

**Family Justice Project
Immigration Advocacy Program
Year-End Report 2022**



Executive Summary

In 2022, Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada's Immigration Advocacy Program provided direct legal representation to immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and others facing humanitarian crisis. Our efforts to assist immigrants was both challenging and filled with uncertainty due to the changes to legal policies and the litigation surrounding those policies. Moreover, the increasing immigration backlogs, both with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS") and the Immigration Court created additional barriers for our team and clients. Despite the challenges, our team worked relentlessly to assist our clients and the community with their immigration needs.

Navigating the immigration process is complex and intimidating. For those who do not have the funds to hire an attorney, it is daunting and frightening. Without legal aid for immigration assistance, many in need turn to notaries who take what little money they have and provide little or no service. Some do even worse, leading to a deportation where relief was possible but for the notarios' actions. It is our honor to provide trusted immigration advice to those in need in our community through free legal classes and Ask-A-Lawyer sessions. Each year we have been able to serve more individuals in need due to support in our community and hard work. We hope to serve more in 2023.

Representation

Below are charts showing the numbers of individuals represented in 2022.

Immigration 2022	
Consultations 2022	2,095
New cases accepted 2022	523
Total cases worked on by attorneys (includes new and previous years cases)	1,396
Total annual clients served	3,542
Total derivatives served	467
TOTAL CLIENTS SERVED	4,009

Pro Bono Immigration 2022	
New cases placed 2022	35
Total cases worked on by attorneys (includes new and previous years cases)	100
Number of clients served in Ask-A-Lawyer	180
Total annual clients served	280

Case Type Breakdown

Case Type	Number of Clients for 2022
Adjustment of Status	150
Afghan Asylum	32
Asylum	53
DACA	50
DACA Renewal	85
Employment Authorization	55
FL SIJ Custody	12
FL SIJ Divorce	1
FL SIJ Guardianship	17
General Immigration Advice	2176
LPR	97
Naturalization	164
PB afghan Asylum	31
PB Asylum	39
PB Immigration	30
Removal of Condition	22
Special Immigrant Juvenile Status	86
T Visa	7
U Visa	410
VAWA	125
Total for the year	3642

Accomplishments

Direct Services to Immigrant Victims

We continued to see a demand for our services from immigrant victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Most of our applicants were seeking assistance with U Visas and VAWAs. These cases are priority cases for us, and we balanced our other projects to ensure that we were able to assist these individuals.

Despite our diligence in filing these cases, our clients were adversely impacted by the long processing times at USCIS. In some instances, it took more than a year to obtain an Employment Authorization Document (“EAD”). This caused problems with our clients’ employers and Department of Motor Vehicles. In addition to the stress of escaping an abusive situation, our clients now had the added stress of trying to maintain their jobs while waiting for USCIS to produce their documents. Similarly, DMV initially refused to renew their driver’s licenses because they couldn’t produce an unexpired EAD.

We intervened and spoke with employers to fight to keep our clients in their jobs. We felt that this was a necessary addition to the services that we offered.

Ask-A-Lawyer Consultations

The community utilized our free Ask-A-Lawyer consultations to obtain legal information and advice particular to an individual's situation. We saw an increase in the number of individuals requesting form review. This was one way we were able to assist those individuals whose cases we didn't have the capacity to represent. Most of these individuals were asylum seekers.

Afghanistan Project

We spent the first half of the year working with our Afghan clients preparing asylum applications. Our clients could be divided into two categories: (1) those who worked with the U.S. government or had family members who worked for the U.S. government or (2) those who opposed the Taliban government. Regardless of which category our clients fell into, they were at grave risk of being harmed by the Taliban. It was imperative that we obtain asylum for these individuals.

In addition to preparing asylum applications, we also assisted them with filing for Temporary Protected Status ("TPS").

Due to the large number of Afghan clients seeking assistance, we worked with our pro bono department to find representation for those that we couldn't assist in-house. Our attorneys provided support to those pro bono attorneys that included monthly meetings to discuss their cases, review of applications, and assisting with preparing clients for interviews.

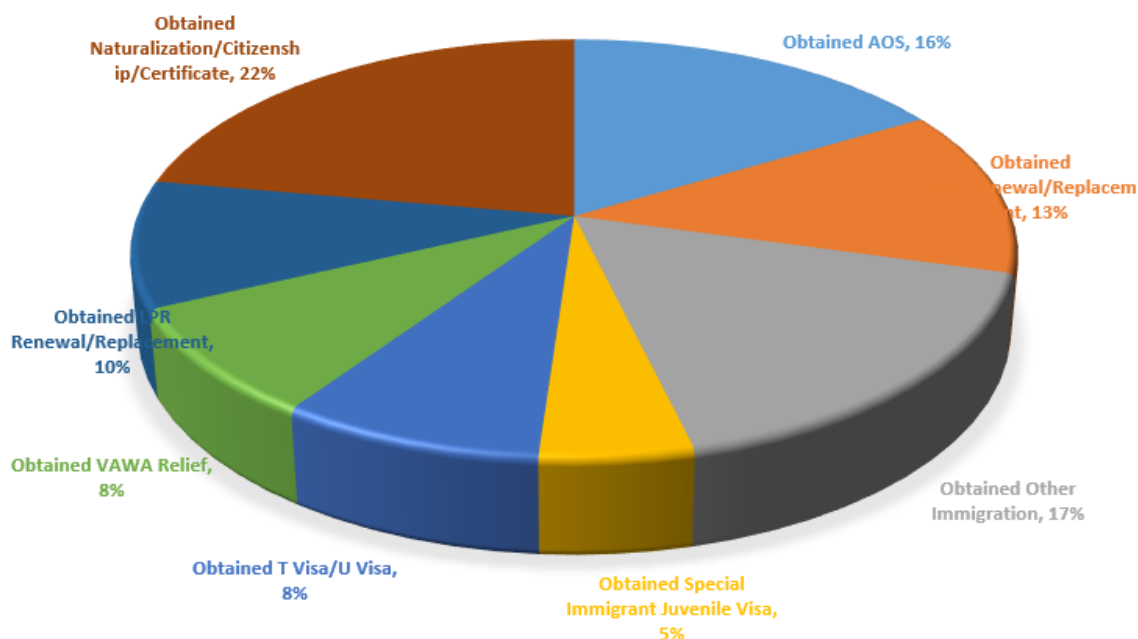
We then spent the next four (4) months traveling with our clients to California to attend their asylum interviews.

We have had four (4) cases approved and are optimistic that we will see more approvals soon.

Outcomes for Our Clients

In 2022, we provided counsel and advice/brief services to 2,095 clients. We had only two unsuccessful petitions. Excluding DACA cases, which are fairly straight forward, below are outcomes in other immigration matters.

IMMIGRATION OUTCOMES 2022



Success Stories

**Omar*

Omar was born in Afghanistan in 2002, in the shadow of the ongoing war between the Taliban and US-led forces. His earliest memories of Afghanistan are of explosions in the streets of his hometown. As he grew older, he also became acutely aware of the threat of the Taliban to any Afghans who worked with the US and its western allies. He saw firsthand the aftermath of the Taliban's ruthless retaliation against Afghans who were even suspected of being involved with the US. When the Taliban could not find the Afghan they suspected of being involved with the US, they would torture and even kill the suspect's family members instead.

As Afghanistan began to fall under the control of the Taliban, his brother was publically outed as an interpreter for the US military in a picture that was posted to social media. As the "baby" of the family, he had not been told details about his older brother's work for safety reasons. Now, even the general Afghan public was aware of his older brother's work as the picture was broadcast nationwide on Afghan news programs. He feared that if he remained in Afghanistan, he would be tortured or killed by Taliban seeking retribution against his older brother. He was able to evacuate to the US with the help of his older brother.

We filed for asylum and his application was granted.

**Veronica*

Veronica was a prior client of ours. She was a derivative on her mother's U Visa petition. Unfortunately, Veronica and her mother never healed from the domestic violence that her mother endured. Their relationship was strained because of that abuse. Veronica ended up running away and her mom didn't know where she was. Her U Visa status expired while she was estranged from her mom.

Veronica was reunited with her mother five (5) years later. Veronica was a victim of human trafficking. She had been living on the street and forced into sex trafficking at the age of sixteen. Her trafficker had threatened her family if she tried to escape. Her trafficker physically and sexually abused her. He made her believe that no one cared about her and that he was the only person who could help her.

The breaking point for Veronica was when she became pregnant with her trafficker's child and he forced her to have an abortion. She decided that she would rather die than continue living the way that she was living. One day they went to the food court in a mall. Someone noticed how he was controlling her in public and contacted the police. She was afraid to talk to the police, but she knew this was her only way out of this situation.

We filed a T Visa for her and she now has her immigration status again. She was grateful that we accepted her case again and wants to use the opportunity to build a future for herself.

**Names changed to protect client's confidentiality.*