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NEW RELEASE

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EOIR Adds 10 New Legal Orientation Program Sites – Initiates Sites for Children

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) announced today that 10 new Legal Orientation Program (LOP) sites will become operational within the next few months to assist detained individuals in immigration court proceedings by explaining their legal rights and options. Moreover, for the first time, EOIR is establishing LOP program sites for children.

This expansion includes six new adult program sites at immigration detention facilities in San Pedro, Calif.; Houston, Texas; York, Pa.; and Batavia, N.Y.; and in the San Antonio, Texas, and Newark, N.J., regions. The four LOP sites for children will be in Corpus Christi, Texas; Vincennes, Ind.; Wayne, Ill.; and Seattle, Wash. These four sites are located at shelters for unaccompanied alien children managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement.

The 10 new sites will augment the efforts of six current LOP sites that are operational at detention facilities in Eloy, Ariz.; Port Isabel, Texas; El Paso, Texas; Tacoma, Wash.; Lancaster, Calif.; and Aurora, Colo. In Fiscal Year 2005, these six sites served more than 20,000 detainees — or nearly 25 percent of all detainees who appeared before EOIR immigration courts.

EOIR has administered the LOP since 2003 to improve judicial efficiency and assist all parties involved in detained removal proceedings. The Vera Institute of Justice is the contractor that carries out the program through representatives from local nonprofit organizations. While the LOP does not fund legal representation, it offers access to legal information and pro bono services to everyone in removal proceedings at the program sites. As a result, experience has shown that detained individuals make wiser decisions and cases are more likely to be completed faster — resulting in fewer court hearings and less time spent in detention.

At the adult sites, legal orientations generally include three components — an “interactive group orientation,” which is open to general questions; an “individual orientation,” where non-represented individuals can briefly discuss their cases with experienced presenters; and a “referral/self-help component,” where those with potential relief, or those who wish to voluntarily depart the country or request removal, are referred to pro bono counsel or provided self-help legal materials and training through group workshops, as appropriate.

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The four new LOP sites for children will focus on one-on-one rather than group sessions. Every child will receive an individual orientation to help the child understand and feel more at ease with the court process. The goal will be to increase the comfort level so that each child will be able to cooperate, as much as possible, with the court and pro bono counsel.

— EOIR —

EOIR is responsible for adjudicating immigration cases. Specifically, under delegated authority from the Attorney General, EOIR interprets and administers federal immigration laws by conducting immigration court proceedings, appellate reviews, and administrative hearings. EOIR consists of three components: the Office of the Chief Immigration Judge, which is responsible for managing the numerous immigration courts located throughout the United States where immigration judges adjudicate individual cases; the Board of Immigration Appeals, which primarily conducts appellate reviews of immigration judge decisions; and the Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer, which adjudicates immigration-related employment cases. EOIR is committed to providing fair, expeditious, and uniform application of the nation's immigration laws in all cases.

Information about EOIR immigration proceedings is available on EOIR's website <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/subject.htm>.