/she was very young, the child may not remember them.
- Time of separation: During the time of separation, there may have been experiences that the children wanted to share with their parents, especially if they were victims of any kind of abuse or mistreatment.
- Understand that the children are going through another separation process, this time from the people who were taking care of them. Parents may feel resentful when this takes place.
- Some children don't want to go live with their parents.
- If the parents formed another family, children may resent the new siblings.
- It is difficult for parents to understand why their children do not appreciate all they have sacrificed.
- Parents get frustrated because they do not understand why their children do not show them love.
- It is difficult for parents to understand why it is so difficult for their child to adapt to this new life for which they worked so hard.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

BEFORE YOUR CHILD ARRIVES:

It is important for parents to prepare emotionally for the arrival of their children. It is an advantage to realize that it is not going to be easy. You can look for support groups or attend parenting classes.

WHEN YOUR CHILD ARRIVES:

- Tell your child how difficult it was for you to make the decision to migrate as well as the causes and reasons for doing so.
- Tell them how your first years in this country were and about the long work days.
- Tell them how you liked talking with them by phone or receiving their letters/emails.
- Show them love and patience.
- Respect their feelings and help them keep in touch with the people who took care of them during your separation. Show your gratitude toward those people.
- Ask them about their experiences when they were not with you and be patient if they are not ready to answer.
- Show interest in their needs.
- If there are other kids in the family (siblings), create an atmosphere of respect and harmony during the adaptation process.
- If the child was a victim of abuse during the separation time, tell your child that you're sorry for that.
- If after doing all of the above, the situation is still affecting family life, seek professional help at school, from community organizations or health centers.

**AN INFORMED
AND INVOLVED PARENT
MAKES THE DIFFERENCE!**