



MEMORANDUM

Date: July 18, 2014

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator 

Re: **Update on Local Health Impact of Recent Increased Efforts by the Federal Government to Detain or Transport Unaccompanied Minors and Families**

Following receipt and distribution of his initial assessment of the potential local health impact of recent increased efforts by the federal government to detain or transport unaccompanied minors and families from, primarily, Central America who are currently in or traveling through Pima County, I asked that Dr. Garcia continue to provide updates as appropriate. Attached please find Dr. Garcia's first update in response to rumors of a lack of screening and associated health risk. Dr. Garcia continues to report that the public health threat presented by unaccompanied minors is minimal.

CHH/cbc

Attachment

c: Jan Leshar, Deputy County Administrator for Medical and Health Services
Dr. Francisco Garcia, Director, Health Department



MEMORANDUM

Date: July 18, 2014

To: Chuck Huckleberry
County Administrator

From:

Francisco García 
Health Department Director

Via: Jan Leshner 
Deputy County Administrator

Re: Situational update on Central American migrants

In my communication to you last Friday on the above referenced topic, I committed to keep you informed as this situation continued to evolve. This update specifically addresses communicable disease issues that have been raised by the national and local media about the Nogales facility.

As was the case with last week's Memorandum, the source of the information I am sharing with you comes from formal and informal, verbal and electronic, individual and group briefings with representatives of Customs & Border Protection (CBP), Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Health & Human Services, its Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and our partners at the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS).

This weekend ADHS informed me that investigators from the CDC had been dispatched to Nogales to assess a cluster of pneumonia cases of undetermined size that had been identified in unaccompanied minors in the Ventura Naval Base facility. These children had been processed through the Nogales CBP facility having spent approximately three days at that location and under the medical supervision of federal Public Health Services clinical staff. The cases were detected through the systematic surveillance process that was developed by the CDC, and which is designed to quickly respond to potential health threats.

At this time, CBP Chief Raleigh Leonard, who is the federally designated Incident Commander with oversight for the Nogales CBP, confirmed that federal authorities had not communicated any significant concerns about the health and well-being of the children in custody at that facility. He reiterated my understanding that children are held at the facility for 72 hours prior to transfer to a Department of Defense site or a contractor-operated shelter. At the Nogales CBP facility they undergo a medical evaluation by federal Public Health Service clinicians. This includes a general assessment, vaccination (for varicella, meningococcus, influenza, diphtheria, tetanus & pertussis, and measles, mumps, & rubella), tuberculin skin test, a brief behavioral assessment, and a pregnancy test. As of this week, children are not cleared for travel if they have a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater, or if they show any signs or symptoms of influenza-like illness. Furthermore, he described that children who were symptomatic or having an acute medical need were taken to local health care providers in facilities within Santa Cruz County for evaluation and treatment.

After the period of observation the children are transferred to Department of Defense or contracted shelter facilities, which then assume responsibility for their care on-site until the minors are placed with a family member pending a hearing or are processed and repatriated to their country of origin. The transport of the minors is handled by the Department of Defense, which transports the children in its own or chartered aircraft to one of three federal bases. The transit of the minors through Tucson is expedited and the children do not go through the public terminal facility. The Department of Homeland Security reports that the number of inbound flights had dropped to approximately one per day, plus two or three additional outbound flights delivering children to Fort Sill in Oklahoma, Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, and Ventura Naval Base in California.

The nature and timing of the currently active investigation is such that at this time CDC does not have any findings to disseminate. However, CDC's overall assessment continues to be one of low risk. This is especially remarkable since almost 5,000 children have now come through the Nogales facility. The fact that disease has been detected, is actively being investigated, and is being appropriately treated, speaks to the success of the active surveillance program that has been deployed at that facility.

I continue to believe that the unaccompanied minor children transiting through Pima County and the approximately 273 residing within the Tucson shelter facility present a very low risk threat to the health of the public in this jurisdiction. This conclusion is based on my best understanding of the current processing and medical system that is in place to serve these children, the minimal interaction between the children and the public, the contracted obligations of the current sheltering facility, as well as reassurances from our federal partners.

The health and well-being of Pima County is my sole priority, and I will continue to follow this evolving humanitarian situation. Although the safety and health of the children who are making the long and perilous journey from Central America is a concern, the risk is really to these children and not to our larger community. As always I will keep you informed if there is a significant change in my assessment of the level of threat.