

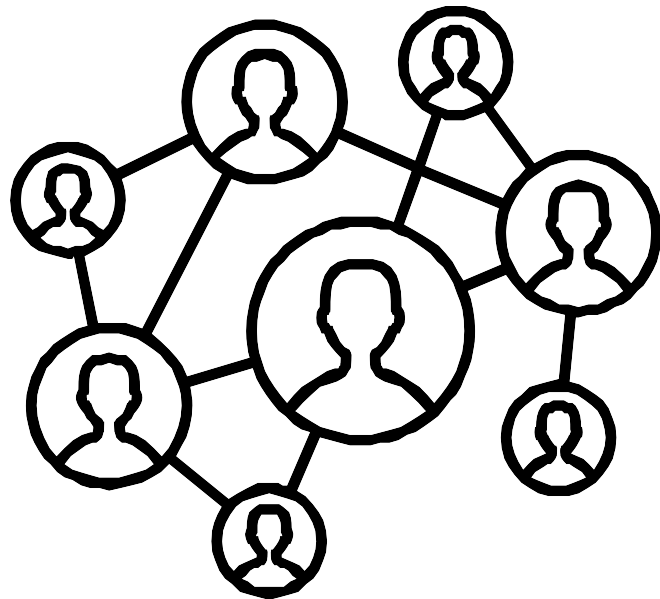
Helping Migrant Youth Bridge the Representation Gap:

MAY
2023

*THE IMPACT OF THE CASE CONTINUITY
PROJECT FOR PROBAR'S CLIENTS*

After ProBAR Staff Attorney Vale Gonzalez's 17-year old Honduran client experienced abuse from a family member and received death threats and harassment from a gang member, he set out on a journey to the United States in search of refuge. Upon entering the U.S., the youth was apprehended by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), processed into removal proceedings, and placed in an Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) shelter.

While detained in the Rio Grande Valley, the child received a Know Your Rights presentation and legal screening from ProBAR staff. After the initial intake session, it became clear to the ProBAR team that this child had a claim to fight for legal relief and the right to remain in the country, and Vale met with the client to begin his representation. Shortly after, the child was released from detention to the care of a trusted adult living outside the state of Texas, and a new initiative at ProBAR – the "Case Continuity Project" – stepped in, identified an attorney in the child's new location, and prevented a gap in the child's representation.



Vale notes, "The Case Continuity Project is a great asset to ensure that a child can have an attorney throughout their entire process. An advocate is essential to uphold the child's legal right to asylum and to pursue other pathways available for relief, and the program brings organizations together to facilitate case migration between attorneys."

For many years, ProBAR's team has sought to connect children who relocate outside of our area with pro bono representation in their new community through legal referrals. However, an effort known as the Case Continuity Project launched in September 2022 across a network of organizations who subcontract with the Vera Institute of Justice that brought new parameters to this area of work and increased its impact. By engaging organizations in various parts of the country, the project amplifies our team's ability to confirm continuing representation for children previously represented by our staff.

Under the Case Continuity Project, staff identify children who qualify for the initiative using case information, and then carefully craft case summaries and send queries to organizations that provide pro bono immigration legal services in the area where the child has moved. After expressing

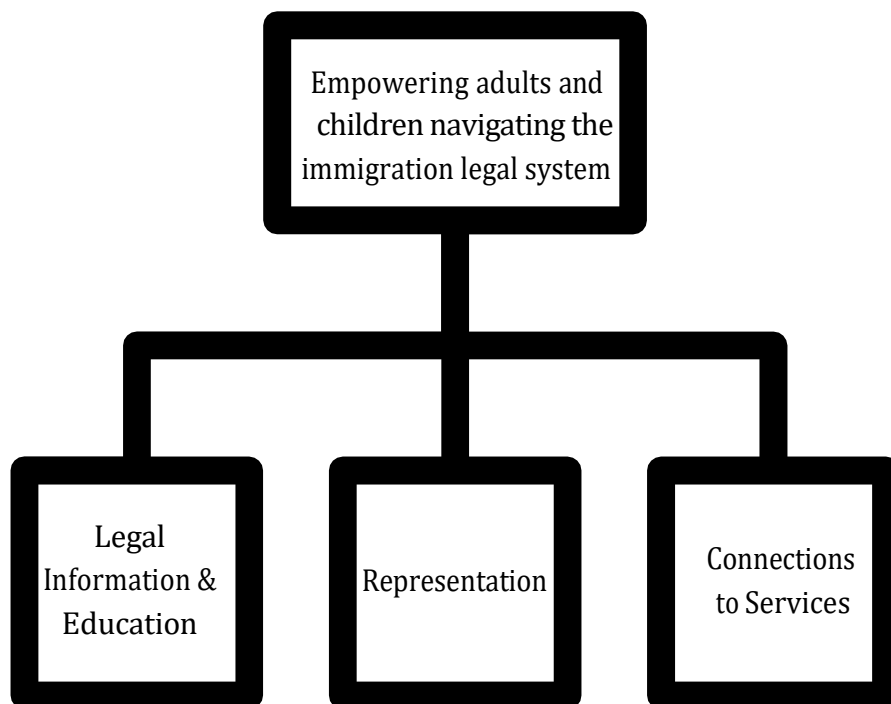
“
*AN ADVOCATE IS
ESSENTIAL TO UPHOLD
THE CHILD'S LEGAL RIGHT
TO ASYLUM AND TO
PURSUE OTHER
PATHWAYS AVAILABLE
FOR RELIEF.*
”

interest in a query, the receiving organization will conduct an intake session with the child and make an assessment about potential paths to relief. At this point, a placement can be made, assuming the organization has sufficient capacity to provide the child with representation.

Since the start of the Case Continuity Project, ProBAR has been notified of at least 12 cases where a child now has confirmed pro bono representation in their new community. Senior Staff Attorney Yvette Chevalier Lopez's former client, a young teen girl fleeing physical and sexual abuse, was another of these 7 children who secured representation after reunifying with family in Maryland thanks to the Case Continuity Project. When asked about the overall impact of the initiative, Yvette shares, "I love knowing that we are helping children continue their case with approved, quality service providers. Children and their sponsors sometimes feel a sense of uneasiness in securing representation after the transition, and our team makes this process smoother for them while making a huge difference in their future."

The impact that this project has had on the lives and legal cases of children navigating a complex immigration system has been incredibly valuable so far. A major challenge that children face within the immigration legal system is that they do not have a right to appointed counsel after release from detention. Trajectories and outcomes improve drastically when children have an attorney by their side. In fact, according to research cited by the American Immigration Council, represented migrants are several times more likely to establish their right to remain in the U.S. than those without representation.

Without the Case Continuity Project, youth like Vale's client who were formerly represented by ProBAR might find themselves in the position of trying to seek out free legal services in unfamiliar communities while also settling into their new homes, enrolling in school, and addressing other needs they encountered during this transition. Assistance locating pro bono counsel alleviates one stressor and helps to ensure they can successfully pursue their legal cases. ProBAR is proud to help migrant youth bridge the legal representation gap through the Case Continuity Project.



How ProBAR achieves their mission