

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

July 18, 2014

Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Craig Fugate, Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Secretary Burwell and Administrator Fugate:

The Florida Department of Health has received unconfirmed reports that the federal government is bringing unaccompanied minors from the border to Florida today. On July 17, we received unconfirmed information that dozens of children were being brought by plane into Miami on Friday. This same day, ABC news reported that "the federal government is so overwhelmed by the current tide of migrants crossing the border it cannot provide basic medical screening to all of these children before transporting them, often by air, to longer-term holding facilities across the country" (*Feds Struggling to Cope with Medical 'Breakdown' at the Border*, ABC News, July 17, 2014).

Specifically, ABC News reported that your Health and Human Services Department's Director of Refugee Health said you "identified a breakdown of the medical screening processes." This breakdown was described in the news report as "a systemic failure of the handoff of these children between Customs Border Protection (CBP) and Health and Human Services (HHS)."

If these reports are accurate, this "systemic failure" in the federal system is extremely worrisome. In order to fulfill my duties as Florida's State Surgeon General, I am asking you to immediately provide the below information. This information is urgently needed and is vital to guarding the health and safety of Florida communities across our state and to the well-being of those children from the border who may have come through the flawed federal system.

- Will you notify the Florida Department of Health immediately of any current or future unaccompanied minors coming to, or placed in, Florida, including their current location?
- Are you conducting health screenings both at the border and again at the time the children are placed in shelters?
- What medical services, if any, were provided to any children placed in Florida?
- Do you have any records of infectious diseases associated with the children currently in federal care in Florida?
- Have any of the children been hospitalized in Florida with fevers accompanying their illnesses? If so, where are they being treated?

Because of the urgency of this request, this letter is being immediately emailed and faxed to you. I expect a prompt response to my request for information on existing unaccompanied minors in Florida and would like to stress the importance of future timely communications.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS".

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health

Florida Department of Health
Office of the State Surgeon General
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A-00 • Tallahassee, FL 32399-1701
PHONE: 850/245-4210 • FAX: 850/922-9453

www.FloridaHealth.gov
TWITTER: HealthyFLA
FACEBOOK: FLDepartmentofHealth
YOUTUBE: fldoh
FLICKR: HealthyFla
PINTEREST: HealthyFla