

APA Official Actions

Position Statement on the Care of Medically Vulnerable Migrants in the United States

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Issue:

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services’ “medical deferred action” policy allowed migrants to remain in the United States for two-year periods on the basis of extreme medical need. These exemptions covered medical conditions for which individuals might not receive adequate care in their home countries due to a lack of availability of necessary treatments, lack of access to qualified health care professionals, or financial limitations. Deportation would likely result in increased morbidity and a decline in their overall health and may be associated with mortality, such as through suicide and homicide, in addition to worsening medical illness. The threat of deportation also adds psychological stress that can worsen the individual’s medical condition and lead to additional psychiatric comorbidity.

APA Position:

Individuals receiving life-saving medical treatment in the United States should complete their treatment without disruption of care or fear of deportation of themselves, their family members, or their caregivers. Deferred action on migration status on the basis of extreme medical need, including

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ WHO (2021). Mental health and forced displacement. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-and-forced-displacement>

routine mental health screening of this population for psychiatric disorders and suicidality, is appropriate.

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