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## The White House

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For Immediate Release

September 30, 2014

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# Fact Sheet: Expanding Access to Legal Representation



THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 22, 2014

**Fact Sheet: Expanding Access to Legal Representation**

Washington, DC – As a matter of policy, the Administration supports providing access to legal representation and services to unaccompanied children. We need every element of the court process to work effectively to accomplish the goal of both honoring humanitarian claims and processing those who do not qualify for relief. Without the necessary funds, our efforts to prioritize these cases will be less efficient and effective.

The President's emergency supplemental request would have provided \$45 million to hire approximately 40 additional immigration judges, \$15 million for direct legal representation services to children in immigration proceedings, and \$2.5 million to expand the legal orientation program that provides assistance to adults and custodians of children in the immigration court system. Congress's failure to pass the supplemental continues to undercut the Administration's ability to effectively and efficiently address the recent influx of Central American migrants.

Meanwhile, the Administration continues to surge existing resources, including immigration judges, asylum officers, and is taking aggressive steps to build the necessary partnerships to address the situation in an effective and efficient way. In August, Vice President Biden issued a call to law firms, companies with large legal departments, and non-profits to collaborate with each other to increase access to legal services for unaccompanied children. Throughout the last several months, other Administration officials, including Secretary Jeh Johnson and Attorney General Holder have issued calls to action to increase access to legal services for this vulnerable population, including at the American Bar Association's annual convening in August.

Below are a few of the actions the Administration and local leaders are taking to increase access to legal services:

**Administration Efforts to Expand Access to Legal Representation:**

- On Sept 29, HHS awarded \$9 million to two current grantees that provide legal services to unaccompanied children, to expand their efforts to provide legal services for this vulnerable population. The expansion would provide paid counsel to approximately 2,600

additional unaccompanied children through the completion of their immigration proceedings.

- In September, the Department of Justice and the Corporation for National and Community Service announced seven ["justice AmeriCorps" grantees](#) that will provide access to legal services in 20 cities by building strategic partnerships to enroll approximately 100 lawyers and paralegals as AmeriCorps members to provide legal services to the most vulnerable of these children.
- The Administration is working with State and local elected officials, to explore ways to increase access to legal services for unaccompanied children in areas where we know there are significant populations.
- DOJ is also actively recruiting pro-bono representation in six major cities across the United States, including leveraging networks like the American Bar Association, among others. Complimenting this effort, EOIR's Legal Orientation Program (LOP) continues to offer legal orientation programs to explain the legal system and immigration process to immigrants and the guardians of unaccompanied children, a model hearing program to improve the quality of advocacy before the court, and a list of free legal service providers for immigration proceedings.
- DOJ has also updated and reissued guidance regarding the use of a "Friend of the Court Model" for unaccompanied children, in addition to updated guidance from the Chief Immigration Judge regarding docketing practices related to unaccompanied minors. In addition, DOJ is hiring two full time lawyers to represent unaccompanied children in Baltimore, Maryland and provide needed mentoring to pro-bono lawyers working with unaccompanied children.

### **Administration Calls on the Support of the Legal Community:**

- In addition, hundreds of lawyers from large and small firms across the country have also pledged to take on representation.

### **Administration Request in Supplemental:**

- The President's emergency supplemental request would have provided \$45 million to hire approximately 40 additional immigration judges, \$15 million for direct legal representation services to children in immigration proceedings, and \$2.5 million to expand the legal orientation program that provides assistance to adults and custodians of children in the immigration court system.

### **Efforts by States and Localities to Provide Legal Services:**

- Some states and localities are also taking proactive steps to provide legal representation to unaccompanied children.
- As a result of the leadership of Governor Jerry Brown, Attorney General Kamala Harris, and others, California has taken significant steps to provide access to legal services, in addition to a few other States and localities.
  - The California Assembly recently appropriated \$3 million to fund nonprofits for this purpose, in addition to adopting an expedited naturalization process and reinforcing the court's ability to provide interpreters for unaccompanied children.
  - San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance to provide \$2.1 million in funds to pay for legal support for unaccompanied minors and families with cases before the DOJ's Immigration Court in San Francisco.
  - Additionally, local foundations, law firms and philanthropists have also announced funding for legal services, including the California Endowment's announcement of \$500,000; the James Irvine Foundation's announcement of \$300,000; the California Community Foundation's announcement of \$250,000; Marc Benioff, founder of Salesforce.com and his wife Lynne announced \$500,000 in funding, to name a few.
- Other states and localities are also stepping up to expand access to legal and social services for unaccompanied minors. Some examples include:
  - The State of New York has secured \$1.9 million in public and private funding for the legal representation of unaccompanied children in addition to passing legislation that codifies the Office for New Americans, which teaches immigrants English, provides assistance throughout the naturalization process, and provides free legal advice for aspiring entrepreneurs.
  - Maryland Governor O'Malley launched [www.buscandomaryland.com](http://www.buscandomaryland.com), an on-line resource and reference guide that aggregates more than 1,300 organizations in the State of Maryland available to meet high-priority needs including clothing, food, legal assistance, physical and mental healthcare, and transportation services. These resources are now quickly available three ways: online, on the phone and through a printable reference guide.

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