



## Working Together to Empower Children Facing Deportation: Information for Volunteers and Pro Bono Attorneys to Learn About CILA's Platform

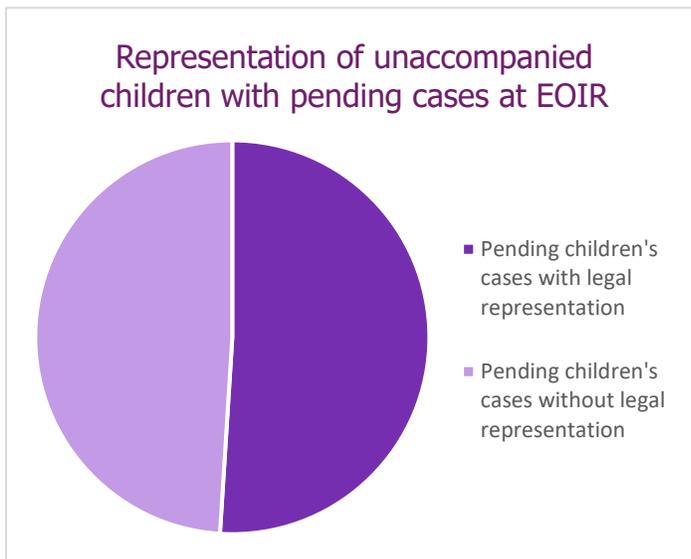
Many children have legal relief available that could offer them protection and more security in the United States. The only thing missing is knowledge and guidance to navigate the system. Children appearing in immigration court alone are unable to access the relief from deportation that is available 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.



### Children's Access to Lawyers in Immigration Proceedings

Data available from the [Executive Office for Immigration Review](#) (EOIR) shows that thousands of unaccompanied children are currently facing deportation 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, [49% of unaccompanied children](#) are facing deportation alone, according to data from EOIR as of July 2022. We must find a way to elevate the voices of youth by providing representation. Although children may have spoken to a lawyer while they were in detention, there is no right to appointed counsel in immigration proceedings. Additionally, many parts of the country do not have legal service providers that represent unaccompanied children for free or low cost. This means that youth in some areas are not represented upon release from detention, unless a pro bono attorney is willing to take their case.

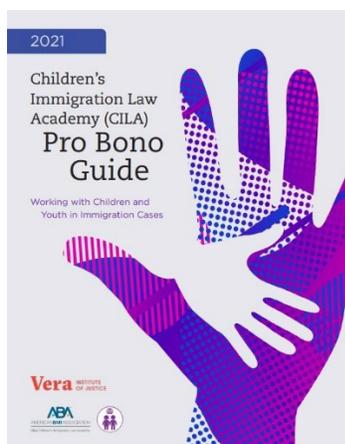
The above chart shows data from EOIR, demonstrating that almost half of the population of unaccompanied youth nationwide lack legal representation for their pending immigration cases. Obtaining legal counsel is difficult for unaccompanied children. Many states lack legal service providers, who can provide free or low-cost legal services to unaccompanied children. Additionally, the cost of hiring a private attorney is a major barrier for many young people who are often still in school and may not be eligible to work in the United States. Children and youth often lack support, and they must navigate legal matters on their own. A pro bono attorney can make a difference in the life of a child or youth to help explain their rights and their options and to walk alongside them in representation.

## Collaborating to Empower Children Facing Deportation

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 similarly to a bulletin board. The platform 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.



The platform is always growing. Eighteen 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. Read the case cards, and express interest in a pro bono opportunity that fits best for you. The posting organization will contact you so you can both learn more, and then you can get started.



Whether you are a new or seasoned immigration or children's attorney, CILA has resources available to support you in your representation. A great starting point is the [CILA Pro Bono Guide: Working with Children and Youth in Immigration Cases](#), available on CILA's website. Additionally, CILA's [website](#) features numerous recorded trainings and written resources to help pro bono attorneys working with children and youth in immigration cases, all available for free. The materials cover introductory material and more advanced topics. 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.

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.