

AFRICAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

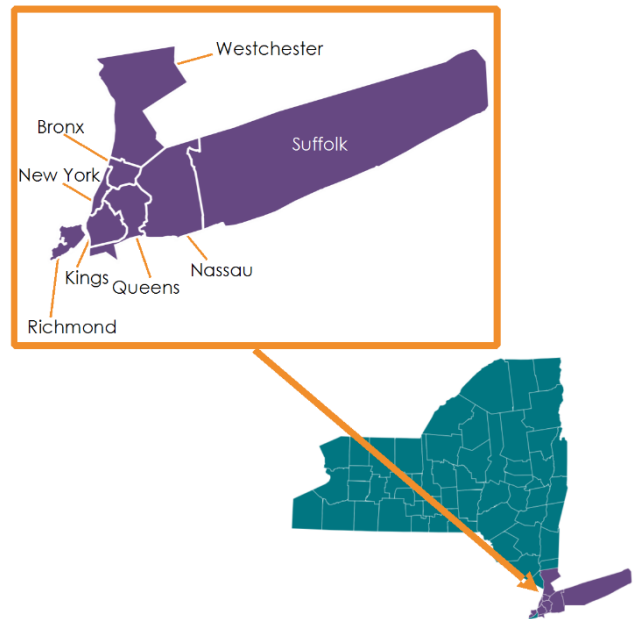
**2023 – 2024
Report**

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Number of people and organizations benefited from our services: African Services Committee (ASC) engaged with over 1,000 people during this fiscal year, providing them a combination of information, legal advice, limited legal services, and full representation on various immigration forms of relief. ASC closed 752 cases, which assisted 789 people. We conducted a total of 1044 intakes during this year. The 275 cases closed with a miscellaneous benefit were cases where we provided HIV+ individuals who do not qualify for an immigration lawful status with a letter certifying these circumstances so they could qualify for housing and other benefits provided by New York City for HIV+ people living under these circumstances.

ASC saw an increase in individuals seeking assistance in removal defense, so we implemented a new Pro-Se service for new immigrants helping them with legal advice and filling out defensive asylum applications, for those who qualified, before the immigration court. We also assisted them with Motions to change venues for their scheduled courts in other States.

The primary target population: African Services Committee provides legal services in the areas of advocacy services, housing, and immigration law. The primary target populations for services at ASC are: (1) members of the African diaspora; (2) immigrants of all backgrounds; (3) people living with HIV or AIDS; (4) people who identify as LGBTQ; (5) people that have experienced mental trauma and are seeking counseling and legal services; (6) men and women who are survivors of gender-based violence because the current level of victim services in the community and (7) existing clients for ASC’s non-legal programs.



Population Served: members of the African diaspora; immigrants of all backgrounds, people living with HIV or AIDS; people who identify as LGBTQ; and existing clients for ASC’s non-legal programs; low-income populations

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:
 Total Staff: 11 Lawyers: 3
 Paralegals: 7 Others: 1

Dollar or other benefits realized by low-income people as a direct result of our efforts: During this fiscal year, ASC secured \$40,425.00 worth of fee waivers from USCIS and \$7,715.00 in direct fee assistance for clients who were either unable to secure a fee waiver or could not afford fees for applications; experts; or specialists.

Increased access to justice or improvements in the administration of justice: Through our ActionNYC program we have continued our partnership with the NYC Mayor's Office for Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) to receive referrals from their legal hotline. ASC has joined the Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance Network (ASLAN), expanding our community capacity to provide immigration legal assistance for newly arrived asylum seekers.

We have also joined several partnerships between different community-based organizations as part of the ASLAN network to participate in the referral networks established by these cooperatives. Further, we have partnership with CLINIC, NYIC and the National Immigration Project where we receive trainings and help with DOJ accreditation, and on-call lawyers to answer complex questions.

Significant improvements in our program's capacity to deliver services (e.g., technology, offices, staff etc.): We continue with the implantation of a hotline for ASC's intakes, they're fully remote and handled by interns, law students and our legal staff. Our hotline is available in 3 different languages: English, Spanish and French. Through the Action NYC program, we continue having access to a Language line that provides interpreters in +200 languages available to screen individuals in their native language.

Three new staff members received DOJ partial accreditation, which allowed them to file immigration applications and accompany clients to their interviews. We have hired a new legal assistant, who is a native Wolof speaker, expanding accessibility to interview and represent the Senegalese community who come to ASC for legal services.

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

As part of the ASLAN network, in addition to providing legal advice, we assisted with pro-se services filling out asylum applications before USCIS and EOIR for applicants who have just arrived in the country and need this service. Additionally, we have processed Pro-Se Motions to change venues for those applicants in removal proceedings who have courts scheduled in other states and who have recently arrived in New York.

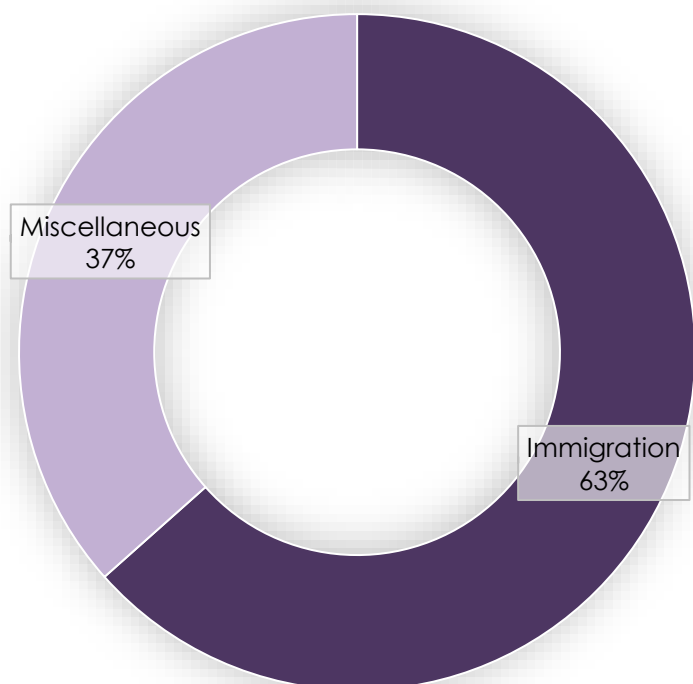
Beyond meeting all the goals laid out for this fiscal year, the legal team also employed the flexibility of the Healthy Horizons program to provide more services to victims of domestic violence.



Since the COVID-19 pandemic, our legal team transitioned to a new screening and intake system for identifying and evaluating potential clients. We created a hotline for people who either have legal questions or are looking for help with their legal matters.

The hotline operates 24/7 and is available in 3 languages, English, Spanish and French. Callers are screened to identify their legal issues and to see if they qualify for representation under our various funded legal services programs.

CASES BY LEGAL PROBLEM AREA:



OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

ASC had reached about 400 participants via Community Legal Education within the first contract year. ASC's goal is to inform the community members of the changes in law that would affect them and their cases, to make sure the community members know and understand their rights and services provided by ASC.

Community Resource Connection Fair: The Ryan White team attended the Community Resource Connection Fair that ASC co-hosted with the Brooklyn Public Library, Walt Whitman branch on February 15, 2024. We provided flyers and answered questions about immigration assistance to 100 newly arrived immigrants.

Welcome NYC Initiative: ASC joined the Welcome NYC Initiative, with the purpose of assisting New York City asylum seekers with workforce development programs, support literacy services, mentoring programs, college awareness, youth leadership, social and educational programs, food services and other programs that empower families and young adults. These workshops were provided in 3 different languages: English, French and Spanish.

Immigrant Navigator Program: On February 21, 2024, our senior attorney, Corrinne Donaldson, gave an informational presentation about the asylum process and what to expect at the Immigrant Navigator Program hosted by ASC's Community Programs team. The program is designed to support recently arrived asylum seekers in navigating life in New York City through a mentor-mentee system. Approximately 50 persons were in attendance.

46

people
benefitted from
**Pro Se
Assistance**

399

people
benefitted from
**Community
Legal
Education**

TECHNOLOGY

ASC has been actively using various technology improvements to be able to switch to remote work, such as: (i) conducting meetings via zoom; (ii) using whatsapp group for emergencies; (iii) utilizing google voice to make phone calls; (v) utilizing google drive and its applications for collaborative group projects.

IOLA TECHNOLOGY GRANT

The Technology Infrastructure has enabled the agency to: update WindowsServer to the most recent version which includes critical security updates, migrate our Accounting software and NYS state reporting AIRS (AIDS Institute Reporting System) to the cloud, install and enterprise-wide firewall, increase Wi-fi bandwidth to improve coverage of 2 office floors.

We would have not been able to implement these improvements without the funding from IOLA. The grant supports the long-term vision of keeping up with the fast-paced changes in IT security requirements, in addition to meeting the hybrid/remote access needs of agency staff to perform their work.

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

Action NYC: Through the Mayor's Office Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) we participate in the networks, bigger discussions about policies, to tailor programming and services to address the emerging needs e.g. TPS for Ukraine and Cameroon, and most recently the Rapid Response to the Migrant Arrivals in New York City.

I-ARC: a collaboration between New York immigration legal providers created in response to the challenges of practicing immigration. Participants include Center for the Interrogation and Advancement of New Americans, the City University of New York, NYU Immigrant Defense Initiative, UJC, Sanctuary for Families, Safe Passage, Lutheran Social Services of NY, Catholic Migration Services, UnLocal, Catholic Charities, City Bar Justice Center, Legal Services NYC, Make the Road, Immigrant Defense Project, KIND, Community Legal Center, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Neighbors Link, Legal Aid Society. ASC participates in the meetings to

collaborate with participant organizations and to develop strategies to be able to effectively represent immigrants with the constant changes in immigration policies and procedures.

Protecting Immigrant Families: The Protecting Immigrant Families (PIF) campaign is made up of hundreds of diverse organizations. The campaign's structure allows for the development of innovative advocacy strategies, distribution of educational resources, and keeps allies informed of all the current and potential policies that impact immigrant families. The coalition has created multiple ways for organizations to participate in this advocacy. PIF partners trained advocates, providers and community members, developed screening tools and educated enrollment workers, held webinars, and engaged community leaders to speak with state health organizations. PIF partners encouraged elected officials to speak up, helped pass county resolutions and engaged state agencies. PIF partners elevated the profile of the threat and leveraged social media, engaged different types of media, and served as a resource and advisory role for media outlets.

Bronx Immigration Partnership: The Bronx Immigration Partnership works to unite and increase the capacity of community-based organizations to provide a coordinated safety net of immigration services for new and newly eligible populations in the Bronx who are the most vulnerable to immigration fraud. Although ASC is not based in the Bronx, around 28% of its clients are Bronx residents, and is therefore accordingly included in this partnership. Member organizations vary in the type of services they provide to immigrant communities in the Bronx: casework; education; health; and legal. Partner members refer prospective and actual clients to one another for services they cannot provide themselves. Finally, members work together to raise funds for the partnership to be able to provide more and better services for immigrants residing in the Bronx.

Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative: The Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative is made up of over eighty non-profit organizations providing or supporting legal services to New York's immigrant communities. This consortium creates a network for these organizations throughout New York State to share resources and best practices. The collaborative also works to challenge anti-immigrant policies. ASC participates in the monthly meetings in order to discuss and develop strategies to be able to effectively represent immigrants with the constant changes in immigration policies and procedures. ASC has joined in many advocacy efforts by the collaborative to challenge policy changes harmful to immigrants. ASC has also participated in collaborative efforts to inform the New York City Council on needs and priorities for funding for immigration legal services.

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

ASC was able to successfully utilize various kinds of volunteer help who contributed a total of **2,105** hours. ASC engaged 1 volunteer Attorney Emeritus Program, 9 undergrad students, 28 law students and 6 volunteers doing pro bono hours.

We continued our efficiency with the help of our Intake Manager who maintained effective recruitment efforts, crafted and recorded intake trainings, perfected training protocols and contributed to the streamlining of the intake and consultation process. We continued to develop our volunteer program and a system to match students' course requirements with the legal department needs by providing them with comprehensive trainings, regular check-ins and communicating via email and phone.

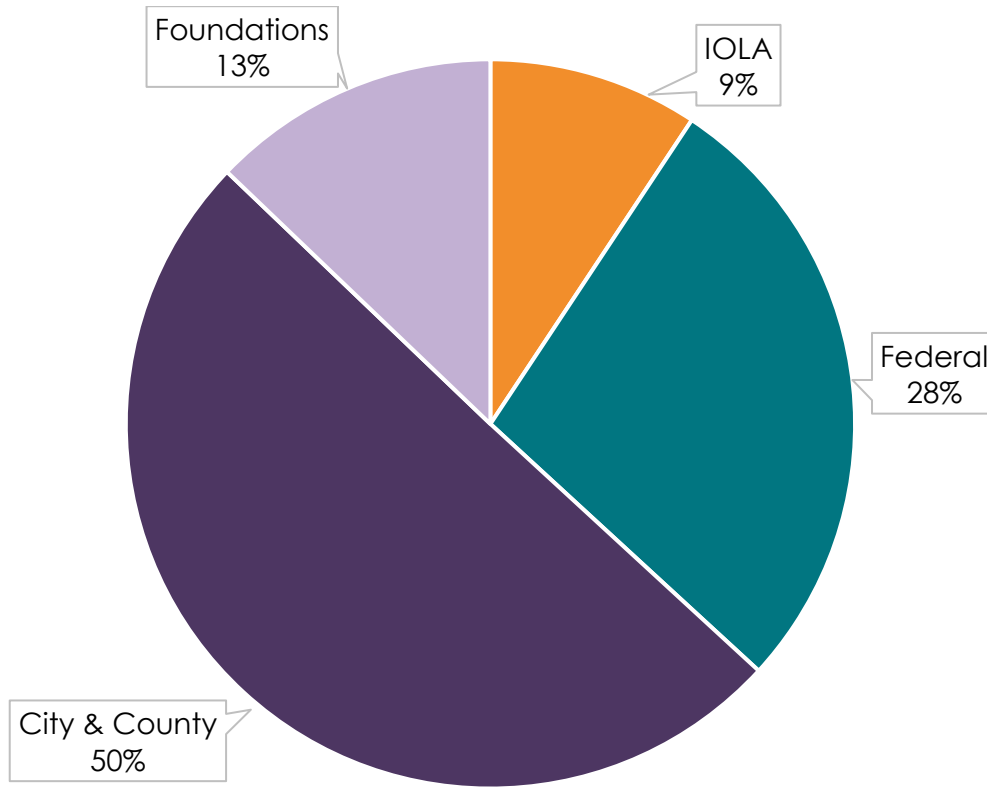
ASC also worked with a large number of students from Columbia Law School who were looking to fulfill their 40 CLS and 50 NY Bar requirements and who helped our team immensely with substantive work during a period of increased volume of work.

All volunteers, legal interns and pro bono attorneys, are required to take a course on confidentiality and proper handling of sensitive information of our clients such as the HIV/AIDS Confidentiality Law Overview training.

1attorney volunteered **50** hours**28**law students volunteered **1,390** hours**15**other volunteers volunteered **665** hours

CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

\$778,225.44



IOLA Funding	\$72,500.00
City & County Funding	\$391,556.52
Federal Funding	\$214,168.92
Foundations	\$100,000.00