



## LEADERSHIP PROFILE



### Chief Operating Officer Chicago, IL or New York, NY

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*“The Young Center for Immigrant Children’s Rights protects and advances the rights and best interests of immigrant children according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and state and federal law”.*

*– Young Center mission statement*

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#### THE OPPORTUNITY



**As troubling as it is unconscionable, immigrant children who enter the U.S. on their own do not enjoy any unique status or protections within federal immigration law compared to adults.** For the last eighteen years, the Young Center for Immigrant Children’s Rights has been working diligently to change this reality. Long a champion and advocate for the best interests of children while they are in deportation proceedings, the Young Center serves as a trusted ally for these young

individuals and works to ensure their safety and well-being.

The Young Center seeks a Chief Operating Officer to assist the new Executive Director as a thought partner and operations leader for an expanding organization that is confronting an unprecedented demand for expertise, knowledge and tenacity in advocating for the needs of children who, without help, will be left to navigate the U.S. immigration system alone. The new COO will provide support and leadership for the Executive Director, staff, and board as the organization both works to respond to the immediate needs of children in the immigration system and fully realizes its aspirations of helping to create a dedicated children’s immigrant justice system.

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**Finding leaders that matter for missions that matter. ®**

The Chief Operating Officer will act as a right hand of the Executive Director to help marshal the considerable operational, financial, and administrative resources of the Young Center into a cohesive, collaborative whole that will support the Young Center's programmatic impact and leverage its commitment to excellence in serving children who are in the immigration labyrinth alone.

Mandates for the new COO will include:

- Working with the Executive Director to help provide and manage the infrastructure necessary to accommodate growth in programs and services
- Overseeing the organizational budgeting and financial systems to ensure that the Young Center can meet its mission goals
- Serving as a collaborative thought partner with the Executive Director to help the organization weigh strategic decisions, drive sound processes, and advance the organization's ability to plan forward as well as react swiftly



## THE ORGANIZATION

The Young Center was founded in Chicago in 2003 with the charge of developing a program to advocate for the best interests of unaccompanied immigrant children — even though U.S. immigration law does not recognize children as distinct from adults. The Center is named after Young Zheng, one of the first children they served.

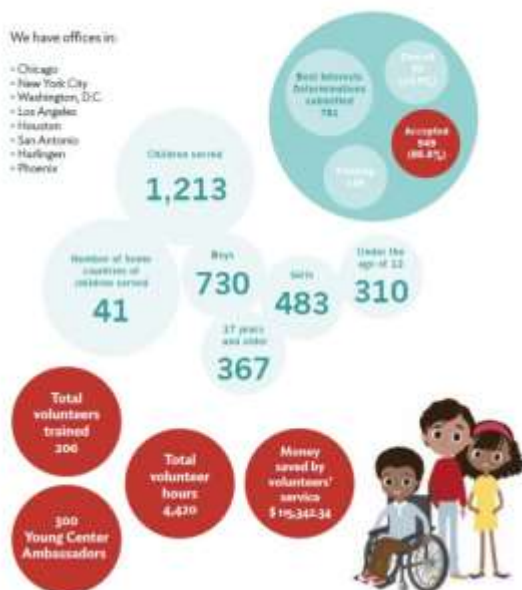
The brainchild of its founder, Maria Woltjen—a lawyer and children's rights advocate—the Young Center began modestly, with Maria singularly guiding the work of this initiative for five years with the help of dedicated volunteer Child Advocates. The Young Center's work grew out of a fervent commitment to integrate child protection principles—especially children's rights to self-expression, to safety, to family integrity, to their own identities—into an immigration system designed for adults.

Today the Young Center is a national organization serving more than 1200 children annually with nearly 100 staff members in eight offices across the country (Chicago, Harlingen TX, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Phoenix, San Antonio and Washington D.C.). Since its inception, the Center has protected the rights and best interests of thousands of unaccompanied and separated children from more than 80 countries across the world.

The Young Center's programs and policy advocacy include:

**Child Advocate Program.** Guided by the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Young Center has developed the only program in the nation that provides children in deportation proceedings with independent Child Advocates, who advocate for the child's best interests—safety and well-being. The Young Center recruits and trains bilingual volunteers, such as teachers, retired attorneys, students, and other community members, to serve as Child Advocates. The volunteers meet with the children and learn their stories, which often hold the key to figuring out whether they are eligible for protection. With this information, Young Center staff—attorneys and social workers—then advocate on behalf of the children, submitting best interests determinations to immigration judges, asylum officers, enforcement officials, shelter providers and lawyers for the children. The Young Center works to represent their needs from apprehension through their journey through the court system and the ultimate disposition of their case.

### 2020 By the Numbers



**Policy Advocacy.** There is no best interests standard in immigration law, nor is there a requirement that judges consider what's best for the child in deportation proceedings, even though the decisions carry life and death consequences. The Young Center conducts policy advocacy at the national level—with Congress and federal agencies—to incorporate the best interests of the child standard into practice, policy, and immigration law.

**Immigrant Child Resource Center.** The Young Center is currently developing and launching a program to support child welfare advocates across the U.S. and to provide technical assistance for children caught in the intersection of migration, child welfare, and children's rights.

The organization has a full-time staff of nearly 100 and a 2022 annual budget of \$12.3 million. Revenues are a combination of government support through the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement program (~50%), grants and contributed support (~45%) and special events and other income (~5%). The organization is financially stable and is embarking on a new strategic plan; immediate priorities include diversifying service programs and geographic reach and expanding the organization's policy advocacy work. For more information about the Young Center and its history, please go to [www.theyoungcenter.org](http://www.theyoungcenter.org).

## THE RESPONSIBILITIES

Reporting to the Executive Director, the COO will be a partner to the Executive Director and the senior leadership team, as well as other critical constituencies across the Young Center community. They will work in alignment and harmony with the Executive Director and will be responsible for effectively managing the Young Center's infrastructure, processes, and human and financial resources. Combining a strong managerial skill set built on a foundation of relevant experience, an authentic desire to work collaboratively, and a passion for the work of the Center, the COO will help the organization function optimally and advance its mission.



(click to play video)

More specifically, the COO will:

- 1. Oversee the day-to-day business operations, planning and systems of the Young Center.** As the central point of contact for the staff on the functional, financial, human resources and day-to-day service-related components of the Center's operations, the COO will ensure the seamless integration of program activity and the venues, and the staff and systems that support them. The COO will both display and inspire calm and teamwork in managing a wide variety of day-to-day activities and ensure that the organization can adapt to unforeseen circumstances with grace and flexibility.
- 2. Lead the organizational planning and management of the Young Center's annual budget in collaboration with the Executive Director and the Director of Finance.** The COO will bring experience in budgeting, financial analysis and managing financial staff to the Young Center. The COO will have demonstrated facility with financial statements (though finance staff will produce them and provide analysis), managing risk, cash flow and planning and managing a profit and loss statement. They will ensure that the Executive Director's goals and vision for the organization are realized through thoughtful and deliberate management of financial resources that will help the organization successfully balance aspirations with financial capacity.
- 3. Be a trusted advisor to the Executive Director and an inspired partner and member of the senior leadership team.** As a partner of the Executive Director and the senior leadership team, the COO will quickly establish and consistently maintain a relationship of superlative trust, candor, patience and respect with the Executive Director and the leadership of the Young Center. The COO will have both facility and comfort with communicating sensitive and difficult information to the Executive Director and the courage to advise and respectfully disagree with her when warranted. They will be a thoughtful and collaborative partner to the Executive Director and provide the help and guidance necessary for the Young Center to run smoothly and allow the Executive Director to focus on mission, programmatic impact, fundraising and external responsibilities.

- 4. Be a strong internal and external communicator and serve as a proxy for the Executive Director when necessary.** The COO will be a capable communicator in a variety of settings. They will be uncommonly good at building relationships and listen as well as (or better than) they speak. Most importantly, the COO will lead by example in carrying out the Young Center's commitment to diversity, equity inclusion and belonging in conversation, interaction and organizational leadership.
- 5. Anticipate, manage and solve problems deliberately and decisively.** The COO will be proactive, planful and forward-looking and avoid inertia with process, programs and outcomes. While balancing multiple inputs, perspectives and competing interests, the COO will be comfortable making decisions with varying degrees of information. In tandem with the Executive Director, staff and board, the COO will help the organization be deliberate in moving institutional objectives forward and building the organizational stability and dexterity to respond to the moral imperatives present in children's immigration issues.

## THE CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate is a capable manager with proven ability to bring organizational leadership and operating cohesion to a rapidly evolving organization where intellectual capital is the chief currency. They will have an established history of leading and supporting a talented operational team, experience working as a thought partner with a chief executive, and a passion for the work of the Young Center. Given the intensity of the Young Center's work, the ability to bring poise and grace, perspective and positivity to the workplace will be important.

Superlative communication, interpersonal management, financial and project management skills are essential. Knowledge of similar organizational environments and experience working in a highly collaborative, dynamic, mission-based environment would be a plus. The COO will bring a collaborative spirit, patience, emotional intelligence, and quiet confidence born of authentic ability.

Assets being sought in the new COO include:

- Strong quantitative, financial management, and planning skills; comfort with profit and loss statements and utilizing data to inform business decisions
- Well-developed interpersonal management skills and material human resource management experience
- The cultural competence to be a senior leader in an organization that values and embraces diversity, equity and inclusion
- The intellect and nimbleness to excel in a complex, fast-moving context involving multiple sites, stakeholders and a mix of different revenue streams



- Relevant experience in managing complex, dynamic and multi-faceted for-profit or nonprofit environments
- An acutely developed ability to execute effectively, focus on details and manage organizational projects to completion
- Significant facility with vision and execution and the ability to balance both
- A commitment to the Young Center’s mission and comfort with being a proxy for the Executive Director as needed
- An authentic persona that inspires trust, invites collaboration and engenders an environment of teamwork across teams of influence
- Respect for technology and its increasing role in expanding impact and connectedness
- Demonstrated experience and ability as a good listener
- The strength to say “No” or “Not yet” in ways that can be understood and respected
- The ability to effectively lead a team working remotely across different cities and time zones

## THE RELATIONSHIPS

The COO will report to the Executive Director, supervise three direct reports as an initial matter, and be responsible for a team of seven full-time staff and key external vendors. The COO is a trusted advisor to the Executive Director and the executive team and an integral part of the leadership of the organization. Key relationships are outlined below:

<b>Reports to</b>	Executive Director, Young Center for Immigrant Children’s Rights (Phoenix)
<b>Direct reports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Finance (Chicago or New York; to be hired)</li> <li>• Senior Manager, Talent &amp; Equity (New York)</li> <li>• Senior Manager, HR &amp; Operations (New York)</li> </ul>
<b>Other key relationships include</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Advocate Program Co-Directors (Chicago, Harlingen)</li> <li>• Policy Director (Philadelphia/DC)</li> <li>• Philanthropy Director (Chicago)</li> </ul>
<b>Other important relationships include</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Center Board of Directors</li> <li>• Young Center staff</li> <li>• Key organizational vendors (IT, accounts payable, audit, equipment, building and systems support)</li> <li>• Key representatives from the HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement and partner organizations</li> </ul>

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## THE LOCATION

The COO will be based in either Chicago or New York and manage teams across the network of Young Center offices. The Young Center has offices in eight cities that include Chicago, Houston, San Antonio, Phoenix, Los Angeles, Washington D.C., New York and Harlingen TX.



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**For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email [Youngcenter@boardwalkconsulting.com](mailto:Youngcenter@boardwalkconsulting.com) or call Michelle Hall, Diane Westmore or John Sparrow at 404-262-7392.**

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