I am not an immigration lawyer, but would like to take a pro bono case. How do I get started?

Check the “Regional Efforts” section of this website for a volunteer program near you. Click here for a directory of local volunteer opportunities. Upcoming trainings and events are listed here.

The following national organizations offer or support programs to match lawyers to children’s cases:
- American Bar Association
- American Immigration Lawyers Association
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network
- Kids in Need of Defense
- USCRI

What are the immigration options for children?

There are protections for immigrant children who have been abused or neglected; have been persecuted or fear persecution in their own country; or, are victims of crime and torture. Children may qualify for immigration benefits based on a family member’s immigration status or case. This PowerPoint presentation gives a good overview of immigration options for children.

What is Immigration Court?

Immigration Court is an administrative law court, within the U.S. Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR). For more detailed information about the EOIR, court rules, and practice manuals, go to: http://www.justice.gov/eoir. View this webinar for an overview of immigration court proceedings. Immigration Judges generally appreciate pro bono counsel, and can provide some guidance on procedure. The EOIR has published guidelines on policies the court may implement to support pro bono.

How is representing a child different than representing an adult?

Watch this webinar to learn about best practices for representing children. It covers the basic immigration options, ethical considerations for working with child clients, and tips for establishing trust and interviewing a child.

How can I help a child client understand the process?

Use plain language to explain your role and how you will help your child client in immigration court. Avoid using technical terms and legalese. Terms as simple at “lawyer,” “judge” or “hearing” may be unfamiliar to your child client. Explain each person’s role in the immigration proceedings and ask the child to explain it to you and demonstrate understanding. In interviews, use open-ended questions instead of leading ones that can be answered “yes” or “no.”
Refer your client to the resources on this website to help them understand the court process, including videos on what to expect in immigration court.

**How do I relate to the child’s guardian or parent?**

The child is your client, not the child’s parent or guardian. If possible, meet with your client without the family or guardian present. Sometimes your client’s eligibility for immigration status depends on harm or a dangerous situation at home. Let your client know that you will not share any information with third parties, but you may ask your client for permission to discuss particular aspects of his or her case with certain family members. The American Immigration Lawyers Association has published an ethics advisory on working with Child Clients. The American Bar Association has also published standards on the representation of child clients.

**Can I get help with a complicated case?**

Some organizations offer mentoring and other resources to help lawyers who are new to immigration law or representing children:

- American Bar Association
- American Immigration Lawyers Association
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network
- Kids in Need of Defense
- USCRI

Check your local bar association for mentoring and support. Upcoming trainings and events are listed on this website, as well as materials to help you understand the law.