



**CATHOLIC LEGAL  
IMMIGRATION  
NETWORK, INC.**

**How to Apply for  
DOJ Full Accreditation  
March 21, 2023**

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## Meet Your Presenters

Helen Chen  
Field Support Coordinator



Laura Burdick  
Field Support Coordinator




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## Overview

- Background
- Eligibility requirements
- The process and application
- After approval
- Resources



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## What is DOJ R&A?

- The recognition and accreditation program permits recognized organizations and their non-attorney accredited representatives to represent clients in immigration proceedings.
- 8 CFR §1292.11 and §1292.12

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## Recognition & Accreditation Roster

- <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognition-accreditation-roster-reports>

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## Hypo

- Claire has been a partial accredited representative for 2 years. Recently, more individuals in removal proceedings are requesting immigration legal assistance from her organization. There is a shortage of local immigration attorneys handling removal defense. The program director is seeking to expand immigration legal services to include removal defense and has asked Claire to consider obtaining full accreditation. What are some program considerations? What should Claire do to get started with the process?

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## DOJ Accreditation: 2 Types

- Partial and Full
- Partial allows representation before DHS
- Full allows representation before DHS & EOIR
- Can request change from partial to full at any time
- Qualifications for full accreditation are greater than partial and will be carefully scrutinized by OLAP
- Must be renewed every 3 years

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## Eligibility for Accreditation

- Must be employee or volunteer of recognized organization
- Must have character and fitness to represent clients
- Must possess broad knowledge and adequate experience in immigration law and procedure – For full accreditation must establish that the individual also possesses skills essential for effective litigation
- Cannot be attorney who is eligible to practice law in the U.S.
- Cannot have resigned while under disciplinary investigation or proceeding
- Cannot be subject to any order disbaring or restricting practice of law
- Cannot be convicted of a serious crime anywhere in the world

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## What is character and fitness?

- Includes, but not limited to examination of these factors:
  - Criminal background
  - Prior acts involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation
  - Past history of neglecting professional, financial, or legal obligations
  - Current immigration status that presents actual or perceived conflict of interest

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## Do you need partial before full?

- It depends!

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## Preparing for Full Accreditation

- Assessing Community Need and Program Capacity: Questions to Ask
- Reach out to USCIS local office if they are not familiar with your organization

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## Finding a Mentor

- Working with a mentor, types of experience needed

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## Court Observation

- How much, how to document, what types of cases to observe

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## Formal Training

- CLINIC’s partial to full training program, <https://cliniclegal.org/issues/defending-vulnerable-populations/partial-to-full-accredited-representative-initiative>
- Other options: IAN calendar, Access EOIR

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## The Full Accreditation Application

- Brief cover letter with list of enclosures
- Form EOIR-31A, <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1348431/download> (Jan. 2017 edition)
- Supporting documentation

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## Supporting Documentation for Full Accreditation

- Resume with:
  - Description of immigration law experience (including legal research, writing, advocacy skills)
  - List of formal trainings (on court skills and advanced level cases)
  - List of immigration forms completed and types of court work done with mentor

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## Supporting Documentation, cont'd

- Copies of certificates, agendas, and other proof of trainings attended
- Log of experiences and observations at the Immigration Court (date, location, type of case)
- 2 redacted writing samples demonstrating written trial and appellate advocacy skills
- 2 letters of recommendation addressing knowledge and experience in immigration law (court practice)
- Character reference letter(s)

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## Training Tips

- Ongoing training
- Mix of in-person, e-learning, and webinars recommended
- Keep good records of all trainings attended, *especially certificates*
- List trainings on resume
- List who gave the training, title, date, location, type of training
- Include \$ for ongoing training in annual budget

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## The Application Process

- File Form EOIR-31A for each staff person seeking full accreditation
- OLAP reviews application and may request additional information
- USCIS has 30 days to respond
- OLAP sends letter with decision in writing (separate decisions for R&A)
- Processing time varies

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## Avoiding Common Mistakes

- Include all supporting documentation in the initial application
- Don't include unnecessary information
- Describe trainings and experience in detail
- Include duration (hours) for each training listed in resume
- Include proof for every training (certificate, affidavit, etc.)
- Make sure information is consistent
- Respond to any OLAP requests promptly
- If you are a CLINIC affiliate, seek help from us.

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## After Approval

- E-Registry:  
<https://ereg.eoir.justice.gov/#maincontent>
- Tips for beginning court practice
- Requirements for renewing full accreditation
- Requirements for reporting changes -  
Email [R-A-Info@usdoj.gov](mailto:R-A-Info@usdoj.gov)

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## What happens if a program loses its only accredited representative?

- Must notify OLAP promptly
- Removed from roster, placed on inactive status for up to 2 years
- Can no longer file G-28s/E-28s or provide legal representation unless you have an immigration attorney
- Must renew recognition by expiration date, even if on inactive status
- Must apply for new staff person to be accredited to keep recognition
- Recommend having 2+ accredited reps on staff

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## R&A Trends

- Processing backlogs are gone!
- Background checks
- Proof of trainings
- Virtual services
- E-mail submission

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## Resources

- R&A Toolkit and Step-by-Step Guide: <https://cliniclegal.org/R&A>
- EOIR R&A Website and FAQs: <http://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognition-and-accreditation-program>
- CLINIC training calendar: <https://cliniclegal.org/training/calendar>
- IAN training calendar: <https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/calendar/>
- If you are a NAC or Coulter partner/affiliate and would like to receive R&A assistance, please contact Helen Chen, [hchen@cliniclegal.org](mailto:hchen@cliniclegal.org)

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## Advocacy Resources

- CLINIC comments on revised application forms (2020 edition): <https://cliniclegal.org/resources/doj-recognition-and-accreditation/revised-application-forms-recognition-and-accreditation>
- OIG report: <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/20-109.pdf>
- CLINIC policy brief: <https://cliniclegal.org/resources/federal-administrative-advocacy/policy-brief-severely-under-resourced-ra-program>
- Comments on the latest proposed form changes in 11/7/22 Federal Register: <https://cliniclegal.org/resources/doj-recognition-and-accreditation/clinic-affiliates-comment-proposed-changes-forms-eoir>

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## Join the CLINIC Network for 2023

- Subscription benefits and request for application: <https://cliniclegal.org/find-legal-help/affiliates/subscription>
- Annual dues for subscription: \$1,500
- Get in-depth assistance on your R&A application

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## Questions?

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