

# Trump's Family Separation Policy Costs at Least \$80 Million

By Michaela Ross | November 21, 2018 3:12PM ET

The cost of caring for and reunifying undocumented immigrant children separated from their parents under a Trump administration policy earlier this year has totaled more than \$80 million, the Department of Health and Human Services said.

That figure is expected to climb. More than 140 children still remained in the custody of the department as of Nov. 6, the HHS said in a [report](#) provided to Congress and released to reporters by Rep. [Rosa DeLauro](#) (D-Conn.).

The report is the first to put a price tag on a portion of a policy that separated at least 2,667 children from their parents and drew fierce public outcry, eventually forcing President Donald Trump to end the effort in June. A federal judge hearing a class-action challenge to the policy ordered the administration in June to reunify the families.

The administration is currently considering a new separation policy, which would force undocumented parents to choose between placing their children in government custody or keeping them in detention together for potentially years as they await trial to stay in the U.S., the acting director for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Ron Vitiello, told a Senate panel last week.



Zach Gibson/Getty Images  
Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.)

### **Congressional Criticism**

The figures drew immediate outcry from DeLauro, the ranking member of the House Appropriations subcommittee that oversees funding for HHS. The department released the report as part of a mandate in an appropriations bill passed earlier this year.

“After months of requesting this information to no avail, we now know that this debacle has cost upwards of \$80 million—more than \$30,000 on average for every child that was separated from their family,” DeLauro said in a statement.

“That is outrageous, and the Administration never should have implemented such a cruel policy, much less shifted \$80 million from critical programs such as Head Start, HIV/AIDS treatment, or cancer research to pay for it,” she said.

In October, a Government Accountability Office [report](#) scrutinized the administration’s response to family reunifications, stating that officials from HHS and the Department of Homeland Security were unprepared for the policy and went months without developing a consistent way of determining if children had been separated from their parents.

The children are part of a larger population of approximately 14,000 unaccompanied undocumented minors in HHS care, department spokeswoman Evelyn Stauffer said in an emailed statement.

“The number of unaccompanied alien children apprehended are a symptom of the larger problem, namely a broken immigration system that encourages them to make the hazardous journey,” Stauffer said.

Shira Stein in Washington also contributed to this story.

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