The Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights

Who We Are

The Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights is a human rights organization that champions the rights of unaccompanied immigrant children who travel to the U.S. on their own, without a parent to guide or protect them. These children make difficult, often dangerous journeys to escape rampant violence, child abuse, child labor, and desperate poverty. The children come from all corners of the world, including Central America, China, India, Somalia, Eastern Europe, and other regions.

The Problem

Upon arrival in the U.S., unaccompanied children are placed in government custody and must fight their deportation case without the help of a court-appointed attorney. A century after the creation of special courts for U.S. citizen children that safeguard the child's "best interests", the U.S. immigration system continues to treat immigrant kids as if they were adults. And that's where we come in.

The Goal

The Young Center's goal is to change the immigration system so that children in immigration proceedings are recognized as children, and best interests are made a part of the decision making process.

The Young Center's Work

The Young Center is tackling this problem on multiple levels:

- Serving as Child Advocates for individual children
- Educating Immigration Judges and enforcement officials about the best interests of the children appearing before them
- Advocating at the national level for changes in policy and law



One Story

Daniela is a 6-year old girl from Guatemala. She traveled to the U.S. with her older sisters who wanted to protect her from their abusive parent. When they arrived at the border, Daniela was separated from her sisters and detained. With the Young Center's help, Daniela was matched with a Child Advocate who speaks her language and visited her regularly. As a result of the Young Center's advocacy, Daniela is safe and has now been reunified with one of her sisters.

Child Advocate Program

Guided by the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Young Center has developed the only program in the nation that provides Child Advocates, whose job it is to advocate for the child's best interests, safety and well-being. The Child Advocates meet with the children one-on-one while they're in detention, and learn each child's story through playing games, making crafts, and other activities that the child enjoys. Volunteer Child Advocates also work alongside Young Center staff to make recommendations that champion the child's best interests.

Become a Child Advocate!

Our child advocates are a diverse group of dedicated volunteers who commit to visiting a child one hour per week as long as the child remains in detention. On average, this could be 3-6 months, but could be longer or shorter. Volunteers must be at least 21 years old and able to communicate in Spanish. Volunteers come from a variety of professional and cultural backgrounds, and we will teach you all of the skills you will need at a required two-day training for new volunteers.

Other Ways You Can Support Our Work



Donate : The Young Center relies on donations to support our Child Advocate Program. To donate please visit our website, where you can also find information about hosting a facebook fundraiser.

Host : You may also volunteer to host an event to raise awareness and/or funding for our work. These might be house parties or happy hours, and you can also see if your favorite restaurant hosts charity parties. The Young Center can help provide materials and support, while you provide the venue and guests!

Stay informed : Learn about policies affecting immigrant children, their stories, and what you can do.

- Visit our website for a list of recommended books and movies to learn about the lives of immigrant children at www.TheYoungCenter.org/books or the www.TheYoungCenter.org/movies
- Join our mailing list to receive our quarterly newsletter by emailing www.TheYoungCenter.org/sign-up
- Like us on Facebook! Facebook.com/TheYoungCenter
- Follow us on Twitter! @TheYoungCenter

For volunteer opportunities in Virginia, Maryland, and D.C., please contact Isabel George

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