Overview of Achievements, 2018-2019

The New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) continues to make significant progress related to the administration of justice through generous IOLA funding. The NYIC does not provide direct legal representation, instead, our target audience is service providers in need of capacity development support and resources, and immigrant communities in need of high-quality information. Through our work we increase the capacity of immigration legal service providers in New York State and make large-scale service coordination projects possible.

Major accomplishments, described in more detail throughout this narrative report, include the development of innovative training tools and resources for legal and related service providers, continued focus on collaborative partnerships to share best practices, and the coordination of a state-wide pro bono response to a crisis in Albany County Jail. In addition, our successful “know-your-rights” curriculum was updated to include crucial information on public charge, and has reached thousands of New Yorkers with critical information on their rights when interacting with immigration agents, how to avoid fraud, how to report hate crimes, and much more.

Population Served: Legal Service Providers of Immigrants and Refugees
Area Served: Statewide
Total Funding: $277,000
Total IOLA Grant: $62,500
Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:
  • Total Staff: 5.95
  • Lawyers: 3.75
  • Others: 2.20
Direct Legal Services
252 Benefits Achieved
252 Non-Profit Groups

Benefits Achieved by Non-Profit Groups

Benefits Achieved 252 cases
Non-Profit Groups 252 groups

Case Example 1
An example drawn from our work at Albany County Jail involves a young woman who crossed the border with her mother and two siblings, fleeing violence and hoping to make an asylum claim. After crossing the border she was separated from her family and sent to Albany, where she was detained awaiting a credible fear interview. The NYIC encountered her there during a pro bono intake session, and flagged her case given her isolation, reported sexual trauma, and clear mental health concerns. The NYIC, as co-coordinators of the project, intervened with the jail staff and ensured that she received an emergency medical screening, an assessment with a mental health professional, and, ultimately, access to ongoing therapy. In addition the NYIC worked with local and national partners to find information about the family members that she had been separated from, and helped to re-establish communication between them while she remained detained. Happily, this young woman ultimately received a positive finding in her Credible Fear Interview, and was released from detention.

Case Example 2
In another example from the same project, the NYIC met during initial intake at the jail a young woman from Cameroon, who had suffered severe persecution including sexual violence in detention before fleeing to Central America, where she made her way on foot to the southern border. She was extremely traumatized while in detention but eager to pursue her asylum case. The NYIC trained pro bono attorneys to prepare her for her credible fear interview, and volunteers met with her over 5 times while she prepared and then awaited a decision. During this time the NYIC collaborated with a legal service provider in New York City to provide full pro bono representation to the client. Because her attorney was remote, the NYIC assisted in facilitating visits and monitoring the young woman’s situation in Albany, alerting her counsel when she was transferred so that there would be no break in representation. Thanks to the efforts of project leads and pro bono attorneys from multiple firms, this young woman was granted parole and was able to reunify with family across the country, where she is now awaiting a decision on her asylum claim.
### Other Services:

**Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Benefitted People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14,524 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>14,477 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Assistance</td>
<td>47 people</td>
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**Other Legal Related Services: Overview**

During the grant period, the NYIC provided a number of other legal services to individuals, mainly focused on education as a tool of both legal capacity development and community development. This work happens through our Immigrant Concerns Training Institute, which focuses on trainings of service providers, including immigration attorneys, and our Community Engagement team, which focuses on developing and providing “Know Your Rights” workshops at school and community events. In addition, this year the NYIC continued to facilitate legal referrals.

**Other Legal Related Services: Examples**

#### Immigrant Concerns Training Institute

During the grant period, the NYIC held three 40-hour Department of Justice (DOJ) trainings, aimed at preparing nonprofit staff to achieve DOJ Recognition and Accreditation, as well as navigate the accreditation process, in Albany and New York City. We also overhauled the curriculum for our 40-hour training in response to shifting trends in immigration law and new policies, and to make the trainings more dynamic and engaging. Our training team developed new sessions and built interactive components into existing ones. During the grant period, 746 individuals received training through the Immigrant Concerns Training Institute. Topics included public charge, representing detained immigrants, working with survivors of trauma, setting up an immigration practice, introduction to immigration court practice, and dealing with gang allegations. All of those trainings were additionally made available via webinar and promoted to service providers throughout the state.

#### Immigration Navigator Program - Public Charge Training of Trainers

In response to the recent publication of the proposed new rule on public charge and demand for community education around the topic, the NYIC also created this year a navigator program focused primarily on public charge concerns. This reorientation of our immigration navigator work allows us to focus our time explicitly on work that responds to a demonstrated need in impacted communities and among service providers.

The NYIC Public Charge Navigator program is designed to create a cadre of individuals trained and equipped to deliver Know Your Rights presentations and engage in other community education opportunities (e.g. tabling) on public charge. The NYIC designed and is offering “train the trainer” sessions for staff and volunteers of NYIC member organizations who want to increase their community education efforts in this arena. These sessions have built up a set of experienced and informed advocates who can support our own ongoing Know Your Rights efforts. Trained navigators have ongoing access to up-to-date NYIC community education resources and technical assistance, and are responsible for tracking and reporting out to the NYIC on their community education efforts in this arena. To date 74 individuals have attended this intensive, day-long training.
Trainings

The NYIC provides hundreds of hours of legal trainings to staff and volunteers of NYIC members and other legal service providers through our Immigrant Concerns Training Institute.

The NYIC significantly expanded the diversity of training offerings in response to changing needs across the state. The NYIC offered a 2-day immigration court training in New York City aimed at building capacity for removal defense and supporting individuals seeking full accreditation. In addition, the NYIC successfully brought this training to Buffalo for the first time, addressing a critical need in the region, given the presence of two immigration courts in the city. In Albany, the NYIC held a day-long training dedicated to responding to recent changes in asylum adjudications, and strengthening the base of service providers who work with detainees in the Albany County Jail. Other highlights include trainings in Syracuse that connected immigration legal service providers with local pro bono partners, a 2-part training on trauma-informed practice, a webinar to address the proposed rule change regarding public charge, and an informational session for community-based organizations on the New York Immigrant Family Unity Program (NYIFUP). This latter session was the first time the six institutional providers of NYIFUP had ever come together for the purpose of helping CBOs and other groups serving immigrants around the State to understand what the NYIFUP program is, who is eligible for free representation, and how community advocates can help when a community member is detained by ICE.

In addition to these newer training initiatives, the NYIC has also continued to offer regular, high-quality legal trainings, including our 40-Hour Overview of Immigration Law. Through its programming, the Immigrant Concerns Training Institute has brought relevant expertise to over 800 individuals across the state, and continues to respond to the evolving needs expressed by our partners.

Technology

At the end of 2018, the NYIC implemented a new management system (Asana) to better streamline our communications and project management abilities. This year, we are launching new HR protocols and migrating our database to Salesforce.

In addition, the Albany County Jail project received donated licenses to an online, secure database, where client information was recorded and tracked to ensure that people who needed referrals or other assistance could be served. This database also facilitated communication between the pro bono coordinators and legal services providers funded to take on cases, so that intakes did not need to be repeated and attorneys had swift access to the necessary information about each case. Client consent was obtained at the outset of the project to ensure that sensitive material was only shared responsibly, and with consent.

In addition to the secure database, project partners needed a way to communicate in real time to effectively manage pro bonos and experienced legal volunteers, and to respond to challenges or crises at the jail and liaise with other partners. To that end, the project developed a protocol for the use of Slack communication channels, which were monitored by project coordinators in shifts seven days a week, and which experienced volunteer supervisors had access to. Issues around access, coverage, interpretation, medical or mental health crises, and other challenges could be quickly resolved. In order to protect client confidentiality, project coordinators established a protocol to ensure that identifying materials and information were not shared over channels, but discussed offline instead.
**Other Services**

**Significant Collaborations**

Current collaboratives include our Health Collaborative, Education Collaborative, various regional convenings, and the Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative (Immigrant ARC), which has continued to grow over the past grant year.

Following its formalize creation in the summer of 2017, Immigrant ARC has developed into a key collaborative of legal service providers in New York State, serving as a place to coordinate advocacy, policy, and funding initiatives and a repository for crucial sharing and strategizing by service providers. Currently Immigrant ARC is made up of eighty-five non-profit organizations and pro bono partners providing or facilitating legal services to immigrants. The past year has seen the creation of an upstate working group within Immigrant ARC to focus on the unique needs and challenges of those providers, as well as subcommittees focused on advocacy, training, and resiliency.

One large success for Immigrant ARC during the grant year was a statewide, two-day legal conference for any by immigration attorneys. Under the banner of “Mobilize, Organize, Resist”, members of Immigrant ARC, their colleagues, and advocates from around the state and country came together for two days in October to discuss the myriad of challenges facing immigration advocates in this moment, and innovative strategies to push back, including the use of impact litigation, administrative law, and partnerships with organizers. The conference provided 26 hours of CLE credit, in-depth lawyering skills sessions, and a track focused on resiliency for service providers which included presentations by both attorneys and mental health professionals. The conference concluded with a lengthy strategy session, mapping out the needs of legal service providers across the state, from greater access to networking opportunities to more shared legal resources and trainings.

Another powerful example of the work that this collaboration makes possible is the massive Immigrant ARC-led volunteer response at the Albany County Jail in the summer of 2018. In July 2018, the NYIC learned that the Trump Administration was planning a massive transfer of individuals to the Albany County Jail, where small numbers of people were regularly detained by ICE. This was a part of a nationwide effort by ICE to clear space at the southern border for the detention of asylum seekers and families. In the end, Albany County Jail saw the largest number of people transferred anywhere in the country, receiving 300 asylum-seekers in a single week, with asylum seekers continuing to arrive throughout the summer and fall. All had yet to go through their credible fear interviews, meaning that there was an opportunity and need to mobilize legal assistance for each.

Working together with the Immigrant ARC, local legal services providers, and the Albany County Sheriff’s Office, the NYIC built a pro bono legal assistance model in a matter of weeks, drawing from resources all over the state and deploying technology to coordinate the mobilization. Experienced immigration attorneys signed up to supervise pro bono volunteers and interpreters, who screened each detainee for their asylum claim, other relief, and issues of health and family separation. Those with upcoming credible fear interviews received preparation sessions with a lawyer. An online sign-up system and training module meant that the project could swiftly scale to seven days a week. An online communication system provided live support to all volunteers at the jail, troubleshooting access issues and challenging cases, and coordinating additional assistance where necessary. Once ICE began to move individuals to the federal detention center in Batavia, the NYIC liaised with a network of area providers to ensure that no asylum seekers fell through the cracks as a result.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

The NYIC utilizes volunteers for a number of our initiatives, such as our “Key to the City” events, which have served more than 39,900 immigrant clients since its launch in 2011. Volunteers provide legal screenings and assist with a number of other activities at NYIC events. During the grant period specifically, the NYIC received support from 254 unique volunteers - who collectively provided a total of more than 1,400 hours of service. Volunteers with legal backgrounds included 1 immigration attorney, 2 non-immigration attorneys, 2 paralegals, and 2 law students.

Additionally, the NYIC’s work at the Albany County Jail engaged a number of volunteers: 199 pro bono attorney volunteers, 31 experienced immigration attorney volunteer supervisors, 45 interpreters, and 7 law students.

Pro Bono Statistics

Attorneys: 223 Volunteers, 1,165 Hours
Law Students: 9 Volunteers, 45 Hours
Other: 294 Volunteers, 1,600 Hours

Sources Of Funding

Iola Grant: $62,500
Foundations: $55,000
State Funding: $84,500
Other: $75,000
Total: $277,000