Overview of Achievements, 2020-2021

Catholic Migration Services (CMS) increased access to justice for thousands of low-income immigrants in Brooklyn and Queens. Our target population faces several barriers preventing them from accessing justice, including language, fear of deportation, unfamiliarity with the U.S. legal system, and inability to pay legal fees. These barriers were compounded during the pandemic, as explained more fully below in the section on obstacles. We helped this population overcome these barriers by providing free legal services, employing bilingual attorneys and staff, using language interpretation services, providing confidential consultations, and making staff available virtually when the pandemic made in-person meetings unsafe or impossible. We also significantly increased our community education to reach our target population and inform them of their rights during the difficult pandemic.

Data for the period April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 show our accomplishments. As listed in the GAR Part 2, our accomplishments include:

- Closed 1982 cases and benefitted approximately 4904 individuals;
- Closed 3 impact cases and benefitted approximately 10,000 households and 25,000 persons;
- Conducted 2852 intakes;
- Helped 62 young immigrants renew DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), thus preventing their removal and enabling them to work lawfully;
- Helped 94 immigrants become naturalized U.S citizens by providing full representation through the entire naturalization process, and helped an additional 122 lawful permanent residents apply for U.S. citizenship with limited representation;
- Helped 35 immigrants adjust their legal status based on family ties, thus reuniting families that had been separated;
- Helped 5 immigrants obtain asylum, and helped an additional 6 immigrants adjust their status based on asylee or refugee status;
- Helped 4 immigrants obtain or renew their Temporary Protected Status, thus allowing them to remain and work lawfully in the country; and
- Helped 18 minor-aged immigrants adjust their status based on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, thus putting them on the path to citizenship, among other accomplishments.

Population Served: Low Income Immigrant Population
Area Served: Kings and Queens Counties

Total Funding: $4,296,563.84
Total IOLA Grant: $110,000

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 38.70
- Lawyers: 16.30
- Paralegals: 15.60
- Other: 6.80
Direct Legal Services
4,907 people benefitted
1,985 legal cases closed

**Housing**

Client J is a 58 year-old immigrant from Guinea in West Africa, whose income is about 140% of the poverty level. A collaborating CBO referred her to us for help regarding her apartment in a private home (not rent stabilized) in Queens. Client J needed repairs and her landlord was harassing her. We provided representation and negotiated a resolution with the landlord. Under the settlement, the landlord forgave rent owed for the last three months and paid J $3000 to move. J was satisfied with this resolution and successfully found new housing.

**Worker’s Rights**

Client N is a 21 year-old immigrant from Zambia and a survivor of domestic violence. She was granted Pandemic Unemployment Assistance in June 2020 but NYS Department of Labor later stopped payment because of certain verification issues. As a result, she became homeless. N came to us through City Bar Pro Bono Project. Our program managing attorney analyzed the issue and realized that N was eligible for PUA and contacted DOL. After several calls, our attorney was able to resolve this matter successfully and DOL paid Client N PUA benefits. In addition to these legal services, our staff made appropriate referrals for other services.

We consider both cases typical in that both clients were low-income immigrants, with precarious financial situations. The resolutions we obtained were extremely meaningful to the clients.
Overview of Legal Related Services

Community education. We provided know-your-rights education through livestreamed videos, prerecorded videos, fact sheets, Zoom meetings, and other means. The goals of our community education are to inform low-income immigrants, tenants, and workers of their rights and the availability of our services to help them enforce their rights. We reached over 22,400 people using our various community education methods.

The pandemic precluded us from conducting other forms of Other Legal Related Services that we conducted in other years. They include: naturalization workshops staffed by pro bono attorneys and supervised by our legal staff; and tenant outreach in which we canvass tenants to determine their needs, inform them of their rights, and organize them if appropriate.
Other Legal Related Services Examples

Livestreamed presentation with Queens Public Library (QPL). On October 5, 2020, CMS staff attorney Samantha Lyons made a bilingual presentation on tenants’ rights livestreamed at QPL’s Facebook page. This KYR presentation has received 900 views to date. We believed this collaboration enabled us to reach a very broad audience, many of whom we would not have reached without our collaboration with QPL, and provide timely needed information.

Virtual Immigration Town Hall On May 7, 2020, we joined with New York Lawyers for the Public Interest in a livestreamed presentation in which attorneys from both organizations discussed Covid-19’s impact on immigrants, tenants, and workers. To date, it has had over 1500 views.

Fact sheets at Catholic Migration Services’ webpage All program areas saw many changes over the past grant year. Examples include DACA, TPS for Venezuelans, eviction moratoria for tenants, and new relief such as Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. To help the public and our target population stay current on these developments, we uploaded fact sheets on these topics to our website.

Impact Cases

Bernandez v. Alternate Staffing. CMS represents the plaintiffs, who are home attendants required to work multiple 24 hours shifts each week, but paid for only thirteen hours per day and not paid overtime premiums despite workweeks of 100 hours or more. The class with approximately 200 members has been certified and the parties are in discovery. The other three cases were related cases involving Zara, a well-known predatory equity landlord. Zara sought to impose rent increases retroactive to 2009, and initiated nonpayment eviction proceedings to recover the retroactive rent. CMS represented the tenants and prevailed at the trial level in all three cases. Zara filed appeals. On July 10, 2020, the Appellate Term upheld the trial court decision in Cruz (Appellate Term Docket No. 2018-2567 Q C). Following that, Zara withdrew its appeal in the Moncada case and failed to perfect its appeal in Bances. The appellate victory in Cruz caused Zara to stop unlawful retroactive rent increases and helped thousands of low-income tenants. We estimate that no fewer than 10,000 households or 25,000 individuals benefitted from these impact cases.
Significant Collaborations

- Hebrew Free Loan Society provides interest-free loans to our naturalization clients for USCIS application fees. This first year of our collaboration has been very successful in helping LPRs obtain the funding they need to naturalize.

- Queens Public Library has invited us to put on KYR presentations on their Facebook page. These livestreamed presentations and videos have enabled us to broaden our outreach and provide much needed KYR community education to residents of Queens.

- LaGuardia Community College continues its collaboration with Catholic Migration Services to provide integrated citizenship services to Legal Permanent Residents. During the pandemic, we also provided KYR community education to LGCC staff and students about our services via Zoom.

- New York Medical College Center for Human Rights invited our Immigration Program Manager to provide immigration law training to medical practitioners. Through this training, approximately 100 medical practitioners obtained a better understanding of the role they can play in immigration relief, including critical asylum applications.

- Moving Forward program is a collaboration between Catholic Charities Brooklyn & Queens and Catholic Migration Services which supports immigrant families who have experienced separation or who are at risk of separation due to immigration enforcement, and who can benefit from case management and other social services.

- New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE) and Catholic Migration Services continue to collaborate to provide workers' rights legal services to low-income immigrant workers.

- We belong to Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative (CILEC), a team of six civil legal services providers and various immigrant-based CBOs. Through this collaboration, the legal services providers provide coordinated non-redundant legal services to underserved immigrant groups. The immigrant-based CBOs include: African Communities Together; Chinese Staff & Workers' Association; Damayan Migrant Workers; and DRUM – Desis Rising Up and Moving.

- We collaborate with National Domestic Workers Alliance and National Mobilization Against Sweatshops, both of which are workers’ rights organizations.

- We belong to the LEAP Coalition, which links 18 legal services providers in initiatives to increase the visibility of our work, share best practices, and develop collaborative trainings and other programming to improve the quality and reach of civil legal services for the poor.

- We participate in Stabilizing New York Coalition (SNYC), a citywide coalition of civil legal services providers that combats the loss of affordable housing at the hands of predatory equity companies. It organizes low-income tenants in predatory equity buildings to stop eviction and harassment by landlords. Through this collaboration and others, we were able to inform other legal services providers of the success we had at Appellate Term and thus help them in their fight on the same legal issue.

- We collaborate with parishes in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn to bring KYR education and legal services to low-income immigrants.

- Together with New York Lawyers for Public Interest, we collaborate with various private law firms on naturalization application assistance. Due to the pandemic, we have not held the workshops but we continue to stay in touch with the private attorneys and have provided training via Zoom to AIG attorneys in the year. Private law firms include: Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP; Fried Frank; and Simpson Thacher & Bartlett.
Other Services...

Technology and Other Innovations

Our new and increased use of technology was based on our need to respond to COVID-19 challenges. Several of the changes were intended to enable staff to continue to provide legal services while working from home. Other changes were aimed at increasing our target population’s access to our services. Examples include:

- We moved shared files to the cloud;
- We increased the use of Zoom and Microsoft Team meetings for client meetings, internal meetings and conferences;
- We are providing legal consultations and other legal services through telephone, Skype, Facetime, and similar means; and
- We are providing KYR presentations via livestreaming and videos on our Facebook page and the Facebook pages of collaborators.

Trainings

We provide ongoing internal training to all staff. All managing attorneys provide ongoing training to program staff regarding legal developments. Due to the many changes in immigration law, the immigration program provides training at biweekly meetings. Our housing and workers’ rights programs provide ongoing training as needed to respond to the many changes over the past year, e.g. eviction moratoria, enhanced unemployment insurance benefits, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. These trainings are supplemented by ongoing updates sent via email and review at later meetings. The ongoing updates include practice advisories from collaborating legal services, proposed rule changes, legal decisions, and scheduled CLEs.

We provide internal training to new staff. All new program hires are provided training and reference materials on substantive law and procedure in their area. They are also trained on the case management system that they will be using. Initial training is followed by close supervision over the initial work period and then followed with regular one-on-one check-ins between program manager and staff member.

Our staff have participated in external training provided by Catholic Legal Immigration Network, New York Immigration Coalition, Immigrant Defense Project, Immigration Advocates Network, The Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development, PLI Institute, and many other bar associations, collaborators, and others.

All staff were required to participate in a five-part racial justice training series customized by CMS and led by an outside expert. Staff were also required to attend training on sexual harassment prevention, as required by state law.

Finally, we provide financial support for staff attorneys to complete at least 12 CLE credits annually. Their CLEs ranged from more basic classes on Presentation Skills and Taking and Defending Depositions to very advanced classes on immigration. We also provide financial support and make training available to our immigration counselors to become accredited DOJ representatives and stay up-to-date on developments.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Total Pro Bono Attorney Hours are 100. Five private attorneys provided pro bono services as co-counsel on two workers’ rights cases and two private attorneys provided pro bono services as co-counsel on a housing matter. Besides generously providing their time and expertise, they also carried costs incurred in the litigation.

We were unable to hold naturalization workshops this year due to the pandemic, which brought down the total number of pro bono hours we are reporting. However, we remained in touch with the group of over 100 enrolled attorneys and consider them re-enrolled for this FY. In addition, we enrolled a new class of 20 pro bono attorneys and provided training via Zoom.

All of the programs had law school interns, all of whom provided case services. Our totals are 11 students providing 2609 hours of pro bono case services.

A college student provided 350 volunteer hours services for our naturalization unit. Tenants volunteered approximately 100 hours to help us resume our monthly community meetings on a virtual basis.

Pro Bono Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attorneys:</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Students:</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Volunteers:</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1,350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources Of Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IOLA Grant:</td>
<td>$110,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundations:</td>
<td>$1,544,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Funding:</td>
<td>$237,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising:</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>$2,374,713.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>$4,296,563.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>