



Answering the Question: “How Can I Help?”

Working with pro bono attorneys and volunteers, the questions “How can I help?” or “How can I get involved?” commonly arise. While these are welcome questions, sometimes they are difficult to answer depending on the current needs and context of the situation. Currently, with the increase of children arriving unaccompanied at the border, there is an increased interest in children’s immigration law and with that, more general public interest in the subject and potentially in helping.

The issues are complex and there are no simple answers to these questions, particularly for interested volunteers who are not attorneys. Moreover, sometimes volunteers’ and pro bono attorneys’ expectations for getting involved may not be realistic. However, being prepared to answer these questions is important to maximize this moment where there may be increased interest in your volunteer program and an opportunity to provide information and awareness regarding issues affecting children in their immigration cases.



We encourage organizations to center the needs of the client and organization when designing programs, while taking into consideration what strengths a pro bono attorney or volunteer may bring to the client and organization. It also helps to think outside the box and consider if volunteers with a variety of skill sets can assist your clients and organization.

Quick Resources from CILA to Help Respond to Inquiries

CILA has created some information that may help you respond to inquiries from interested volunteers and pro bono attorneys.

- We drafted an [ABA CILA Fact Sheet: Unaccompanied Children at the Border](#) (March 22, 2021) that provides information regarding the systems involved and context to what is happening currently at the border. You can easily share this document to help provide information.
- CILA created a [webpage](#) with additional information regarding how to get involved and resources to learn more information. Feel free to share the link.

- We have also created an example draft document below with information regarding different ways to get involved that you can revise to fit your programs' needs if you would like to make it more individualized to your program. Simply change the text to include your program's opportunities and information. You can also change the colors to match your organization's branding. Feel free to keep any of the resources included if you wish.

Additionally, consider CILA's ideas for programs when responding to interest from individuals with diverse backgrounds.

Program Ideas: Responding to Interest

It helps to be prepared to respond to a variety of inquiries from interested volunteers.

- Be creative when considering your organization's needs and determining volunteer and pro bono attorney opportunities.
 - Consider what additional skill sets would help your program and clients. Does your organization need help with web design? Flag this need. Or think about whether a partnership with medical providers would help. Read CILA's prior [resource](#) regarding working with health care professionals.
 - Are there ways to break up a case so that a pro bono attorney can help with a specific task or part of the case rather than taking on the full case? It may help to have some opportunities that are short-term and others that are long-term. Check out CILA's prior [resource](#) regarding working with pro bono attorneys on appeals.
- Create a handout with ways to get involved with your organization that is ready to send to email requests for more information.
- Have a standard email response that can be replicated by volunteers. If you are overwhelmed by the demand, post an automatic response email with options to get involved.
- Get to know local organizations so you can refer a potential volunteer to others in the area if you do not have a current need or if the potential volunteer's skill set matches a different need.
- If your organization has a public outreach component or is engaged with policy issues, consider collaborating on these issues.
- If your organization sends out a regular communication such as an email or e-newsletter to interested volunteers and pro bono attorneys, consider inviting potential volunteers to sign up for the list. Perhaps share a relevant news article or policy issue in the email or e-newsletter so you can help provide awareness to the general public on these issues as well, so your communication is inclusive of volunteers who are not attorneys.



SAMPLE: Example Document You Can Modify for Your Organization's Needs

Ways To Get Involved To Help Immigrant Children & Youth

LEARN ABOUT THE ISSUES

IN ADDITION TO READING THE NEWS ABOUT IMMIGRATION LAWS AND POLICY AS WELL AS ISSUES AFFECTING CHILDREN, CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES.

- **Facts about immigrant children at the border:** Read CILA's [ABA CILA Fact Sheet: Unaccompanied Children at the Border](#) which provides information regarding the systems involved and context to the current increase of child migrants at the southwest U.S. border.
- **Learn more about the experience of unaccompanied children and youth:** Watch a video created by the ABA's Commission on Immigration (COI) entitled [Tu Futuro, Tu Voz](#) (Your Future, Your Voice) to hear from four young adults, Jiveli, Nancy, Adolfo, and René, from Central America who came to the United States as unaccompanied children. They share what it was like to work with legal service providers as children and provide advice about the legal immigration process for youth.
- **Learn more about working with unaccompanied children and youth:** Watch a video co-created by CILA and South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project ([ProBAR](#)) entitled [Standing with Children: Unaccompanied Children and the Need for Pro Bono Representation](#) to hear from legal staff providers and a pro bono attorney regarding what it is like to work with children in their immigration cases.
- **ABA policy recommendations:** Read the ABA's top policy recommendations for the immigration system including issues affecting unaccompanied children in [Achieving America's Immigration Promise](#). The ABA also drafted the [Standards for the Custody, Placement and Care; Legal Representation; and Adjudication of Unaccompanied Alien Children in the United States](#) to provide guiding principles for children's immigration law.
- **ABA Commission on Immigration blog:** Follow the blog [Generating Justice: Immigration Reflections from the Border and Beyond](#). For example, a February 2021 blog post dives into additional policy changes and legislative action needed in "[A Long Wait for Special Immigrant Juveniles Means a Risk of Deportation.](#)"

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

VOLUNTEERING YOUR TIME IS A GREAT WAY TO HELP SUPPORT NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN IMMIGRATION CASES! THERE ARE A VARIETY OF SKILL SETS THAT ARE HELPFUL TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUTH SEEKING PROTECTION IN THE UNITED STATES.

- **Do you have language skills to offer?** Many organizations have volunteer opportunities to provide in person or remote interpretation and translation support. You can search for some



of your local organizations at [Immi](#), created by the [Immigration Advocates Network](#) and [Pro Bono Net](#).

- **Do you have strong administrative or organizational skills or experience as a legal assistant or paralegal?** Offer to volunteer with local nonprofit organizations to provide administrative support to the organization or to support a legal case. Some nonprofit organizations may pair a pro bono attorney with a volunteer administrative assistant or paralegal to work on a case. You can search for some of your local organizations at [Immi](#), created by the [Immigration Advocates Network](#) and [Pro Bono Net](#).
- **Do you have strong research skills?** Some organizations may need assistance from volunteers to research country conditions to help support clients' asylum cases. You can search for some of your local organizations at [Immi](#), created by the [Immigration Advocates Network](#) and [Pro Bono Net](#).
- **Are you a law student?** Consider volunteering with an organization to offer legal research support or to research country conditions to support a child's case. Additionally, many nonprofit organizations working with children and youth offer internship opportunities. You can search for some of your local organizations at [Immi](#), created by the [Immigration Advocates Network](#) and [Pro Bono Net](#). Also, consider [opportunities](#) with the ABA's Commission on Immigration.
- **Are you a health provider?** Many cases benefit from the knowledge of a health professional either through a supporting statement with expertise on a particular medical condition or through an evaluation of a client. There are several ways to get involved either through directly working with a nonprofit organization or joining efforts with an organization such as the [Physicians for Human Rights](#).
- **Do you have a heart for working with youth and wish to be a child advocate?** Consider volunteering with the [Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights](#) as a child advocate in Houston, San Antonio, Chicago, Harlingen, Phoenix, Los Angeles, New York, or DC.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES FOR ATTORNEYS

THOUSANDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN IMMIGRATION COURT HAVE NO ATTORNEY AT THEIR SIDE. REPRESENTATION MAKES A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN FACING DEPORTATION.

- **Are you an attorney wanting to help?** CILA hosts a [platform](#), Pro Bono Matters for Children Facing Deportation, for attorneys to view available pro bono cases to work with children and youth in their immigration cases. There are opportunities nationwide. In most cases, no prior immigration experience is necessary; organizations can help provide training and resources.
- **Do you need resources to help support you in the case?** Additionally, CILA has a variety of free resources and trainings on our [website](#) to help support you in pro bono representation including [CILA's Pro Bono Guide](#). If you are a pro bono attorney in Texas, feel free to reach out to CILA for [technical assistance](#) support.



ADDITIONAL WAYS TO GET CONNECTED

- Advocate with local leaders for policy and legislative change. Visit [the ABA Commission on Immigration's Legislation & Policy](#) page to get ideas.
- [Join](#) CILA's quarterly e-newsletter for pro bono attorneys to stay updated on CILA's resources and issues affecting children and youth.
- Follow the ABA's COI on [Twitter](#) @ABA_Immigration and [Facebook](#).
- Learn more about CILA by checking out [CILA's 2020 Annual Report](#).
- [Donate](#) to CILA or your local provider working with children who are unaccompanied. You can search for some of your local organizations at [Immi](#), created by the [Immigration Advocates Network](#) and [Pro Bono Net](#).

[Access an editable Word document of this example here.](#)

