



## A DREAM for the Holidays 2017 Activity Guide for Children and Youth

### Welcome

Thank you for joining A DREAM for the Holidays!

Immigration policies that attack our loved ones and neighbors, shut our doors to refugees, and separate families across the country threaten the fabric of our communities and the well-being of our children. Though they are deeply affected, young people rarely have an opportunity to speak out about how these policies impact their lives, their families and their communities. A Dream for the Holidays is an opportunity for their voices to be heard. This holiday season, thousands of children will send letters to Congress telling their unique stories while expressing a shared dream to keep families together.

**The youth in your community can be part of this powerful effort! Letters can come from around the country, and from children of all ages. They can be writing, drawings, or both.** Some will be written by children who have had a parent or other family member detained or deported. Some will come from children who live with the fear that this could happen to them. And others will be written by children who are learning about these issues for the first time.

We'll deliver thousands of letters to members of Congress in early December (right at a time when they are looking forward to spending time with their own families.) In this moment Congress has the opportunity to stand up to the White House's attacks on immigrants. We need Congress to pass a clean DREAM Act for immigrant youth who are at risk of being deported after Trump ended the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program. Families with TPS (Temporary Protected Status) need Congress to act before Trump puts them at risk of deportation too. And Congress must refuse to fund Trump's wall and deportation machine that would tear even more families apart.

We're so glad that you are joining us. The voices of children and youth are powerful and can sway Congress to do the right thing. Thank you for being a part of this important initiative and sharing your holiday dream!

If you have any questions feel free to contact Anna Duncan: [anna@domesticworkers.org](mailto:anna@domesticworkers.org).



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Please visit [www.dreamfortheholidays.org](http://www.dreamfortheholidays.org) to learn more about A DREAM for the Holidays, sign up to pledge letters, check out letters that have already been submitted, and receive updates. Also, please join our DREAM for the Holidays **Facebook group** where you can post your photos and letters using the hashtag #DreamForTheHolidays.

A DREAM for the Holidays is a project of We Belong Together ([www.webelongtogether.org](http://www.webelongtogether.org)), a campaign to win immigration policies that honor the needs and contributions of women and that keep families together. We Belong Together is a campaign of the National Domestic Workers Alliance ([www.domesticworkers.org](http://www.domesticworkers.org)) with the participation of hundreds of organizations and individual women and children around the country.

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## **Background Information for Adult Facilitators**

**The U.S. immigration system has failed children and families.** A groundswell of actions around the country over the past several years has shown that immigration is truly one of the key civil rights issues of our times. It is also a critical issue for women and children. Three-fourths of all immigrants are women and children. Understanding how immigration laws impact women and children is critical to understanding how the system needs to change.

More than 5.5 million children in the US live in mixed-status families with one or more undocumented parent, and over 5,000 children are in foster care because their parents have been detained or deported. Children who lose a parent to deportation often experience symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and are more likely to fall into poverty and do poorly in school. In some cases, children are present when police or ICE officers detain their parents for reasons as minor as traffic offenses. Witnessing these incidents creates lasting imprints. Children are often left to care for younger siblings if their parents are detained. Even just the constant fear of losing a parent can harm a child's long-term health and development.



For most immigrants, under current laws there is simply no way to legalization or citizenship. Over 4 million people are already waiting – in many cases for decades - for visas that would allow them to reunite with their families, and the Trump Administration is trying to make it impossible for some families to ever reunite. Instead of prioritizing family unity and children’s wellbeing, Trump has unleashed attack after attack on immigrant communities, and prioritized spending billions more dollars to detain, deport, and force a wall through border communities.

Since Trump took office, immigration detentions have increased by 40% according to ICE’s (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) own estimates. Counter to Trump’s fear mongering rhetoric that attempts to criminalize immigrant communities, the increase has been even more dramatic for immigrants who have strong ties in the US like mothers and primary caregivers for young children.

Trump is also threatening the futures of immigrant youth by ending DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). More than 200,000 US citizen children have parents with DACA and now risk losing their parents to deportation, unless Congress passes a clean DREAM Act before DACA expires. And Trump recently canceled Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for multiple countries - and has threatened to cancel it for the remaining countries - putting at risk children whose parents have made their homes in the US for years and decades thanks to TPS.

It’s up to Congress to take a stand. The letters collected as part of A Dream for the Holidays will be shared with your members of Congress to show that children across the country are united in their dream that no child spend the holidays in fear. Instead, Congress should promote policies like a clean DREAM Act and protections for people with TPS that ensure that all children - regardless of their immigration status or that of their parents – can grow up and thrive with their families intact and supportive communities.

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### **Tips for Discussing These Issues with Children and Youth**

A DREAM for the Holidays deals with immigration and refugee issues and may touch on many children’s deepest fears: becoming separated from a parent or loved one, watching their parents suffer under an unjust system, or facing harm or danger themselves. For youth who have often felt powerless in a system that does not take their needs into account, the opportunity to tell their own story can also be a deeply transformative one. It’s important that adult facilitators reflect on the potential impacts of these discussions ahead of time, and prepare for the wide range of responses children may have to the topic.



The following are some tips for adult facilitators to consider before embarking on A DREAM for the Holidays activities, especially if you are facilitating these activities in a group setting.

**Before facilitating A DREAM for the Holidays activities:**

- Make sure that children know that they can talk with you privately about these issues if they need to, away from the other members of the group.
- Remember that some children may have personal experience with trauma or family separation, even if you are not aware of this.
- If you are working with young children in a school or community center environment, you may want to send home a note to parents, telling them about A DREAM for the Holidays so that they can effectively continue the conversation at home. Visit [www.dreamfortheholidays.org](http://www.dreamfortheholidays.org) to download a sample letter to parents.
- Since Trump's election there's been increased bullying in schools, particularly towards Black, Latino, Muslim, and LGBTQ kids. You may want to talk to students and fellow teachers about what we can do to create safe environments for all children and youth.
- Please visit [www.dreamfortheholidays.org](http://www.dreamfortheholidays.org) to sign up to participate in the project and let us know how many letters you'll be sending in. This way, we'll be able to send you updates on the project that you can share with the children who wrote letters.
- Review the activity guide and modify it in whatever way you think would make it most appropriate for the children you work with.

**During A DREAM for the Holidays activities:**

- It is important to establish an environment of safety before beginning the activities. You can begin the activities with a discussion of what it means to be in a community and what it means to take care of one another. A DREAM for the Holidays is an expression of collective responsibility, and an intention to raise our voices together to change our immigration policies.
- Recognize that all families are different, and that, for a variety of reasons, the children in your group may not live in traditional nuclear families. Emphasize that a family is any grouping of children and adults who love and care for each other, and that this is a campaign to make sure that we can all stay together with the people we love in a safe environment.
- Discuss the ways that the members of your community come together to support and care for each other. Help children see that they are part of a network of support, and that whatever their personal experience with these issues, they are not alone.
- Use A DREAM for the Holidays as a civics lesson. Make sure kids understand that despite all of Trump's attacks, we all still have rights. Explain that the members of Congress who



will receive the letters are representing us in Washington and have a responsibility to listen to our concerns.

- Emphasize that, throughout history, injustices have only been stopped when ordinary people like all of us speak out. Explain that when people come together to express a shared dream, they are able to accomplish things together that no one would have been able to accomplish alone. A DREAM for the Holidays can be linked to discussions of other social movements or to the wave of protests around the country this year against hate and racism. You can also talk about other key moments in history when people have demanded changes to unjust laws. Through A DREAM for the Holidays, we can all build on this momentum.

#### **After A DREAM for the Holidays activities:**

- Tell children that their letters will be delivered to their representatives in Congress in Washington, DC. Many of the letters will also be added to the DREAM for the Holidays online gallery. At the end of the project, they'll be able to read other children's letters on the website.
- Join our **Facebook group** and post your letters and photos on your personal social media using the hashtag #DreamForTheHolidays.
- For kids who like reading out loud, you can record them with your cell phone while they read their letter out loud. Then post the video on social media with the hashtag #DreamForTheHolidays or email it to [anna@domesticworkers.org](mailto:anna@domesticworkers.org) to share.
- At the end of the campaign, you'll receive a report back on the letter delivery in Washington, DC. Please share it with the children who participated, so that they can see where their letters went and learn about the impact their words have had.

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### **Activity Guide for Adults Working with 5-7 Year Olds**

#### **Before you begin:**

- Ahead of time, familiarize yourself with the issues by reading through the "Background Information for Adult Facilitators," and the "Tips for Discussing these Issues with Children"
- Sign up to participate at [www.dreamfortheholidays.org](http://www.dreamfortheholidays.org)

#### **Materials needed:**

- Leah's story (See Appendix 1)
- Drawing materials



## **Activity**

### **1) Introduction:**

I want you to think about when you were a baby for a minute. Do you know where you were born? Here in our room, some people were born in \_\_\_\_\_ (name your state or country), some people were born in other places, and some people were born in other countries. (If you know the countries, list them to validate the stories of the children in the room.) Think about where you were born. Were you born here, \_\_\_\_\_, or somewhere else? What about your brothers and sisters? How about your mom, dad or caretaker?

Right now, in some cities and towns, grown-ups have decided that some people who were not born here and you do not have special papers called immigration papers, need to leave their homes and go back to where they were born. This means that sometimes mommies and daddies have to leave their families very quickly. Also, there are some parents who have come here to work but have had to leave their children behind. They have to wait a long time to be with their children again.

### **2) Read Leah's Story**

**\*\* Note** that the stories in the appendix may not be appropriate for the youngest children. If you feel that is the case with your group, skip ahead to step 4 below.

You can find the stories in Appendix 1 below.

### **3) Discussion questions**

- How did the story make you feel? Why?
- Think about your own family. Why is it important to have a family?
- What do you like to do with your family?
- What can we do to help other kids whose family could be split up?

### **4) Drawings and text**

Explain that we're going to do a project to help keep families together.

Ask children to draw a picture of something they like to do with their families. Older children can write a sentence or two about their picture, such as: "This is my family and me at the playground." Younger children can dictate an explanation of their drawing to you.



Letters and drawings can be colorful, but please no collages, glitter or glue.

After their text, please include the message: "Defend our dreams, keep families together!"

### 5) Add on names and ages

Ask children to write their first name, age, and state on the front of their drawings.

### 6) Sending in letters

**Mail or scan and email your letters by December 1, 2017 to:**

A DREAM for the Holidays  
904 Broad St  
Durham, NC 27705

or to [anna@domesticworkers.org](mailto:anna@domesticworkers.org)

Take a photo of the letter and post on facebook, twitter or instagram to spread the message of a DREAM for the Holidays. **Don't forget to use the hashtag #DreamfortheHolidays.**

#### **Additional Video Resources:**

- [A Child's Wish](#)
- [The Pick Up](#)
- [Do You Promise?](#)
- [Leah's Story](#) (scroll to bottom of page to play the video)

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## **Activity Guide for Adults Working with 8-11 Year Olds**

### **Before you begin:**

- Ahead of time, familiarize yourself with the issues by reading through the "Background Information for Adult Facilitators," and the "Tips for Discussing these Issues with Children"
- Sign up to participate at [www.dreamfortheholidays.org](http://www.dreamfortheholidays.org)



**Materials needed:**

- Leah and Charlie's stories (see Appendix 1 below)
- Letter-writing materials

**Activity**

**1) Read the Stories**

- Explain that today we're going to do an activity that can help lots of children and families all over the country.
- Read Leah and Charlie's stories out loud. The stories can be found in Appendix 1.

**2) Discussion**

**Talking points:**

- Donald Trump says he wants to build a border wall and deport millions of immigrants. So some children are afraid of being separated from their families if they happen to be from a different country.
- When families are separated, children suffer a lot. Imagine waking up every day and not being able to see your parents! Imagine going to bed at night without them there to tuck you in. Some kids can have problems in school because of all of the new responsibilities like taking care of younger siblings.
- Some of the countries where these families come from are not safe so they may be scared to get sent back there because they could get hurt.

**Questions:**

- How did the story make you feel? Why?
- Think about your own family. Why is it important to have a family?
- What do you like to do with your family?
- What can we do to help other kids whose family could be split up?

**Talking Points:**

- If you think it isn't fair that children could get separated from their families, there is something you can do. This year we can tell the people in Congress to keep families together.
- Right now kids around the country are writing letters to Congress with their dreams and a message to keep families together.





- We're going to write letters too! We are going to participate in a project called A Dream for the Holidays. This project is for children all over the country to write letters saying that we need Congress to do something so that families will be able to stay together. These letters will be delivered to members of the U.S. Congress in Washington, DC right before they get ready to spend time with their own families during the holidays.

#### Questions:

- Children are participating in A DREAM for the Holidays for a lot of different reasons. What are some of these reasons?
- Do you think we should write letters? Why?
- Injustices will only come to an end when people like us stand up for what is right. What are other times when people have come together to say "no" to something they thought was wrong?

### 3) Letter-writing

Ask children and youth to write a letter including any of the following points. Please make sure that each letter is handwritten on ONE sheet of paper, single-sided. **It can be colorful, but please no collages, glitter or glue!**

- Why is family important to you?
- Why do you think that all families should be allowed to stay together?
- Is there an example from your own life that shows why this is important to you?
- Include, somewhere in the letter, **"Defend our dreams, keep families together!"**
- Your name, age, and state

### 4) Sending in letters

**Mail or scan and email your letters by December 1, 2017 to:**

A DREAM for the Holidays  
904 Broad St  
Durham, NC 27705

or to [anna@domesticworkers.org](mailto:anna@domesticworkers.org)

Take a photo of the letter and post on facebook, twitter or instagram to spread the message of a DREAM for the Holidays. **Don't forget to use the hashtag #DreamfortheHolidays.**



**Additional Video Resources:**

- [A Child's Wish](#)
  - [The Pick Up](#)
  - [Do You Promise?](#)
  - [Leah's Story](#) (scroll to bottom of page to play the video)
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**Activity Guide for Adults Working with Youth Ages 12 and up**

Before you begin:

- Ahead of time, familiarize yourself with the issues by reading through the “Background Information for Adult Facilitators,” and the “Tips for Discussing these Issues with Children”
- Sign up to participate at [www.dreamfortheholidays.org](http://www.dreamfortheholidays.org)

Materials needed:

- Leah, Charlie, Ruby and Muhammad’s stories (see Appendix 1 below)
- Letter-writing materials
- Additional video resources listed at the bottom of this section

**Activity**

**1) Reading/Video**

Based on the ages of the children you are working with, choose among the stories and additional resources listed to start discussion.

**2) Discussion**

**Talking points:**

- Donald Trump says he wants to build a border wall and deport millions of immigrants. So some children are afraid of being separated from their families if they happen to be from a different country.
- When families are separated, children suffer a lot. Imagine waking up every day and not being able to see your parents! Imagine going to bed at night without them there to tuck you in.



- Some kids can have problems in school because of all of the new responsibilities, like taking care of younger siblings.
- Some of the countries where these kids and families come from are not safe so they may be scared to get sent back there because they could get hurt.

**Questions:**

- How did the story make you feel? Why?
- Think about your own family. Why is it important to have a family?
- What do you like to do with your family?
- What can we do to help other kids whose family could be split up?

**Talking Points:**

- If you think it isn't fair that children could get separated from their families, there is something you can do. This year we can tell the people in Congress to keep families together.
- Right now kids around the country are writing letters to Congress with their dreams and a message to keep families together.
- We're going to write letters too! We are going to participate in a project called A DREAM for the Holidays. This project is for children all over the country to write letters saying that we need Congress to do something so that families will be able to stay together. These letters will be delivered to members of the U.S. Congress in Washington, DC right before they get ready to spend time with their own families during the holidays.

**Questions:**

- Children are participating in A DREAM for the Holidays for a lot of different reasons. What are some of these reasons?
- Do you think we should write letters? Why?
- Injustices will only come to an end when people like us stand up for what is right. What are other times when people have come together to say "no" to something they thought was wrong?

**3) Letter-writing**

Ask children and youth to write a letter including any of the following points. Please make sure that each letter is handwritten on ONE sheet of paper, single-sided. **It can be colorful, but please no collages, glitter or glue!**

- Why is family important to you?
- Why do you think that all families should be allowed to stay together and all kids



should be able to grow up in a safe place?

- Do you have an example from your own life that shows why this is important?
- Include, somewhere in the letter, “Defend our dreams, keep families together!”
- Your name, age, and state

#### 4) Sending in letters

**Mail or scan and email your letters by December 1, 2017 to:**

A DREAM for the Holidays  
904 Broad St  
Durham, NC 27705

or to [anna@domesticworkers.org](mailto:anna@domesticworkers.org)

Take a photo of the letter and post on facebook, twitter or instagram to spread the message of a Dream for the Holidays. **Don't forget to use the hashtag #DreamfortheHolidays.**

#### **Additional Resources for Adults and Older Youth:**

- [Leah's Story \(scroll to bottom of page to play the video\)](#)
- [Family Forever: An Activity Book to Help Latino Children Understand Deportation](#)



## **APPENDIX: Stories**

### **Leah's Story**

Ten-year-old Leah lives in Miami, Florida, with her family. Leah enjoys art and music classes at school, and her passions are painting and dancing. Her two favorite foods are pizza and spaghetti. When she grows up, Leah wants to be a teacher so that she can teach other children how to read, especially about immigrant families and their rights. Sadly, Leah's mom recently received a deportation order. That means she can be sent back to her country any time without Leah knowing. Her dad is also undocumented.

Leah was born here and is a U.S. citizen. Her older sister wasn't born here but she got papers through a program called DACA so that she wouldn't have to worry about being deported. But now President Trump took away DACA so Leah's sister could be forced to leave too. Leah's hopes and dreams are to keep her family together. Leah is afraid that her parents and her older sister could get deported because of Trump's actions. She would like to give the world - especially other families who share a similar story - a message: "Don't worry about getting deported because there's people fighting for you... and remember to always love your family no matter what happens."

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### **Charlie's Story**

Charlie's life hasn't been easy, especially since his family was split up. Born in the U.S., Charlie is the youngest of five kids. Like other kids his age, Charlie enjoys soccer, going to the park, watching movies, and dreams of traveling to California. But Charlie lives with a much harder burden to bear than most 13-year-olds. Charlie's Dad was deported more than two years ago. When he was held in detention by immigration authorities, Charlie and his family prayed, held vigils, wrote letters and petitions asking for compassion for his family. His father was deported anyway.

"I dream about the day we will all be together," says Charlie. "It's been more than two years and I miss my dad so much. I miss playing soccer with him, I miss going to church with him." Because of his experience, Charlie wrote to Congress and the President asking them to stop separating families: "What if immigration broke up your family? Would you like it? Now just close your eyes and imagine your family destroyed ... no child and family should suffer like we did."



### **Muhammad's Story \*(for older youth)**

Muhammad's brief life has been riddled with difficulties. He is 17 years old. He grew up in the Syrian city of Aleppo, where all of his relatives lived near one another. Now they are scattered across five continents. Some uncles are left in Syria, others are in northern Europe, others are on their way here. His parents have been in the U.S. for the past two years. Muhammad was jailed by the government in Syria and tortured for six days. When he managed to escape, his parents gave him a forged passport, which showed him to be two years younger than his real age, so he could avoid the military draft in Syria. His girlfriend was left behind in Aleppo and was killed by a bomb last year.

"What can you do? This is what war is like" Muhammad says. Now, he lives in the US, is a junior in high school and earning good grades. However, he is bullied because of his name and because he sometimes leaves the classroom to go pray. He is scared that Trump will send him to Syria or put him in jail for being Muslim. Despite all he has been through, Muhammad has dreams for the future. He wants to be able to be reunited with all his family and for them to live in safety in a place that welcomes them. He would like to finish school and become an engineer one day.

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### **Ruby's Story \*(for older youth)**

Ruby, left Honduras less than a year ago, but her eyes still go wide as she recounts her 1,600 mile journey. The 15-year-old says she slept in the bushes, walked through deserts, was captured by kidnappers and held in a trailer, and eventually picked up by the U.S. Border Patrol in Texas. "You have to risk yourself," says Ruby. "There's no future in Honduras."

Ruby hopes for a better life in the U.S. "There's a lot of crime in Honduras. They kidnap people. Adults and children, old people, to get money. If you don't pay the gangs they kill you. And the police do nothing. The government also arrests and sometimes even kills kids if they think they are gang members." Honduras is one of the most dangerous places in the world. Early this year, some of Ruby's friends were deported because they were recently arrived immigrants from Central America. Ruby is scared that the same thing could happen to her and she could be forced to leave her family in the US and go back to Honduras where she is afraid for what the future could bring.