

How Do I Find Out What’s Happening in My Client’s Case?

You’ve taken on a pro bono case with the Justice Campaign. Thank you! If you’ve taken a bond, parole, or habeas case, you also need to know what is happening in your client’s underlying “removal proceeding”. Remember, requesting parole, filing a bond motion, or filing a habeas petition in district court are all distinct proceedings from the case in which your client is trying to get permission to stay in this country—whether that’s through an asylum claim, an appeal of a prior case, or something else. **Because that removal case doesn’t stop while you’re requesting release from detention, it’s important you keep track of what is happening in it.** It can have eligibility and jurisdictional effects on your case.

There are two things you should always know about your client: **Where** s/he is detained, and **What** is happening in his/her underlying removal case.

PRACTICE NOTE: Check regularly on your client’s underlying case as you proceed with your parallel request.

Where’s My Client?

We wish this were simple: your client should be where s/he was when the case was referred to you. Unfortunately, that’s not always the case. Clients are regularly moved between detention centers, especially if their case is on appeal or they have a final order of removal (i.e. their removal case is completed). Here’s how to find your client:

First, visit the ICE Detainee Locator at: <https://locator.ice.gov/odls>

The screen should look like this:

The screenshot shows the ICE Detainee Locator System (ODLS) website. At the top is a dark blue navigation bar with links for Home, Who We Are, What We Do (highlighted), Newsroom, Information Library, and Contact ICE. The main content area is white and features the title "Online Detainee Locator System". Below the title is a language selection dropdown menu set to "English". A note states: "Use this page to locate a detainee who is currently in ICE custody." Below this is a red warning: "Online Detainee Locator System cannot search for records of persons under the age of 18." The "Search by A-Number" section includes instructions: "If you know the detainee's A-Number, ICE recommends you use the A-Number search. The A-Number must be exactly nine digits long. If the A-Number has fewer than nine digits, please add zeros at the beginning. You are also required to select the detainee's correct Country of Birth. (* Required Field)". There are input fields for "A-Number:" (with a red asterisk) and "Country of Birth:" (with a red asterisk). The A-Number field contains "A-Number" and the Country of Birth dropdown is set to "-- Select a Country --". A "Search by A-Number" button is at the bottom left. On the right side, there are three dark blue boxes: "Related Information", "Helpful Info" (with links for Status of a Case, About the Detainee Locator, Brochure, ICE ERO Field Offices, ICE Detention Facilities, and Privacy Notice), and "External Links" (with a link for Bureau of Prisons Inmate Locator).

Search by A#--you will need the client's A# and the client's country of birth. Once you conduct the search, one of two types of screens will appear. Either there is information indicating where your client is detained, which will look like this:

Official Website of the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Report Crimes: Email or Call 1-866-DHS-2-ICE

Home Who We Are **What We Do** Newsroom Information Library Contact ICE

Search Results: 1

Country of Birth: Cuba
A-Number: 213218830
Status: In Custody
State: GA
Current Detention Facility: [FOLKSTON PROCESSING CTR/DR JAMES](#)
** Click on the Detention Facility name to obtain facility contact information*

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Related Information

Helpful Info

- Status of a Case
- About the Detainee Locator Brochure
- ICE ERO Field Offices
- ICE Detention Facilities
- Privacy Notice

Here, you can tell that your client is detained, and where s/he is detained (in this case, at the Folkston Processing Center in GA). Clicking on the hyperlink to the facility will bring you to that detention center's main page which will contain basic information like its address and main phone number.

Sometimes, your search result may end up looking like this:

Official Website of the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Report Crimes: Email or Call 1-866-DHS-2-ICE

Home Who We Are **What We Do** Newsroom Information Library Contact ICE

Search Results: 0

Your search has returned zero (0) matching records. Please re-check the search terms you entered to ensure they are correct and try your query again. Please remember the system does not provide information for detainees under the age of 18.

If you conducted a name-based search, please remember that only exact matches to the name you entered will be returned. You may want to try searching any name or spelling variants used by the detainee.

If you conducted an A-Number search you may want to try conducting a name-based search instead.

If you are unable to find the detainee using the Online Detainee Locator System, please contact your local field office.

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Related Information

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Usually, this means your client is no longer in detention. That could be due to his/her being released into the United States via parole or bond or winning his/her removal case. It can also mean that s/he has been deported. Finally, sometimes this is temporarily the result you will receive if your client is still detained but is in the process of being moved from one detention center to another, especially if they are far apart. If you're not expecting your client to have been released, the best follow-up if you receive this result is to contact the ERO Field Office that was responsible for your client's detention and ask if s/he has been released.

A list of the ERO (ICE) Field Offices and their main phone numbers can be found here:

<https://www.ice.gov/contact/ero>

What's Happening in My Client's Case?

You also need to be regularly checking (at least weekly) on the status of your client's underlying removal case. A client who is detained can, in general, be in one of three places in the process:

- 1) His/her case is still in its initial stages in front of an immigration judge ("IJ"). There has been no order in his/her case yet.
- 2) Your client is on appeal in front of the Board of Immigration Appeals. This is almost always due to your client losing in front of the immigration judge and on his/her appeal, but occasionally a person can remain detained if they win their case before the IJ and the government appeals. **While your client has an active appeal before the BIA, their order of removal is not considered "final"**. This is particularly important for habeas cases.
- 3) Your client has a final order of removal, either because s/he lost the appeal before the BIA, or never appealed at all. If your client is appealing beyond the BIA to the federal circuit court, whether the order of removal is "final" differs by Circuit. Be sure you're talking to your mentor about this.

To find out your client's case status, go to: portal.eoir.justice.gov/infosystem/

Your screen should look like this:

The screenshot shows the top of the website with the Executive Office for Immigration Review logo and name. Below is an announcement regarding the coronavirus pandemic and court operations. The main heading is "Automated Case Information" with a link for "en Español". A welcome message follows, and there is a form to enter an "A-Number" with a "Submit" button. A note below the form states "Note: This form is protected by reCAPTCHA". At the bottom, a yellow instruction box says "Instructions: The alien registration number, also known as the A-Number, begins".

Enter the client's A#, and you'll get the following information:

The screenshot displays the case details for a client named Jesus Javier. The page title is "Automated Case Information" and the client's name and A-Number are shown at the top right. The page is divided into four main sections:

- Next Hearing Information:** A box stating "There are no future hearings for this case."
- Decision and Motion Information:** A box stating "The Immigration Judge ordered **REMOVAL**." It includes the decision date (June 30, 2020) and court address (1900 East Whatley Road, OAKDALE, LA 71463). Below this, it mentions a "MOTION TO REOPEN, IJ JURISDICTION" that was transferred to the Board of Immigration Appeals on July 30, 2020.
- Case Appeal Information:** A box stating "A case appeal was received on July 30, 2020. It is currently pending." It includes the status of the Alien Brief (received on September 23, 2020) and the DHS Brief (briefing schedule expired).
- Court Contact Information:** A box providing contact information for the Board of Immigration Appeals, including the address (5107 Leeburg Pike, Suite 2000, Falls Church, VA 22041) and phone number (703) 605-1007.

A "Back" button is located at the bottom left of the page.

On the top right, you'll see your client's name and A#.

The top left box will have the next hearing date and location, if the case is still before the IJ (**NOTE:** Bond hearings will NOT appear on this page).

The top right box has any decision information, and what court the case was before at the IJ level.

The bottom left box has any BIA appeal information, and finally the bottom left box gives the full information of what court the case is currently before (in the above example, the address of the Board of Immigration Appeals).

PRACTICE NOTE: If your client is *only* applying for Withholding/CAT and *not* asylum, it will indicate that they were Ordered Removed *even if they won withholding*. Please talk to your mentor about this situation if you think it may apply.

We know you're working as quickly and diligently as you can to pursue your client's release from detention. It's important that as you do so, you keep apprised of your client's situation to ensure that you have the best chance of getting your client released.

As always, any questions about these topics can be directed to your mentor. Thank you again for taking on a case with the Justice Campaign!