

# **THE DOOR- A CENTER FOR ALTERNATIVES**

2022-2023

# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Each year, The Door empowers up to 11,000 New York City (NYC) youth to reach their full potential through an array of comprehensive services, including health and mental health care, career and education, legal services, crisis services, housing supports, arts, sports and recreational activities, and daily meals. The Door’s legal services are provided by The Legal Services Center (LSC), established in 1992. The LSC ensures that low-income youth are provided with high-quality civil legal representation in matters including access to higher education and vocational services, humanitarian immigration applications, public benefits, and the right to safe and supportive foster care placements.

In the last year (4/1/22–3/31/23), we provided low-income NYC youth (ages 12-24) with critical support and resources to address civil legal needs. Specifically, we handled 2,452 matters and closed 2,319 cases, benefiting 2,516 people. We also provided pro se assistance to 36 youth and we made 2,842 referrals to other services. We educated 2,062 community members through trainings, workshops, and other forms of community education. We partnered with 307 pro bono attorneys and 13 law students, helping us expand our capacity to provide civil legal representation to immigrant youth. Overall, we are proud to have significantly exceeded most of our goals; over our two-year grant term we closed 4,535 cases, benefiting 4,859 people, we educated 3,994 people, and made 5,786 referrals.

Indeed, in the last year, the LSC’s priority was to provide free civil legal services and education to the increasing number of immigrant youth in NYC, including those who have been recently bussed from the southern border. In 2022, we were able to serve 150 of these migrant youth, providing them with legal representation, if appropriate, in addition to access to crisis supports and referrals to community partners. However, the LSC, on average, turns away 75 migrant youth per week due to lack of capacity. We will continue to refer these youth to community partners and to our suite of other holistic services to best meet their needs.



## Population Served: Low Income Children and Youth

**Total Funding: \$5,008,373**

**Total IOLA Grant: \$137,500**

### Staffing Full Time Equivalents:

- Total Staff: 42
- Paralegals: 13
- Lawyers: 21
- Other: 8

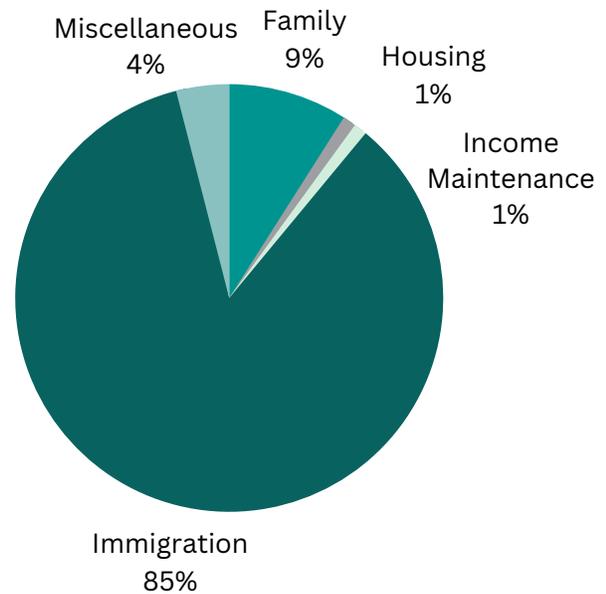
# DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

We are pleased to share two representative case studies that highlight the critical and important work that IOLA has supported in the past year.

This year, we worked with a young woman from Burkina Faso. Her family attempted to arrange her marriage to a much older man. Besides the marriage to a man she did not know, she knew her family would also arrange for her to undergo female genital mutilation, an illegal practice that is still prevalent in Burkina Faso. Her mother, fearing for her daughter’s safety, helped her escape to the United States. Eventually, she was referred to the Door for legal assistance. Our office assessed she was eligible for both asylum and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). We pursued both forms of relief. In early 2023, our client’s SIJS case was approved and she is now a lawful permanent resident of the United States. She is an active participant in our French speaking support group.

Our office has also been working with a young man from Haiti. When he connected with our LSC, he was undocumented, and our attorneys were able to successfully represent him on a SIJS case and his adjustment of status. He is now a lawful permanent resident of the United States. During the pendency of his immigration case, our team flagged some potential issues he had with his previous tax returns from 2018 and 2019. He was referred to our civil attorney for a consultation. Based on our office’s familiarity with the interaction between immigration status and tax law, we discovered some errors an outside preparer had made. Our office was able to amend his tax returns and assist him in receiving over \$4,000 in tax refunds.

**2,516 people benefitted from 2,319 legal cases closed**



**Cases by Legal Problem Area**

# OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

The Door continued to offer a range of additional legal services in the past year in order to provide NYC youth with holistic and comprehensive support. We offered training workshops, referrals to other legal providers, and connections to social service supports, including mental health support groups. We also provided community legal education and trained applicable providers and vested stakeholders on legal issues impacting NYC youth, including social service staff and other community members. Our usual targeted clinics for youth, the Emancipation, Street Law, and Runaway and Homeless Youth clinics, were offered in-person this year for the first time since the start of the pandemic. While we provided 81 youth with pro se assistance over the entire grant term, we are looking forward to continuing to engage young people in-person in the years to come, which we believe will lead to reaching additional youth.

We also continued to refer youth to our on-site suite of comprehensive services at The Door, to address any barriers they may be facing while we pursue their legal cases. The Door’s LSC is unique as it is embedded within a larger youth development agency. This structure enables our staff to eliminate the silos in delivering coordinated, supportive services, and allows us to provide assistance to young people’s legal and other multi-faceted needs. As highlighted above, each time a young person completes an intake assessment with the LSC, they work with an attorney and a social worker in the process. Thus, the social worker can easily conduct warm hand-offs to The Door’s suite of wraparound social services. This interdisciplinary structure and accessibility of our services provides an innovative and cost-effective way to serve youth impacted by social and economic instabilities.

**2,098 People Benefitted from Services Other Than Direct Legal Services**

## Number of People Benefitted from Other Services



## OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

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In the past year, LSC staff continued to hear feedback from our clients that with court closures, changing policies around immigration in the United States and in NYC, and the inability of New York State's legal system to process the influx of immigrants quickly and clearly, it is difficult to feel confident at all times about the status of their legal process. As described above, there have been many systemic challenges to getting accurate information to young people going through the legal process, specifically migrant young people. To help combat this confusion, we started sending out frequent messages to all LSC clients to educate them of their specific legal processes and provide them with consistent updates via text message or email correspondence. We also send out separate flyers to those on our waitlist. This helps tackle an ongoing obstacle, which is keeping young people engaged in their typically complex and arduous legal processes.

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## OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

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The Door continues to connect our board and staff with several development and training opportunities to promote continued education and ensure we are all best supporting our community of NYC youth. At The Door's quarterly Board meetings, Board members share ideas about strategy and management from their expertise as professional leaders. Board members are also encouraged to attend professional development events held by our partners, such as J.P. Morgan and Trinity Church Wall Street, to further their own knowledge and gain new connections.

Additionally, we continue to connect our staff with several training opportunities to promote their continued education and professional development. As in prior years, all staff receive a New Employee Orientation, attend Trauma-Informed Crisis Intervention training, a De-Escalation training, and we offer monthly meetings for all managers. Additionally, based on staff interest, the Door also launched an Overdose Prevention Trainings for all employees.

Within the LSC, we offered several trainings to new attorneys, which included overviews of our civil legal services, immigration relief pathways, best practices for representing clients in court, and best practices for maintaining clients' case information. All new attorneys also participate in a mock trial advocacy training covering topics like appearing in court and representing clients in adversarial trials, which we conduct yearly.

# IMPACT CASES

The Door is pleased to share three brief narratives of impact cases and other group entity representation efforts in which we are involved.

The Door is an institutional plaintiff in *Immigrant Defenders Law Center, et al. v DHS*, a case brought in the Central District of California to ensure that unaccompanied immigrant children, previously subject to the “remain in Mexico” or “Migrant Protection Protocols” (“MPP”), are given the full protections they are due under the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution, and the Flores Settlement Agreement. The matter is still under ongoing litigation. If successful, this action could provide hundreds of unaccompanied children with a path to having their immigration cases heard and decided on the merits, rather than being bound by any prior MPP procedures or outcomes.

The Door is also a Plaintiff in a Complaint filed in August 2021, by Millbank, following USCIS’ failure to comply with an April 2021 FOIA request for data that is necessary to examine trends in the treatment of immigrant children under the SIJS statute, a matter of urgent importance affecting the well-being of tens of thousands of vulnerable immigrant youth. We are still in settlement negotiations regarding this matter.

**616**  
**Beneficiaries**  
**were**  
**affected by**  
**7 Impact**  
**Cases**

## All Impact Cases:

- *Hlass, Tulane School of Law, The Door v. USCIS (21-2200-TSC) (on-going)*
- *Immigrant Defenders Law Center, et al v. DHS, Central District of California (on-going)*
- *Ms. L v. USCIS/MMM. v. Sessions, Southern District of California (on going)*
- *Lucas R. v. Azar, Central District of California, (on-going)*
- *Alvarado Alfaro v. AG, (3d Circuit) (on-going)*
- *Galvez v. Renaud (9th Circuit) (on-going)*
- *AO v. Garland (remanded)*

# PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

We are grateful to partner with several private attorneys and volunteers as we deliver our wide array of legal services. In the last year, we worked with 307 pro bono attorneys to help ensure effective service provisions for NYC youth in need of civil legal services. The LSC's Pro Bono Managing Attorney continues to grow our reach in the provision of legal services and in training pro bono firms on the nuances of working with specific groups of immigrant youth. She continues to connect with firms' pro bono counsel and circulates a monthly newsletter to prospective and partnering firms with success stories from partners, practice tips, and summaries of cases available for pro bono placement. As a result, we continue to work in close partnership with 30 pro bono firms.

Additionally, we maintained partnerships with 2 firms and one retired attorney to continue offering legal clinics to support youth in exploring their legal options and needs. As highlighted above, this includes our Emancipation Clinic in partnership with Cahill Gordon & Reindel LLP; our Runaway and Homeless Youth clinic with Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP; and our Street Law Clinic, facilitated by David Werber, our long-time volunteer partner and retired Legal Aid attorney.

We also relied on the support of 13 law student interns (both summer and term-time), 1 undergraduate intern, 2 social work interns, and 2 Norton Rose Fulbright fellows to assist us in supporting and representing immigrant youth. Our Norton Rose Fulbright fellows work with Door clients full-time and handle full caseloads. The contributions of private attorneys and volunteers have been crucial to maintaining the high volume of cases we handle, and further supporting our clients in accessing the highest quality of care.



**307 Attorneys volunteered 10,460 hours**

**13 Law Students volunteered 3,761 hours**

**4 Other Volunteers volunteered 1,560 hours**

Each  icon is equal to 32.4 volunteers.

Attorneys are represented through the Green Figure.

Law Students and Other Volunteers are represented through the Grey Figure.

# SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

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In the last year, we launched new collaborations with other organizations committed to high-quality civil legal services to increase our impact and efficacy. We also strengthened our existing collaborations with legal services providers, private bar organizations, and community-based organizations. For example, in the last year, we partnered with Covenant House, a non-profit that provides temporary shelter to homeless youth and young adults. Covenant House has been fundamental in offering shelter to asylum seeking immigrant youth in NYC. Through our partnership, we have accepted referrals for youth in need of civil and immigration representation. We have also mentored their staff attorney on immigration matters, as he builds his caseload. The Door also has a new linkage agreement with Sanctuary for Families, to accept and send referrals, when needed, for survivors of gender-based violence for immigration representation or family law representation.

Additionally, we continued to partner with peer legal providers to respond to changes in immigration policy and provide additional support to immigrant youth through targeted referrals and advocacy. We work closely with our partners in the ICARE Coalition to coordinate the provision of legal services for unaccompanied minors, which includes direct representation, support groups, counseling, and referrals to social services. This year, we welcomed a new Executive Director, Sierra Kraft, who will represent the ICARE Coalition and advocate on behalf of the Coalition to New York Immigrant Court judges.

We also continued collaborations with the Vera Institute of Justice and numerous legal services providers to ensure that we are providing the best care for youth in ORR custody. We are meeting with these providers quarterly to discuss and think about how to best advocate for detained young people as a community. Additionally, through the network of providers partnering with the Vera Institute of Justice, LSC staff from The Door plan to join a committee that is dedicated to passing amendments to the Family Court Act, in order to permit children in ORR custody in New York State to seek Special Immigrant Juvenile status.

This past year, we also continued to work regularly with many organizations to provide educational referrals, foster care supports, health insurance and benefits enrollment, ESOL, and shelter services, including: New Immigrant Community Empowerment, Make the Road NY, the Hispanic Federation, Ecuadorian-American Cultural Center, La Casa de Don Pedro, NYC Office of Adult Continuing Education, York College Learning Center, Pathways to Graduation, NYC DOE Family Welcome Center, Asociacion de Tepeyac, Catholic Charities of NY, NYC Human Resources Administration, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, NYC Health & Hospitals, Public Health Solutions, CAMINANDO, Terra Firma Clinic at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore,

NYC Administration for Children’s Services, Manhattan Comprehensive Night and Day High School, The High School for Health Professions and Human Services, City-As-School High School, the Covenant House New York, Ali Forney, and Manhattan Business Academy. Finally, the LSC’s five embedded licensed social workers have maintained partnerships with over 20 mental health providers for youth who may be suffering from extreme trauma and are in need of mental health supports.

## SOURCES OF FUNDING

The Door received **\$5,008,373** in total funding this past year

<b>Federal Funding</b>	<b>\$2,698,255</b>
<b>City and County Funding</b>	<b>\$1,356,918</b>
<b>Foundations</b>	<b>\$311,375</b>
<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>\$291,092</b>
<b>State Funding</b>	<b>\$198,233</b>
<b>IOLA Grant</b>	<b>\$137,500</b>
<b>Other Funding</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>

