

REPORTS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENHANCING MECHANISMS FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

INTRODUCTION

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The Study Group on Immigrant Representation* Subcommittee on Enhancing Mechanisms for Service Delivery has for the past year focused its attention on the barriers to immigration representation and on what can be done to improve the delivery of quality pro bono and affordable legal services to immigrants in removal proceedings.

A number of factors have led to the highest number of immigrants placed in removal proceedings in recent history. At the same time, certain government policies have drastically increased detention of those in removal proceedings and created other significant impediments to the provision of quality legal services to this population. With no right to appointed counsel, the percentage of immigrants who traverse the complexities of the immigration law without counsel, often at risk of losing longtime residence and family in the United States, is unacceptably high.

The subcommittee has studied the problem in the New York City area, both in the detained and nondetained context, in order to propose changes in court and government policy and practice that will facilitate and enhance access by this population to quality representation. Two reports follow—one focusing on cases in which the immigrant is detained and the other where the immigrant is at liberty. These reports closely examine removal proceedings in New York City, current government policies in prosecuting those cases, and the many obstacles to quality legal representation. Each report ends with a series of proposals that we hope the government, the courts, and those concerned with the fairness of our legal system will take to heart.

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