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EOIR's Office of Legal Access Programs

The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) established the Office of Legal Access Programs (OLAP) in April 2000 to improve access to legal information and counseling and to increase representation rates for foreign-born individuals appearing before the immigration courts and Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). OLAP is responsible for administering the Legal Orientation Program, the Legal Orientation Program for Custodians of Unaccompanied Alien Children, the National Qualified Representative Program, and the BIA Pro Bono Project. OLAP also coordinates the Model Hearing Program and other initiatives which improve access to legal services for individuals appearing before EOIR's tribunals, and provides technical support to the courts' Pro Bono Liaison Judges and Pro Bono Committees.

Legal Orientation Program

Since 2003, EOIR has carried out the Legal Orientation Program (LOP) to improve judicial efficiency in the immigration courts, and to assist detained individuals and others involved in detained removal proceedings to make timely and informed decisions. Under the LOP, EOIR contracts with nonprofit organizations to provide group and individual orientations, self-help workshops, and pro bono referral services for detained individuals in removal proceedings. LOP's main focus is on detention centers and is operational in 33 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) adult detention centers, but it is also present at three ICE family residential centers and two EOIR immigration courts serving non-detained individuals.

Independent analysis has shown that the LOP has positive effects on the immigration court process: detained individuals make better informed and more timely decisions and are more likely to obtain representation; and cases are completed faster, resulting in fewer court hearings, less time spent in detention, and [cost savings](#).

Legal Orientation Program for Custodians of Unaccompanied Alien Children

The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 tasked EOIR and the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement to offer legal orientation presentations to the adult custodians of unaccompanied alien children in EOIR removal proceedings.

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The goals of the legal orientations include seeking to protect children from mistreatment, exploitation, and trafficking, as well as increasing the appearance rates of these children in immigration court. In 2010, EOIR launched the Legal Orientation Program for Custodians of Unaccompanied Alien Children (LOPC) to meet these goals and to help increase pro bono representation rates of unaccompanied alien children in immigration proceedings.

EOIR administers a contract to provide the LOPC at 15 locations nationwide: Arlington, Va.; Atlanta; Baltimore; Boston; Charlotte, N.C.; Dallas, Harlingen, and Houston, Texas; Los Angeles; Long Island and New York City, N.Y.; Memphis, Tenn.; Miami; Newark, N.J.; and San Francisco. The LOPC providers offer services similar to the LOP services, but tailored to the adult custodians of unaccompanied alien children. Services include: general group orientations; individual orientations; self-help workshops; and assistance with pro bono referrals. Additionally, LOPC providers are able to assist with school enrollment and make referrals to social services to help ensure the well-being of the child. OLAP issues guidance to LOPC providers designed to assist them in identifying victims of mistreatment, exploitation, and trafficking; protecting the victims from further harm; and connecting the victims to needed social services.

In addition, since 2013, the LOPC has operated the LOPC National Call Center to assist in making appointments for custodians at one of the LOPC provider locations, and to provide telephonic assistance to custodians who live outside the geographic areas in which LOPC is currently available. This telephonic assistance includes legal orientations on the immigration court process, as well as guidance in filing basic court forms, such as the Change of Address Form and motion to change venue.

BIA Pro Bono Project

In 2001, EOIR and non-profit agencies developed the BIA Pro Bono Project (Project). Individuals in removal proceedings do not have a right to counsel at government expense and, as a result, many appear before the immigration courts and BIA without counsel. Agencies that provide legal services to immigrants can face many obstacles in identifying, locating, and communicating with unrepresented individuals in time to write and file an appeal brief. The Project helps overcome such obstacles. Once cases are identified and reviewed by pro bono attorney screeners, summaries of the cases are distributed by a non-profit agency to pro bono representatives throughout the United States. Volunteers who accept a case under the Project receive a copy of the file, as well as additional time to file the appeal brief.

In February 2014, EOIR completed a [ten-year review of the Project](#), demonstrating that the Project found counsel willing to accept the case for 87 percent of cases selected by the pro bono attorney screeners between 2002 and 2011. Since the beginning of the Project, more than 1,200 individuals have been represented by pro bono counsel through the Project.

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Model Hearing Program

The Model Hearing Program is an educational program developed to improve the quality of advocacy before the court, as well as to increase levels of pro bono representation. Model hearings, which consist of small-scale “mock” trial training sessions held in immigration court and partnering bar associations and/or pro bono agencies, provide practical and relevant “hands-on” immigration court training to small groups of attorneys and law students with an emphasis on practice, procedure, and advocacy skills. Participants receive training materials, may obtain Continuing Legal Education credit from the partnering organization, and commit to a minimal level of pro bono representation. Since June 2001, EOIR has hosted more than 100 model hearing training sessions in immigration courts nationwide. The [Model Hearing Program Training Manual](#) contains detailed information on the content and structure of this program, as well as samples of past training sessions.

National Qualified Representative Program

In April 2013, EOIR launched the National Qualified Representative Program (NQRP) to provide Qualified Representatives (QRs) to certain unrepresented and detained respondents whom an immigration judge or the BIA find to be mentally incompetent to represent themselves in immigration proceedings. The fundamental goals of the NQRP are increased efficiency and fairness in immigration proceedings. EOIR administers the NQRP under a contract with a national provider, which in turn uses local subcontracting legal service organizations and law firms to provide QRs where required.

Baltimore Representation Initiative for Unaccompanied Children

The Baltimore Representation Initiative for Unaccompanied Children (BRIUC) funds direct representation in immigration proceedings at the Baltimore Immigration Court for unaccompanied children who are under the age of 16 and whose cases are not joined with an adult's (regardless of the child's eligibility for immigration relief). Established in 2014, BRIUC aims to prevent mistreatment, exploitation, and trafficking of unaccompanied children.

Remote Access Initiative

In 2016, EOIR established the Remote Access Initiative (RAI), which provides direct representation for unaccompanied children who meet the same qualifications as with the Baltimore initiative, but who live in the Southeastern United States and face barriers to accessing legal services based on their distant geographical location from legal service providers in more highly populated areas. The Memphis Immigration Court serves as the jurisdiction for the program. The geographical area of focus includes Eastern Tennessee, Northwest Arkansas, and parts of Northern Mississippi. RAI funds a coalition of legal and social service providers located across Tennessee to identify qualifying children and provide them with representation in immigration proceedings.

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justice AmeriCorps

In 2014, EOIR and the Corporation for National and Community Service entered into a strategic partnership to increase national service while facilitating the effective and efficient adjudication of immigration proceedings involving unaccompanied children under the age of 16 whose cases are not joined with an adult's, and working to prevent their mistreatment, exploitation, and trafficking. The justice AmeriCorps program provides funding through grants to host organizations to support members providing legal representation for these children.

List of Pro Bono Legal Service Providers

The List of Pro Bono Legal Service Providers (List) is provided to all individuals in immigration court proceedings. The List is central to EOIR's efforts to improve the level and quality of representation before its immigration judges, and is an essential tool to inform individuals in proceedings before EOIR of available pro bono legal services. OLAP administers the List and publishes it quarterly in January, April, July, and October. The List contains information on non-profit organizations and attorneys who have committed to providing at least 50 hours per year of pro bono legal services before the immigration court location where they appear on the List. The List also contains information on pro bono referral services that refer individuals in immigration court proceedings to pro bono counsel.

Immigration Court Helpdesks

For Fiscal Year 2016, Congress provided EOIR with funding to create information helpdesks at the immigration courts with the greatest pending caseload. The primary goals of the Immigration Court Helpdesk (ICH) are to orient non-detained individuals appearing before the immigration court on the removal hearing process, and provide information to non-detained individuals to inform them about possible remedies and legal resources. The ICH will provide in-person information sessions, self-help assistance to individuals without counsel, and information on available pro bono resources to unrepresented individuals. The ICH was recently launched in five immigration courts: Chicago; Los Angeles; Miami; New York City; and San Antonio.

Other initiatives

Drawing on informational pamphlets developed by non-profit partners, EOIR places on its website and in several immigration courts the self-help guides that are available throughout ICE's detention facilities. The self-help guides provide an overview of immigration proceedings and information on the most common forms of relief, bonds, and changes in venue.

Additional resources:

- [American Bar Association Know Your Rights video](#)
- [LOP Cost Saving Analysis report](#)