



Working Together to Empower Children Facing Deportation: Information for Organizations Interested in CILA's Platform

Many children have legal relief available that could offer them protection and more security in the United States. The only thing missing is knowledge and guidance to navigate the system. Children appearing in immigration court alone are unable to access the relief from deportation that is available to them under the law. The need is greater than the services the current system of nonprofit legal service providers can provide.



There is no doubt that appointing a free, specialized attorney to every child in this system is the gold standard. Until that standard is realized, many children need help from attorneys on a pro bono basis to fill this gap.

Thank you for your efforts to help recruit and work with pro bono attorneys assisting children and youth in immigration cases.

Children's Access to Lawyers in Immigration Proceedings

Data available from the [Executive Office for Immigration Review](#) shows that thousands of unaccompanied children are currently facing removal in immigration courts across the United States. Unfortunately, unaccompanied children are not entitled to appointed legal counsel or best interest advocates like children in the juvenile or child welfare systems in the United States. In fact, [48% of unaccompanied children](#) are facing deportation alone, according to data from EOIR through January 2023. We must find a way to elevate the voices of youth by providing representation.

Collaborating to Empower Children Facing Removal

The ABA's Children's Immigration Law Academy (CILA) hosts a platform called [Pro Bono Matters for Children Facing Deportation](#) on CILA's website. The platform works almost like a bulletin board. It is a place for nonprofit legal service providers who work with children and youth in immigration matters to post pro bono opportunities in need of assistance. Interested lawyers and advocates can search and share available pro bono cases and opportunities.



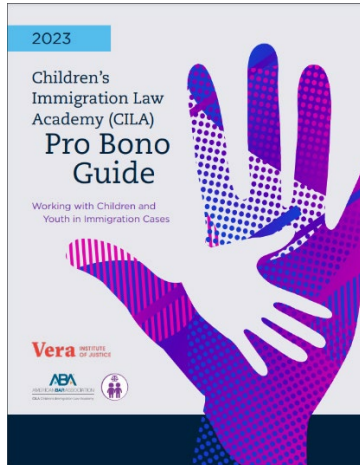
**Pro Bono Matters
for Children Facing Deportation**

Are you a legal service provider who would like to post children and youth's immigration pro bono opportunities on [CILA's platform](#)?

Email us at probono@abacila.org.

The platform is always growing. Twenty-one organizations can currently post pro bono opportunities to help children and youth in immigration cases across the nation. Some organizations provide mentorship and training to attorneys who are not familiar with

immigration law, while other organizations seek experienced attorneys. Interested pro bono attorneys can read the case cards, and express interest in a pro bono opportunity. The posting organization contacts the interested individual to learn more about the potential volunteer and provide more information about the opportunity to get started.



CILA has resources available to support pro bono attorneys. Pro bono coordinators can feel free to share CILA's recorded trainings and written materials. This is one way we capacity-build in our work, by creating and sharing these materials on CILA's [website](#). They are all available for free. The resources cover introductory material and more advanced topics. A great resource for pro bono attorneys is the [CILA Pro Bono Guide: Working with Children and Youth in Immigration Cases](#). CILA also sends a quarterly [e-newsletter](#) to pro bono attorneys, those interested in engaging in a pro bono case in the future, or for anyone who wants to learn more. Feel free to share our newsletter with interested pro bono attorneys and volunteers.

Pro Bono Programs: No One Size Fits All Model

CILA conducted a survey on pro bono engagement in legal service organizations funded by the Vera Institute of Justice. Despite the complexities, 94% of the organizations who participated in the survey revealed that they utilize pro bono support in a number of different ways, and all of the participating organizations thought that pro bono help can support their mission. Pro bono attorneys have supported legal service nonprofits by taking on full representation of a child facing deportation, taking on unbundled pieces of a legal case (research, brief writing, etc.), participating in a one-time clinic, representing a sponsor in a family lawsuit, volunteering as a pro bono attorney or guardian ad litem in family court, representing clients in the appeal process or an appeal to federal court. Legal service providers reported that pro bono attorneys thrive when they have an established relationship with the nonprofit, are able to commit to the length and depth of the opportunity, are provided training and resources, and space to connect and ask questions. The survey also revealed that all organizations have limited resources to provide the trainings, resources and mentorship that helps a pro bono attorney thrive. CILA issued a detailed report of the [survey results](#).

Until there is universal representation for all children in immigration proceedings, we hope the platform can be used as a tool to help connect legal service organizations with pro bono attorneys, and CILA hopes to help bridge the gap by providing [resources](#) to help guide pro bono attorneys in effective representation of youth. CILA also hosts a [Pro Bono Coordination for Child Immigration](#) listserv and quarterly working group, that meets by video conference. The working and listserv are open to anyone at a legal nonprofit who is involved in the coordination of pro bono opportunities to help children and families facing deportation, whether it is full time or as part of your job.

