

Legal Services for Unaccompanied Minors

Background

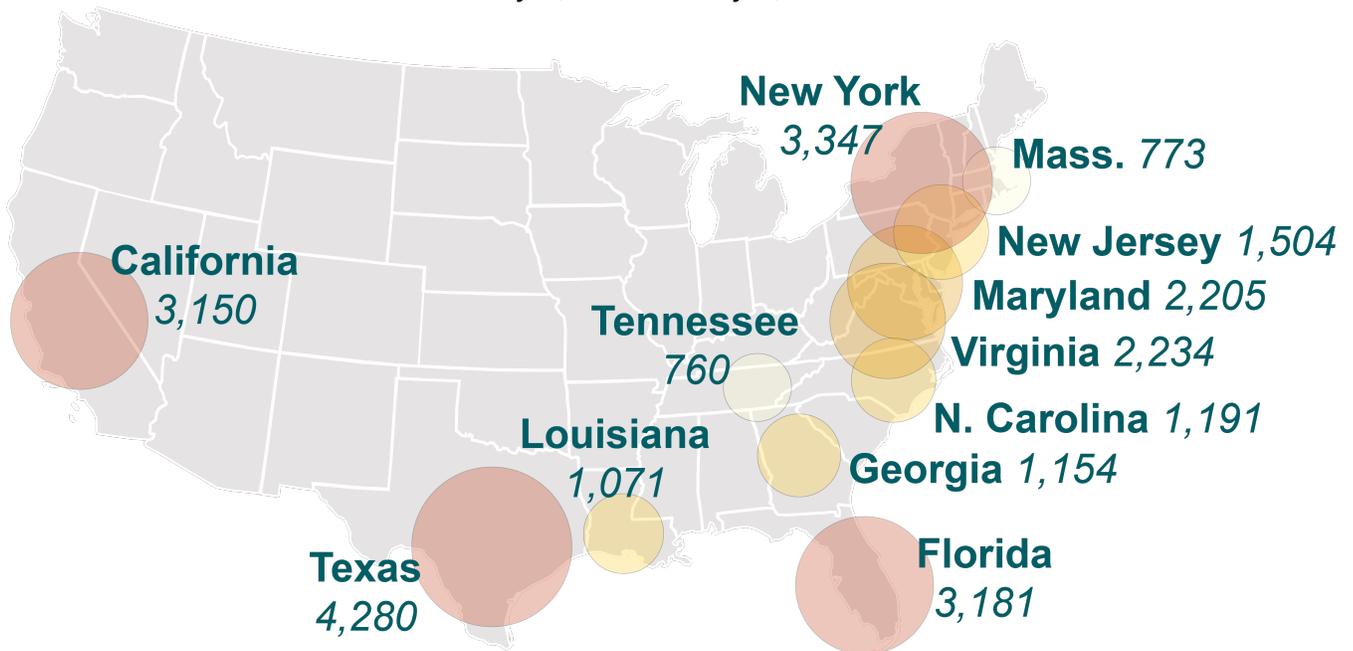
The number of unaccompanied children entering the United States has grown to more than 57,000 so far in 2014, up from 27,884 children in 2013 and far fewer in years prior to that. These children, and also some families, are fleeing drastic increases in gang-related violence and their governments' inability or unwillingness to protect them.

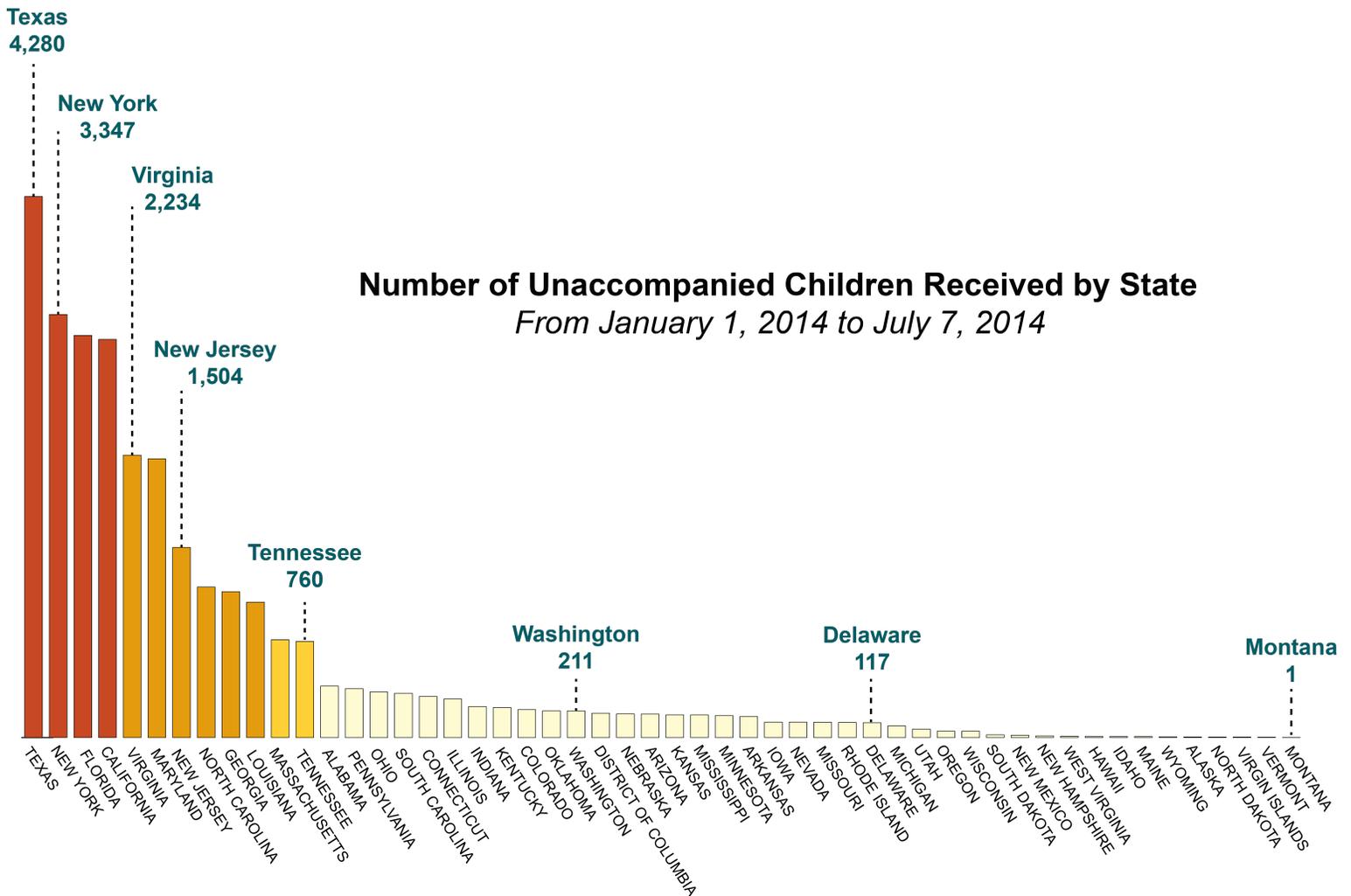
Upon arriving in the US, children receive a "Notice to Appear" in immigration court where a judge will make the final determination if the child will be deported or remain in the US – often through the asylum process or on a special immigrant juvenile visa that is available to children who have been abused or neglected by a parent. As immigration courts are currently backlogged, children often stay with family, in a foster home, or in detention for an extended period of time while they await their proceedings.

CWS hopes to provide pro-bono legal services throughout the U.S. where children and families are sent after initial screenings. These children will not be assigned an attorney by the state, and therefore will be left to explain their case alone unless pro-bono legal services are provided.

Where are the children going?

States Receiving More Than 500 Unaccompanied Children
from January 1, 2014 to July 7, 2014





What Will CWS Do to Help?

CWS hopes to provide pro-bono legal services throughout the United States, concentrating on locations where there is a critical amount of unaccompanied children. Children will remain with families and foster care arrangements for several years before seeing an immigration judge and pro-bono lawyers are needed during this time and at the time of the proceedings to provide:

1. Legal counseling regarding US immigration law and asylum proceedings
2. Representation during immigration proceedings for unaccompanied children
3. Appeals for denied asylum and visa applications
4. Additional legal services for children and families

Currently, CWS is deploying Spanish-speaking legal staff and volunteers to the Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, interviewing children and their families and helping them understand how to apply for protection. CWS hopes to expand this model for more long-term legal assistance in locations around the United States where minors are being placed. CWS will be able to combine locations where many children are being sent that also already have either CWS or partner agency offices offering legal assistance.