



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on August 8, 2014

Illegal Immigrant Kids May Overwhelm U.S. Schools

With more than 50,000 Unaccompanied Children (UACs) having been apprehended at the U.S. border since October, school districts across America are bracing for an unmanageable wave of these children flooding into their schools in upcoming weeks.

"We haven't started school yet, so we are all just holding our breath to see what's going to come on the first day of school," *USA Today* quoted Caroline Woodason, assistant director of school support for Dalton Public Schools in Georgia.



USA Today also quoted Francisco Negrón, general counsel for the National School Board Association, who said, "One of the challenges here, though, is the large number of unaccompanied minors. This is a whole new wave of immigrant students that are coming without any guardians whatsoever."

The report also cited statements from Alberto Carvalho, superintendent of the Miami-Dade County school district, which has the largest number recently-arrived immigrant children in Florida. The district requested additional federal funding last week to support the expected flood of new immigrant students. During the final three months of the last school year, the district enrolled 300 children from Honduras. While the district has an ample number of English-as-second-language teachers, as well as relationships with local social services, "there's an unknown factor" about how the new students will affect the district financially, Carvalho said. Of course, those "social services" will also cost the taxpayers an unknown amount of additional funding.

Since most of the children coming here illegally are from Central America, they are not deported immediately back to their country of origin. The William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, signed into law by George W. Bush, requires that children entering our country illegally be granted a court appearance to allow a judge to evaluate their particular situation. The law was enacted to prevent victims of child trafficking from being automatically sent back to those who had effectively enslaved them, but the authors of the act did not anticipate the massive increase in the numbers of such unaccompanied minors, which has clogged the immigration courts to the point of eliminating their effectiveness.

The traffickers and smugglers responsible for facilitating the human wave from Central America have exploited that law to overwhelm the system. During the lengthy period of time between apprehension and the hearing, the illegal immigrants are free to go wherever they wish and the no-show rate for the determination hearings is high. As one example, Judge Michael Baird of the federal Dallas Immigration Court said on July 22 that 18 of the children whose cases he was scheduled to hear on that day didn't show up for court.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials transfer unaccompanied minors to the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement to be housed in shelters,



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some on military bases and others in local facilities. Some are placed with Spanish-speaking sponsors. During the period between their initial apprehension and the final determination of their status by an immigration court, the children are sent to local public schools to be educated. This period can be a lengthy one. Reuters News on July 22 quoted Judge Dana Leigh Marks of San Francisco, who is president of the National Association of Immigration Judges: “We are reaching a point of implosion, if we have not already reached it.”

The report cited Justice Department figures that U.S. immigration courts have a backlog of 375,373 cases, almost 50,000 more than they faced two years ago. Judge Marks, who is one of the 243 judges presiding over 59 immigration courts in the United States, is setting hearing dates as far off as 2018. It now typically takes three to five years for cases to clear the system, judges and lawyers have said.

With those tens of thousands of pending cases involving unaccompanied children who have entered our country illegally, the process of educating, housing, and attending to their other needs will likely continue for years and cost the taxpayers an unknown — but substantial — sum.

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