

They are fleeing violence from which their countries cannot protect them.

Most unaccompanied children come from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, which are **three** of the **six** most dangerous countries in the world.

They are seeking safety and need our help.



**50%**

Of children arriving in the U.S. have no one to represent them in immigration court

**5x**

Children without representation are five times more likely to be deported back to danger

That's where Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) comes in:

- ✓ We **protect children** who arrive in the U.S. alone.
- ✓ We provide lawyers to **represent them in their deportation proceedings.**
- ✓ We **advocate for policies** that protect the rights of these children.
- ✓ We **help children reintegrate safely** in their home countries, only if they cannot stay in the U.S.

## Help us advocate for unaccompanied children:

We can change the course of thousands of children's lives

[www.supportkind.org](http://www.supportkind.org)

Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

1300 L St. NW, Suite 1100 | Washington, DC 20005 | (202) 824-8680

[info@supportkind.org](mailto:info@supportkind.org)

# Legal protections for unaccompanied children:

**Unprecedented numbers** of children have come alone to the U.S. in the last three years seeking protection. Many have survived **severe abuse, including sexual and physical violence, trafficking, and persecution**. These children have no one to protect them in their home countries and see no choice but to flee, or die.

- Many of these children are eligible for protection in our immigration system, but need an attorney to help them present their case. **At least 60 percent of children** who have attorneys are granted U.S. protection.
- U.S. protections for these children include: **asylum** (for those who have been **persecuted**); **special immigrant juvenile status** (for those who have been **abused, abandoned, or neglected**; **trafficking (T) visa** for those who have been **coerced into forced labor or sex**; and **U visa** for **crime victims**. Without an attorney, most children will not gain the protection for which they are eligible.

## Eduardo's Story

Eduardo remembers what it was like playing and going to school in his peaceful beach town in El Salvador before it was taken over by the MS-13 gang. At 15, Eduardo began receiving threats to force him to join the gang. Eduardo refused for over a year and then, in one day, his life changed forever. While riding a bus into town **he witnessed several gang members get on and shoot the driver in the head**. Eduardo agreed to testify against the men who murdered the driver. At 16, Eduardo was moved to a safe house for six months during the trial but was then forced out of witness protection while the trial was still pending. **With no one to protect him from the gang members who knew he had testified against them**, he fled for the U.S.

Fortunately, Eduardo was matched with a KIND pro bono attorney, who successfully obtained asylum for Eduardo. Yet, Eduardo is in the minority. **Approximately 50 percent of unaccompanied children have no one to represent them in immigration court**, which compromises their ability to access existing legal protections in the U.S. The evidence is clear – **an asylum applicant, like Eduardo, is five times more likely to succeed in his case if he is represented by counsel**.

## OUR CALL TO ACTION

**Promote the public-private partnership model used by KIND as effective and cost-efficient in securing legal representation for children**

Efforts to provide representation to vulnerable children must include a robust pro bono model. While appointed counsel is important, it cannot fill existing needs alone. Providing pro bono attorneys ensures due process for these children and increases the cost-efficiency and effectiveness of our severely backlogged immigration court system.

**Reject all forms of expedited screenings and ensure due process**

U.S. law recognizes the vulnerability of children arriving alone and provides a framework for the full review of cases, timely proceedings, and appropriate case in the interim. These important procedural protections should not be compromised because they allow children's cases, like Olivia's, to be properly heard by an immigration judge.

**Support safe reintegration of returned children**

KIND recognizes that not every child is eligible for U.S. protection. However, U.S. policy should promote a safe and humane return of children to their home countries. Partnerships with governments and nongovernmental organizations which provide social services, including family reunification; school enrollment; counseling; and skills training help ensure that returning children are safely reintegrated into their community.

## KIND IN ACTION

We have **trained more than 11,000 pro bono attorneys** and **served more than 9,100 children** since 2009

- Develops and mentors a pro bono network of attorneys at more than 300 major law firms, corporations, law schools, and bar associations in eight cities across the U.S. to represent vulnerable children in immigration court
- Leverages private-public partnerships so that **for every \$1 invested in KIND, \$5 is generated in value** totaling more than **\$84 million** in pro bono attorney support since 2009
- Secures protections for children who have fled sexual and gender-based violence, gang and organized crime attacks, and domestic violence
- Promotes U.S. principles of the rule of law and due process so that children have their cases for protection heard by judges
- Operates a collaborative project in Guatemala to ensure that if a child is sent home, the child is returned safely to their community
- Serves as an expert resource on unaccompanied children arriving alone and advocates for best practices in child migration policy in Central America, Mexico, and the U.S.