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## **EOIR's Legal Orientation and Pro Bono Program**

The Executive Office for Immigration Review's (EOIR's) Legal Orientation and Pro Bono Program provides aliens in immigration court proceedings with legal information and self-help resources, and improves their access to pro bono legal representation. Aliens in immigration court proceedings are not entitled to publicly-funded legal representation. Consequently, many appear in the immigration courts and before the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) without legal counsel. EOIR works closely with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the Program's four initiatives: the Legal Orientation Program (LOP), the BIA Pro Bono Project, the Unaccompanied Alien Children Initiative, and the Model Hearing Program.

### **Legal Orientation Program**

The LOP provides detained aliens who are in removal proceedings with basic information on immigration law and court procedures. As a result, LOP participants can make better-informed decisions about their cases earlier in the immigration court process and are more likely to appear for their hearing if released from custody. The LOP provides trained NGO presenters who conduct group orientations to address general immigration law issues, individual orientations to provide more specific guidance, and follow-up services such as self-help workshops or referrals for pro bono representation.

The LOP also improves access to pro bono representation by enabling NGOs to reach a wider audience. The LOP not only provides aliens with welcome legal services but also promotes judicial efficiency. EOIR's fact sheet on the [LOP evaluation report](#) indicates LOP participants have fewer court hearings and spend less time in detention.

EOIR oversees the LOP at 12 detention facilities in the following states: Arizona, California, Colorado, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington.

### **BIA Pro Bono Project**

The BIA Pro Bono Project assists NGOs in their efforts to link pro bono resources nationwide with indigent aliens whose cases are on appeal to the BIA. EOIR identifies certain

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types of cases for pro bono representation using criteria selected by the NGOs. The NGOs distribute summaries of the cases identified by EOIR to pro bono representatives throughout the country. The pro bono representatives who accept a case receive a copy of the court record and, in most cases, additional time to file the appeal brief.

The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., provides critical assistance in coordinating the project. Other NGO participants include the American Immigration Law Foundation, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition, and the National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild.

### **Unaccompanied Alien Children Initiative**

Through the Unaccompanied Alien Children Initiative, EOIR develops and implements pro bono programs and activities for unaccompanied alien children in coordination with NGOs and the [Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement](#), the agency responsible for the care of unaccompanied alien children in federal custody.

EOIR also promotes the use of special dockets for unaccompanied alien children and child-friendly court procedures within the immigration courts, and coordinates training sessions for pro bono representatives who handle unaccompanied alien children's cases. Additional information is available in EOIR's fact sheet on [unaccompanied alien children](#).

### **Model Hearing Program**

The Model Hearing Program provides practical and relevant hands-on immigration court training to small groups of attorneys and law students who commit to a minimum level of pro bono representation throughout the year. Volunteer immigration judges throughout the country conduct mock trials focusing on practice, procedure, and advocacy skills. Attendees may also receive training materials and continuing legal education credit.

EOIR coordinates the training sessions in partnership with bar associations and pro bono agencies with the goal of improving the quality of advocacy before the immigration judges and BIA and increasing levels of pro bono representation.

— EOIR —

*EOIR, an agency within the Department of Justice, is responsible for adjudicating immigration cases. Specifically, under delegated authority from the Attorney General, EOIR interprets and administers federal immigration laws by conducting immigration court proceedings, appellate reviews, and administrative hearings. EOIR consists of three components: the Office of the Chief Immigration Judge, which is responsible for managing the numerous immigration courts located throughout the United States where immigration judges adjudicate individual cases; the Board of Immigration Appeals, which primarily conducts appellate reviews of immigration judge decisions; and the Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer, which adjudicates immigration-related employment cases. EOIR is committed to providing the fair, expeditious, and uniform interpretation and application of immigration law in all cases.*