Overview of Achievements, 2018-2019

Catholic Migration Services (CMS) accomplished its goal of increasing access to justice by expanding services and creating new initiatives 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. CMS helps this population overcome these barriers by providing free legal services to those in need, employing bilingual attorneys and staff, using interpretation services, providing confidential consultations, and holding outreach events in many immigrant neighborhoods throughout Brooklyn and Queens.

Data for the period April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019 show the success that CMS has had in providing legal services to low-income immigrants residing in Brooklyn and Queens. Our accomplishments include:

- Closed 3014 cases and benefitted approximately 6700 through these services;
- Conducted 3106 intakes in the year;
- Helped 133 young immigrants obtain or renew DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), thus preventing their removal and enabling them to work lawfully in the country;
- Helped 124 immigrants become naturalized U.S citizens by providing full representation through the entire naturalization process, and hosted naturalization workshops at which we helped 584 lawful permanent residents apply for U.S. citizenship after thorough screening (we do not have data on the outcomes for workshop clients);
- Helped 205 immigrants adjust their legal status based on family status, thus reuniting families that had been separated;
- Helped 51 immigrants obtain or renew their TPS status, thus allowing them to remain and work lawfully in the country.

Population Served: Low Income Immigrant Population

Area Served: Kings and Queens Counties

Total Funding: $3,553,908

Total IOLA Grant: $75,000

Staffing - Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 33.07
- Lawyers: 14.75
- Paralegals: 10.56
- Other: 7.76
Breakdown of cases by Legal Problem

Total Cases Closed: 3,014 cases
Total People Benefitted: 6,611 people

**Immigration**

In 2015, we helped a young woman, who had entered without inspection as a 15 year old, obtain protection under DACA. In 2017, we advised her regarding how to obtain parole to leave the country and visit her dying grandfather in Mexico. She obtained parole then lawfully re-entered the United States in 2017. This meant that she was now eligible to adjust her immigration status based on her marriage to a U.S. citizen. We submitted an adjustment of status petition in 2017 and she was interviewed in April 2019. She is still waiting for the final decision on the adjustment of status. This case typifies the long-term relationships we develop with our clients, the type of relief we are able to obtain (from undocumented to limited protection to documented status with a path to citizenship), and the lengthy backlog of petitions and cases at USCIS.

**Employment**

In 2018, an immigrant from Peru sought help recovering unpaid wages for domestic services she performed. We contacted the employer but the employer did not respond. We then filed a wage complaint with the New York State Department of Labor, and assisted our client through the investigatory process. In March 2019, our client received a check from NYS DOL for her owed wages of $10,640. This case is typical of our employment law clients, the type of work for which they were not paid, and the relief we can obtain without filing suit in state court.
Number of People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,107 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community legal Education</td>
<td>4,920 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
<td>2,187 people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Overview of Legal Related Services

- **Naturalization workshops.** CMS hosts naturalization workshops and participates in workshops hosted by other organizations. These workshops provide free naturalization legal services to lawful permanent residents. The goal is to provide efficient legal services and maximize the number of immigrants who become naturalized citizens. In this FY, we helped 584 lawful permanent residents complete applications for citizenship and, when appropriate, fee waivers, at naturalization workshops.

- **Community education.** CMS provides bilingual know-your-rights education at stand-alone events, 10 community meetings in Queens that CMS hosts annually, and at events hosted by other community organizations. We also held three community meetings in Bushwick, Brooklyn during the first quarter of the year covered by this GAR. The goals of these events are to educate low-income immigrants, tenants, and workers about their rights and to inform them of our services to help them enforce their rights. The community meetings have additional goals, e.g. provide a venue for residents to get to know each other, become active in their community, develop leadership skills, and work together for social justice.

- **Tenant outreach.** We identify buildings with apparent systemic issues such as rent overcharges, landlord harassment, etc. and canvass tenants in these buildings. Staff from our housing program knocked on doors and spoke directly with tenants about organizing to protect their rights. The goal is to inform tenants of their rights and determine the tenants’ interests in working together as a unit to enforce their rights.

- **Organize tenants in buildings.** If tenants are interested, we hold meetings and know-your-rights presentations for tenants in particular buildings. The goal is to inform tenants of their rights, provide representation if requested, and develop leaders among the tenants.
Other Legal Related Services Examples

- **Community education. Example of Stand Alone Know Your Rights Event.** On April 12, 2018, we hosted a meeting on the recently enacted Right to Counsel law in New York at a parish facility in Elmhurst, Queens at which 150 community members attended. We were one of the lead organizations in the Right to Counsel coalition and we used this town hall to talk about the RTC coalition, how tenants won this right, how the law works, and how the law can be used to build tenant power. Tenants and community leaders were invited to the Town Hall as well other organizations, including the Fortune Society, Legal Aid, Queens Legal Services, Housing Court Answers, NYC Commission of Human Rights, and NYLAG. Tenants were provided the opportunity to express their ideas and share them with the group. In an effort to disseminate information further, we invited attendees to sign commitment cards to get involved and spread the word on RTC.

- **Community education. Example of community meeting:** On June 27, 2018, we held a regularly scheduled monthly community meeting in Woodside, Queens, at which over 68 local community members learned about Major Capital Improvements (“MCIs”). MCIs permit landlords to increase rent in excess of the increases allowed by the Rent Increase Guidelines Board, in order to pay for major capital improvements. Many landlords have abused the MCI system to raise rent unlawfully for cosmetic changes, harass current tenants, constructively evict current tenants who cannot afford the inflated rent increases, and remove units from the protection of the rent stabilization laws. We hosted this event with Woodside on the Move and invited State and City elected officials to hear tenants’ firsthand experience with landlords’ abuses of the MCI system. At the end, tenants asked the elected officials to commit to form a committee of tenants, organizers, and elected officials to work on language to amend the current MCI law.

- **Organizing Tenants. Example of building meeting.** On November 14, 2018, we held a meeting for tenants of a building located in Jackson Heights at which 20 tenants attended. We had already canvassed tenants and held a building meeting to discuss the problems that many of the tenants had. At this meeting, we discussed possible collective action, specifically filing an administrative complaint for the tenants jointly and obtaining a possible rent reduction order to address the ongoing vermin issue and other needed repairs.
Impact Cases

Bernandez et al v. Alternate Staffing

Bernandez et al v. Alternate Staffing – Together with private co-counsel, we represent current and former employees of Alternate Staffing, a home healthcare agency. The workers are mostly immigrants from Honduras who allege several NYS labor law violations, including significant overtime violations. There are approximately 200 possible beneficiaries. During the year, the case was stayed pending a decision on the employer’s obligation to pay workers for 24 hours when they are scheduled for 24-hour shifts. That matter was recently decided and the case can now proceed.

Significant Collaborations

CMS has collaborated with many organizations to help low-income Lawful Permanent Residents apply for citizenship in a very efficient workshop setting. In the 12 months covered by this report, 584 LPRs submitted citizenship applications as a direct result of our collaborations. The following are some of our significant Collaborations:

- Through the New Americans Campaign (NAC), we have collaborated with NALEO, Make the Road New York, Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights, Gay Men’s Health Crisis, River Fund Inc., Queens Public Library, YMCA Flushing, and CUNY Citizenship Now!. This collaboration, with joint publicity, shared volunteers, increased language skills, and broader geographic scope, enables us to reach more LPRs and provide more naturalization services at workshops than if each of the organizations had acted individually.

- Together with New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, CMS collaborates with the private law firms of Cleary Gottlieb; Fried Frank; Simpson Thacher; and Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer on naturalization application assistance. Attorneys for AIG and Goldman Sachs also provided pro bono naturalization application assistance. We trained volunteer attorneys from these firms to provide naturalization legal services. With their assistance, we were able to host workshops and provide naturalization services free of charge to low-income LPRs at a time convenient for them.

- CMS collaborates with LaGuardia Community College (LaGCC) to provide integrated citizenship services to LPRs. LaGCC provides citizenship instruction and CMS provides naturalization legal services.

- We are collaborating with Catholic Charities Brooklyn & Queens (“CCBQ”) to reach immigrant families at risk of separation due to immigration enforcement. This collaboration provides important information (including legal advice) to families that may need to plan for the possibility of such separation, as well as provide case management and social services to families who have experienced a separation.

- CMS collaborates with New Immigrant Community Empowerment and Urban Justice Center on a monthly workers’ rights legal clinic for members of NICE.

- During the FY, CMS collaborated with St. John’s Law School at the Bread and Life Immigration Clinic. Located in Bedford-Stuyvesant, this clinic brought direct legal services to low-income and indigent immigrants. Some are referred from a local home-
Other Services...

Technology and Other Innovations

CMS implemented a new phone system this past year. Perhaps the most significant improvement is that it enables calls to be forwarded to staff members’ cell phones without revealing staff personal cell phone numbers. Although CMS had a prior system that enabled call forwarding to staff cell phones, it was frequently not used because staff’s personal cell numbers would be revealed to the caller when they returned the client’s call on the cell phones. This new system avoids the problem and thus encourages quick return of clients’ calls.

CMS implemented a new software program to track data on tenant organizing. This system is the same one used by other legal services organizations that belong to Stabilizing NYC and should encourage more uniform data gathering and sharing among the collaborators.

Trainings

CMS provides ongoing internal training to staff members; examples follow:

- All managing attorneys provide ongoing training to program staff regarding recent developments. The immigration program holds biweekly meetings with training included.

- Our Immigration program manager provided training on asylum for new attorneys and other legal staff in the Immigration Program.

- Our Naturalization Supervising Attorney provided Naturalization training to our Mercy Volunteer and Jesuit Volunteer Corps members, who provide a lot of our routine naturalization work under supervision. He also provided refresher training on naturalization for staff.

- A Supervising Attorney provided training on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status for new attorneys and paralegal.

- An outside trainer provided training in-house on Public Benefits for immigrants.

- The Director of Legal Services provided training on strategies for investigating employers and their assets, so that employers can be held accountable for labor law violations.

- CMS housing organizers have been trained on a new database that will improve data collection on our organizing efforts.

CMS staff have participated in external training provided by our various collaborators. Examples include:

- Immigration program attorneys attended a webinar training on “Recent Developments in U Nonimmigrant Status and Adjustment” put on by Catholic Legal Immigration Network.

- Immigration staff members attended a training by Catholic Charities on Helping parents at risk of detention and deportation create a plan for their families, including standby guardianship.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Pro Bono Attorneys- Our immigration program’s naturalization unit regularly uses the services of pro bono attorneys. During the year covered by GAR, one pro bono retired attorney volunteered about 60 hours a month during eight months of the year. This is his fourth year of pro bono service with us. His services ranged from intake to assessment of client’s eligibility to naturalize.

Four major law firms, Cleary Gottlieb, Fried Frank, Simpson Thacher, and Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholar regularly provided pro bono attorneys to assist at naturalization workshops. Attorneys from AIG and Goldman Sachs also assist regularly.

Three law firms are co-counseling with our workers’ rights program on three separate employment law cases in federal court. These attorneys have contributed a significant number of hours and provided expertise on particular employment and labor issues. Also they are carrying significant costs incurred in the federal cases. We could not have provided representation to these workers seeking recovery of unpaid wages and other relief, if these attorneys had not agreed to co-counsel with us.

Law students – Law students provided services under the supervision of our immigration attorneys at the Bread and Life Clinic, discussed above. Law students served as summer interns in the immigration program and provided a variety of services to immigrant clients.

Volunteers – Individuals have provided volunteer services to make our monthly community meetings successful. They volunteer their time to create the agenda, invite speakers, etc. A core of about 25 volunteers provides these services.

Pro Bono Statistics

Attorneys: 149 Volunteers 1290 Hours
Law Students: 12 Volunteers 450 Hours
Other Volunteers: 25 Volunteers 400 Hours

Sources Of Funding

Iola Grant: $75,000
Foundations: $707,070
State Funding: $264,000
Fundraising: $103,500
Other: $2,404,338
Total: $3,553,908