

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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