



**The Family Law Section & the Commission on Immigration
Are Seeking Pro Bono Assistance for:**

**Unaccompanied Immigrant Child Victims of
Persecution, Trafficking, and Other Violence**

Each year, more than 5000 unaccompanied immigrant children, ranging from infants to teenagers, are taken into U.S. custody after having left their home countries. Many are fleeing persecution, gang violence, family abuse, or other trauma. Some are apprehended at the border after embarking on perilous journeys to the U.S., while others are discovered in the interior without legal documents or adult family members to speak for them. These children are generally arrested, detained and placed into deportation proceedings where they appear on their own before immigration judges. They are alone, frightened and confused. Many have valid claims to stop their deportation; however, without the assistance of counsel, prevailing in immigration court is highly unlikely for these children in adversarial proceedings against trained and experienced Department of Homeland Security attorneys.

Other non-citizen children, who are in foster care in the United States, may have also been abused, abandoned or neglected, or even bought or sold into prostitution. As soon as foster care terminates, the result may be the deportation---often easily preventable---of a child to an unknown country of birth.

Family law practitioners are in a unique position to provide much needed legal assistance to non-citizen children who are victims of persecution, trafficking, and other violence. These children may be eligible for relief under the immigration laws, but with no right to pro bono counsel or a guardian ad litem in immigration proceedings, most appear pro se, having received no legal advice at all. Without representation, their chances of success are minimal, at best, and they may be returned to life-threatening conditions. Legal remedies for these children include Special Immigrant Juvenile Visas (SIJ), T & U visas, relief under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and asylum.

Attorneys familiar with child custody, divorce, abuse and neglect, and other areas of family law are desperately needed to provide pro bono assistance for immigrant children who have been abused, abandoned, neglected or worse. Attorneys can also help victims of family violence or other crimes who fear deportation if they report their abusers. Providing pro bono assistance to unaccompanied immigrant children and victims of violence is an unparalleled opportunity to serve the community, and to advocate for the most vulnerable members of our society.

Attorneys, paralegals, accredited representatives, and law students are all encouraged to volunteer their time, and no previous immigration experience is required. If you are interested in helping, please contact Irena Lieberman, Staff Director, ABA Commission on Immigration, at 202-662-1008 or liebermi@staff.abanet.org.