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NEWS RELEASE

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EOIR's Legal Orientation Program — Evaluation Report by Vera Institute *Findings Show LOP Is Effective in Educating Detainees and Improving Court Efficiency*

The Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) has recently evaluated the Executive Office for Immigration Review's (EOIR's) Legal Orientation Program (LOP) and issued a report on the impact and benefits of the program. The report indicates that the LOP successfully educates detained aliens in immigration removal proceedings to make more informed decisions about their cases, and also enhances efficiency in detention and immigration court processes.

Report Findings

EOIR has contracted with Vera — a nonprofit justice policy organization — to provide LOP services, as well as oversee and measure program performance. Vera's report findings are based on calendar year 2006 data collected from six LOP sites during that time.

The findings for aliens participating in the LOP include:

- **Cases for LOP participants move an average of 13 days faster through the immigration courts.** Prompt case completions result in less detention time.
- **Fewer LOP participants fail to appear for their hearings upon release from detention.** Seven percent fewer LOP participants received *in absentia* removal orders.
- **The LOP can effectively prepare detainees to represent themselves *pro se*.** For some LOP participants, *pro se* case outcomes approximated those associated with legal representation.
- **The LOP may improve detention conditions.** Access to legal information reduces behavior problems.
- **The LOP increases immigration court efficiency.** LOP participants are better prepared and more likely to be able to identify the form(s) of relief from removal for which they are eligible. They also have a better understanding of the immigration court process.

Vera's report is available online at <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/reports/LOPEvaluation-final.pdf>.

Background

The LOP informs detained aliens in immigration removal proceedings about the immigration court process, how to obtain legal representation or represent themselves *pro se*, and how to determine appropriate forms of relief from removal or expedite the removal process.

Representatives from nonprofit organizations provide:

- The interactive “group orientation,” which is open to general questions;
- The “individual orientation,” where non-represented individuals can briefly discuss their cases with experienced counselors; and
- The “referral” or “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 given self-help legal materials and basic training through group workshops, where appropriate.

The LOP has served more than 120,000 detainees since the program was established in 2003. Currently, the LOP is offered at the following sites: Eloy, Ariz.; Lancaster and San Diego, Calif.; Aurora, Colo.; Hudson County Jail and Middlesex County Jail, N.J.; Batavia, N.Y.; York, Pa.; El Paso, Houston, Pearsall, and Port Isabel, Texas; and Tacoma, Wash.

Additional information about EOIR’s Pro Bono and Legal Orientation Program is available on EOIR’s website at <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/probono/MajorInitiatives.htm>.

- EOIR -

EOIR, an agency within the Department of Justice, 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 the fair, expeditious, and uniform interpretation and application of immigration law in all cases.