Overview of Achievements, 2020-2021

During the period of April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, the Safe Horizon Domestic Violence Law Project (DVLP) and the Immigration Law Project (ILP) provided high quality, comprehensive legal information, brief services, and representation to 1,908 survivors throughout New York City. DVLP and ILP provide services in the areas of family law, matrimonial law, VAWA petitions, U-Visas, adjustment proceedings asylum, conditional residency, family petitions, green card renewals, naturalization, and removal proceedings.

Specifically, DVLP litigated 68 family law cases and provided brief services, including advice and counsel to 1810 clients. DVLP/ILP also provided trainings to communities throughout New York City on the basis of family law, housing law, and public assistance.

Since April 2020, ILP has risen to meet the unprecedented challenges posed by a once-in-a-lifetime, global pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. While many offices have "paused" operations, the immigration courts and agencies have done so only to a limited extent—the immigration courts have not suspended or auto-extended any deadlines; United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) have not auto-extended any work permits or DACA statuses; and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has continued to arrest and place folks in immigration proceedings. The Trump administration was particularly aggressive and unrelenting during COVID, weaponizing a public health crisis to further its anti-immigrant agenda. ILP staff thus became "essential, frontline workers" in the fight to protect and defend immigrant communities and our communities as a whole in the midst of this pandemic.

Population Served: General Low Income Population
Area Served: New York City Metropolitan Area
Total Funding: $2,839,011
Total IOLA Grant: $237,500
Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 14.00
- Lawyers: 12.00
- Paralegals: 2.00
Family Law/Domestic Violence:

Safe Horizon Domestic Violence Law Project (DVLP) represents Sandy* in her order of protection case in the Bronx Family Court. Sandy’s ex-boyfriend had broken into her home on two separate occasions, brutally assaulting her during one of the break-ins, and had most recently refused to return their child-in-common after an extended visit. Safe Horizon DVLP was able to secure the safe return of the child by filing an emergency motion (writ of habeas corpus). The client and the child then went into shelter. Shortly after that, Safe Horizon DVLP filed a Family Offense Petition on behalf of the client and the child. The matter immediately went to trial within a month after filing the family offense petition. Safe Horizon DVLP commenced and finished the order of protection trial in approximately 90 minutes. After having our client, Sandy* testify and the opposing party testify, the court made an immediate ruling. The court gave our client a full two-year Order of Protection which included the child, with findings of attempted assault, criminal obstruction of breathing, harassment 2nd degree stalking 4th degree.

Immigration:

L.S. is from Guyana. Her conditional residence expired and her mother and U.S. citizen stepfather refused to assist her in the filing of a petition to remove the conditions on her residence. We provided immigration legal assistance by filing a waiver of the joint filing requirement based on abuse and extreme hardship and the waiver was granted. With her permanent resident card, L.S. became eligible to naturalize and in September 2020, we assisted her in the filing of a naturalization application. L.S.’s application has since been approved and she is now a U.S. citizen.
Other Services...

Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>261 people</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
<td><strong>250 people</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td><strong>11 people</strong></td>
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Other Legal Related Services: Overview

The DVLP/ILP routinely presents at community meetings throughout various New York City communities to provide information on domestic violence and the services provided by DVLP/ILP. Safe Horizon is the largest provider of victim services throughout New York City. DVLP/ILP utilizes this established infrastructure to reach people in need of services. Staff Attorneys regularly provide trainings at Safe Horizon’s community programs, precinct programs, shelters and child advocacy centers. All of these presentations have occurred virtually due to the on-going pandemic.

Other Legal Related Services: Examples

Safe Horizon DVLP has continued to receive referrals from the family courts throughout New York City for the past year to assist the courts in providing services to litigants throughout New York City. Safe Horizon DVLP has drafted a large number of family offense petitions throughout New York City in the last year. These petitions include: orders of protection, writs of habeas corpus and any emergency motion a litigant requests. Safe Horizon DVLP continues to provide this assistance to the courts as the court clerks capacity has greatly diminished over the past year.

Safe Horizon DVLP continues to offer trainings involving “Know Your Rights” and “Family Law 101” Trainings to underserved communities in Queens. DVLP also offers these clinics to Safe Horizon’s community, court and shelter programs throughout New York City. During these trainings DVLP is able to offer information and insight into family court proceedings. DVLP provides their contact information to participants for any follow-up after these clinics and for distribution to individuals who may need to contact DVLP for advice, counsel or representation in the future.

Safe Horizon ILP has been actively engaged in policy advocacy and strategic litigation projects. On the policy advocacy side, ILP submitted numerous comments in response to Notices of Public Rulemaking (NPRM). For one significant NPRM, ILP engaged the services of a pro bono law firm to assist in the research to be used as a background for our comment. The comment was submitted on behalf of Safe Horizon and also used as a template for other immigration advocates.
**Significant Collaborations**

Safe Horizon ILP in one of our responses to an NPRM, collaborated with I-ARC and the law firm, DLA Piper to help draft the comment in response to the NPRM. For the FOIA litigation, ILP collaborated with Gibson Dunn, who is representing us and ASISTA on a pro bono basis. ILP was also part of a larger coalition comprised of about 70 local legal service providers and community-based organizations advocating to get ICE out of courts.

Safe Horizon DVLP has collaborated with many community-based organizations specifically in Queens County to ensure that survivors needs beyond just legal needs were being met during this pandemic. Additionally, Safe Horizon has collaborated with all of the New York City Courts to ensure that every survivor who wants access to justice is afforded that opportunity.

**Trainings**

DVLP/ILP attorneys regularly attend trainings for continuing legal education credit and to increase their knowledge and expertise in the area of family and immigration law, which has constantly and rapidly changing. Most of the trainings attended by ILP attorneys are targeted at experienced attorneys and discuss the latest immigration and policy changes and best practices and strategies in responding to them. Specifically, over the past year, DVLP has conducted trainings about the virtual court process and the status of the courts during the pandemic.

A significant training attended by a few experienced ILP attorneys was the PLI Immigration Law Conference offered virtually in December 2020.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

DVLP/ILP maintains strong relationships with New York City’s law schools and utilizes law students to meet the needs of domestic violence victims. During the summer, four law student interns volunteer full time for ten weeks at DVLP averaging thirty-five hours per week. Due to the pandemic the internship program last summer 2020 was virtual and is expected to be virtual again this year.

At the beginning of the internship program, interns are provided with a DVLP/ILP training manual created by staff. The manual includes office policies, how to operate the Legal Helpline, and detailed information on family law matters. The internship begins with a three-day intensive training provided by different legal service organizations in the city covering relevant areas, including family law, criminal law, immigration law, domestic violence, housing, and other related topics. Also, in order to help interns understand other issues that affect clients’ lives, DVLP provides ongoing training with an emphasis on implicit bias along with a weekly brownbag lunch discussion which addresses other relevant areas. Examples of brownbag lunches include presentations in Government Affairs, issues addressing violence in the LGBT Community, Consumer Debt/Credit, trafficking, the New York District Attorney’s Office Sex Crimes Unit, the Legal Aid Juvenile Rights Division, the Bronx County District Attorney’s office, and a mental health counselor discussed the possible mental health implications subsequent to a domestic violence incident. One of the brownbag lunch discussions is allocated to a session on career development, including what an ideal resume and cover letter would look like.

Each attorney supervises one or two interns and also serves as a mentor. The mentors meet with the interns on a regular basis to review their progress and address any issues that may arise. Attorneys closely monitor interns during the course of the internship and two formal evaluations are conducted at the midpoint and final point of the internship program. The DVLP/ILP attorneys complete an evaluation form on each intern’s performance for the intern’s work to their corresponding law school professor.

As described above, ILP recruited the law firm, DLA Piper, with the help of I-ARC, to assist with the response to an NPRM. ILP recruited the firm, Gibson Dunn, after responding to a request for case examples on another potential litigation project they were working on. In addition, we recruited the firm, Kelly Drye & Warren, by posting on a special listserv, to assist in the filing of an individual case appeal to the Second Circuit.

Sources Of Funding

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<th>Source</th>
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