

# Vera Institute of Justice

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://www.vera.org/publications/the-flow-of-unaccompanied-children-through-the-immigration-system-a-resource-for-practitioners-policy-makers-and-researchers>**

## Policy Issue Resources

### Publication

Every year, thousands of unaccompanied children are detained in the U.S. immigrant system. These children who are not afforded the right to free public defense must often navigate a web of laws, policies, and government agencies alone. Vera, with funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), works with a national network of legal service providers to improve access to legal services for these children.

The legal process for unaccompanied children detained by U.S. immigration is incredibly complex; this report provides a thorough overview of this system as a resource for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers working to help these children.

The report includes background information related to the government's custodial authority over these children, recent legislation affecting them, and a brief discussion about the definition of an unaccompanied child."

It also includes a description of the phases of a child's involvement in the system: apprehension and referral by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security; ORR intake, placement, and care; release to family or other sponsors in the United States; and immigration court proceedings and legal services.

Finally, the report describes potential outcomes for children following their involvement in the system.

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