

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/court-is-intimidating-especially-if-you-are-seven-years-old>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Recently, I conducted a site visit for Veras [Unaccompanied Children Program](#), which helps [legal service providers](#) increase pro bono legal representation for immigrant children who have no parent or guardian to help them as they undergo removal (deportation) proceedings. The provider I visited uses a host of child-friendly tools to teach these children about their legal rights, the U.S. legal system, and why they are being removed. One of the most innovative tools I saw was the court tour.

Removal can be a confusing and traumatic experience for adults. But the experience can be even more so for children who may not understand the law and the immigration system in general. The court tour is meant to get children familiar with the courtroom environment and courtroom proceedings prior to their first appearance before an immigration judge.

The court tour I observed which included a child who was only 7 years old! included role playing of what happens during a court appearance. For example, the children learned to use the court's microphones and to rise when a judge enters the courtroom. More practically, they also learned how to work with an interpreter and how to interact with their legal counsel and the government attorney. The role play was conducted as part of a larger Know-Your-Rights presentation where the children were also able to ask specific questions about their case and general questions about the immigration system. Sound pedagogical practices were used during the court tour, such as asking children to repeat back what was learned and using age appropriate terminology, to ensure that the children understood and retained the information.

I personally cannot imagine having to go through the removal process, especially if I were back in the second grade. Fortunately, there are programs such as the one I visited that help to make the process less intimidating and more accessible.

Transformative change, sent to your inbox.

Vera Institute of Justice. All rights reserved.