Overview of Achievements, 2020-2021

During the 2020 - 2021 grant year, CARECEN overcame significant challenges to continue providing the high-quality legal services that have been our hallmark for nearly four decades.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced CARECEN to quickly shift gears in the spring of 2020, moving its two offices and all staff completely remote within two days. Despite this significant disruption, CARECEN continued to seamlessly provide direct legal services to its immigrant clients during the grant period. It utilized new digital tools, to include Zoom, HelloSign, and various Google Suite applications, to ensure its virtual offices remained fully accessible to clients. While CARECEN experienced a decrease in the demand for direct legal services during the COVID-19 pandemic, it ensured accessibility of virtual representation to all clients while maintaining the high level of professionalism for which it is known.

During the grant year, CARECEN provided a wide array of pro bono and low bono direct legal services to 1,634 immigrants on Long Island. Services included lighter-touch cases, such as advice and counsel and screenings for immigration benefits, green card renewal and applications for work authorization, as well as representation on naturalization applications, adjustments of status, and complex removal defense cases.

Because CARECEN orients its services towards low-income immigrants, approximately 96% of clients assisted during the program year fell below 150% of the federal poverty line – a higher number than in previous years due the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on job loss within the immigrant community. This income level made these clients eligible for a reduction or waiver of federal immigration fees for various immigration benefits, amounting to a total savings of approximately $462,187 to these individuals.

Population Served: Low Income Immigrants and Refugees

Area Served: New York City Metropolitan and Surrounding Area

Total Funding: 881,684.34

Total IOLA Grant: $102,500

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 9.00
- Lawyers: 2.00
- Paralegals: 3.00
- Other: 4.00
Camila is a Colombian citizen and a DACA recipient. She was brought to the United States when she was a child, graduated from college in the United States and is now working as a pre-K teacher. She married her long-time U.S. citizen boyfriend in 2019 and, with CARECEN’s help, through him was able to apply for her green card in 2020.

George is a lawful permanent resident and a citizen of Guyana. He has had his green card since 1989, but because of a severe developmental disability has been unable to apply for citizenship. CARECEN assisted George in obtaining a medical waiver to the naturalization test and he became a United States citizen in 2020.
Other Services...

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22,413 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td>8,425 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td>704 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Assistance</td>
<td>13,284 people</td>
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#### Other Legal Related Services: Overview

CARECEN has a robust community education program that empowered thousands of immigrants through education and access to information and resource. This community education was geared towards all immigrants across Long Island.

During the grant year, CARECEN provided 34 community education sessions on a variety of topics relevant to the immigrant community. These topics were selected based on expressed community need, with a particular focus on emerging issues in immigration law and COVID-19 resources. Examples of topics offered are “Eligibility for Direct Payments Under the CARES Act”, “The Future of DACA and TPS”, “Public Charge Rule”, “Changes in Immigration Law and Policy”, and “Qualifying and Applying for Unemployment Benefits”.

On emerging, novel issues -- such as changes to federal immigration law and policy CARECEN aimed to offer the community education session within a week of the change. Commencing in the spring of 2020, with the change in service delivery resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, 100% of CARECEN's community education was conducted virtually using platforms like Facebook Live and Zoom.

During the grant year, CARECEN provided citizenship classes and one-on-one citizenship preparation to 126 immigrants online via Zoom. These free, volunteer-led services are geared towards preparing immigrants to represent themselves at their naturalization interviews.

#### Other Legal Related Services: Examples

**Citizenship Classes**

Through its volunteer-led citizenship classes, CARECEN helped prepare 126 immigrants across Long Island to represent themselves at their naturalization interviews. These classes, offered both during the day and in the evenings to accommodate a variety of work schedules, focus on the fundamental English skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening that are required to pass the naturalization test.

**Community Education Workshops**

In January 2021, President Biden announced the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021, which would provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, TPS holders, DACA recipients, and agricultural workers. Because of the significant misinformation about this bill in the immigrant community, CARECEN offered a community education workshop on the topic. This workshop, offered via Zoom, informed 98 immigrants about the bill, a timeline for the legislative process, how to prepare should the bill become law, and how to protect themselves from fraud by practitioners who are already offering representation under the program.
Other Services

Impact Cases

Make the Road NY, et al. v. Pompeo was filed in December 2019 with representation by The Center for Constitutional Rights, The Legal Aid Society, The National Immigration Law Center and Paul, Weiss, Rifkin, Wharton and Garrison, LLP. The case challenged three interrelated and discriminatory “public charge rules” that violate immigration statutes and the U.S. Constitution. In July 2020, the Southern District of New York granted injunctive relief.

Trainings

During the 2020-2021 grant year, CARECEN increased its focus on staff training. In total, over the grant year, CARECEN staff participated in more than 50 trainings on immigration law and policy and other related legal topics. CARECEN staff continue to participate in external training, primarily those offered through the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) and the Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative (I-ARC), and the Practicing Law Institute (PLI). During the grant period, CARECEN also offered a series of on-going, monthly in-house legal trainings. These substantive and skill-building trainings were offered to all legal staff and led by external experts in the field of immigration law, to include experienced immigration law practitioners and immigration judges. Geared primarily towards attorneys or paralegals with less than three years’ experience, these trainings helped to increase organizational capacity by educating legal staff on novel areas of law and deepening knowledge in areas with which they were already familiar.

Technology

During the 2020-2021 program year, CARECEN increased its use of technology substantially. All staff continued the new initiative of utilizing applications on the Google Suite for case tracking and case review as well as for inter-staff collaboration on work. This has increased program efficiency by consolidating program operations into one system and has facilitated ease of conversation and collaboration between program staff on case-related matters. CARECEN also began partial implementation of a new, proprietary case management system through Notion. CARECEN will fully implement this case management system during the 2021-2022 grant year.

Additionally, CARECEN commenced providing community education virtually using Zoom and Facebook Live. This has had a dramatic impact on client access to community education services as it has allowed for CARECEN to reach more people. In fact, because of the possibility for videos to share and circulate more widely, CARECEN has found that community education provided online has a significantly broader reach than in-person sessions. Particularly in light of the closures due to COVID-19, had CARECEN not changed its delivery method for this service, it would not have been able to continue providing any community education.
**Other Services**

**Significant Collaborations**

During the grant year, CARECEN built on our long-established cooperative relationships with other organizations serving Long Island’s immigrant community to improve service provision and increase outreach effectiveness.

One of the major collaborations was the Long Island Project created in 2018 in partnership with the Immigrant Justice Corps. Through this collaboration, four Immigrant Justice Corps fellows, under the supervision of a supervising attorney at CARECEN, provided direct representation to 202 Central American immigrant children and families at risk for deportation.

As a founding member of Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative (I-ARC), CARECEN continues collaborating with more than 40 organizations statewide around immigrant advocacy issues.

CARECEN participates in monthly I-ARC Steering Committee meetings and quarterly general membership meetings which focus on sharing resources and best practices and challenging anti-immigrant policies and laws.

During the grant year, CARECEN also participated in five different, Long Island-based collaboratives (described in detail below). Each one of these collaboratives focuses on increasing legal services capacity and immigrant advocacy initiatives on Long Island.

As a founding member of the Long Island Legal Services Table and the Long Island Legal Services Group, CARECEN continues to expand access to legal services for immigrants on Long Island. These convenings bring together approximately two dozen immigration lawyers from non-profit organizations Long Island to share updates, best practices, information on services and to collaborate in an effort to expand the panorama of low/no-cost immigration legal services across the region.

As a founding member of the Long Island Language Advocates Coalition (LILAC), CARECEN continued its work monitoring violations of federal and state language access law. LILAC member organizations meet on at least a monthly basis. During the grant year, CARECEN and other member organizations focused on initiatives around language advocacy with local police and sheriff’s departments, the Nassau and Suffolk County Executives’ offices, and community education on a wide variety of advocacy issues.

As a founding member of the Long Island Civic Engagement Table (LICET) CARECEN continues its work organizing and educating immigrants on Long Island. During the grant year, CARECEN and other member organizations focused on campaigns around Green Light NY, Census 2020 and voter registration/GOTV.

CARECEN continued its support group for parents of unaccompanied children through a collaborative project between CARECEN, Children’s Village, and the New York State Office for New Americans that entered its fourth year during the grant period. This group empowers parents through education and provides them a toolkit to assist them in parenting children in the United States. During the grant year, due to the inability to meet in-person, this group met on a weekly basis via Zoom.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CARECEN experienced a reduction in its projected collaboration with pro bono attorneys, law students and volunteers. Several of its volunteer-based initiatives were temporarily suspended due to a decrease in organizational capacity and limitations on in-person meetings. Nevertheless, during the grant year, 10 volunteers, including pro bono attorneys, donated their time to support CARECEN’s programs.

Four private attorneys and three law students assisted CARECEN staff in the analysis and preparation of cases in a practice area where they have expertise. One of these was Lauris Wren, Clinical Professor and Director of the Hofstra Asylum Clinic, is a nationally recognized expert on asylum law. During the 2020-2021 grant year she consulted with CARECEN staff on a variety of cases, to include asylum cases, adjustment of status and naturalization. An additional three volunteers assisted with citizenship class instruction and naturalization interview preparation.

Pro Bono Statistics

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<th></th>
<th>Attorneys:</th>
<th>4 Volunteers</th>
<th>12 Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law Students:</td>
<td>3 Volunteers</td>
<td>234 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Volunteers:</td>
<td>3 Volunteers</td>
<td>468 Hours</td>
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Sources Of Funding

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IOLA Grant</td>
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<td>Foundations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>State Funding</td>
<td>$236,019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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