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## ABA Family Legal Guide

### Family Law

#### Children

##### Rights and Responsibilities of Parents

What are the legal rights of children?

Children have a unique status under the law. The law defines children as unmarried persons under the age of majority--usually eighteen--who have not left home to support themselves. The law protects children from abuse and neglect. It also entitles them to the protection of the state. Children may be removed from their home if it is necessary to ensure them a safe, supportive environment. This removal may be temporary or permanent.

Children have a right to be supported by their parents. At minimum, this means food, shelter, clothing, medical care, and education.

The law allows children to sue. However, in most instances an adult legal representative must begin the suit. The representative is often referred to as guardian ad litem for the child, or as next friend.

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- How is the court system structured?
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