



The Door

A Center for

Alternatives

2023 – 2024

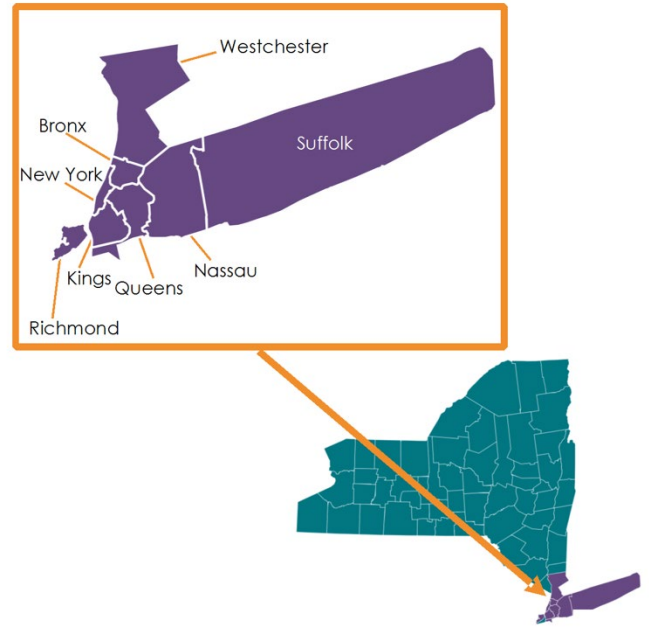
Report

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Each year, The Door empowers up to 9,000 New York City (NYC) youth to reach their full potential through a suite 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 youth with low-income 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 (4/1/23–3/31/24), we provided low-income NYC youth (ages 12-24) with critical support and resources to address civil legal needs. Specifically, we handled 3,116 matters and closed 2,507 cases, benefiting 2,685 people. We also provided pro-se assistance to 197 youth and made 3,089 referrals to other services. We educated 3,557 young people and community members through trainings, workshops, and other forms of community education. We also partnered with 421 pro bono attorneys and 12 law students, helping us expand our capacity to provide civil legal representation to immigrant youth.

In the last year, the LSC’s main priority was to provide high quality and accessible civil legal services to the increasing number of migrant youth arriving to NYC. Indeed, through our partnership with Vera Institute of Justice and the Acacia Network, we were able to serve 2,523 newly arrived youth through our Detained Minors Project (which serves youth in Office of Refugee Resettlement shelters.) As of March 31st, 2024, 1,728 of the 2,523 cases involving newly arrived youth were still open.



Service Area: NYC Metropolitan & Surrounding Area

Population Served: Low-Income Children & Youth

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:
 Total Staff: 51 Lawyers: 28
 Paralegals: 14 Others: 9

Thus, only 759 cases from our Detained Minors Project were closed during the grant term and were included in our closed case total of 2,507. We provided all newly arrived youth who came to the LSC with legal representation, if appropriate, in addition to access to crisis supports and referrals to community partners.

In years past, a majority of newly arrived youth primarily spoke Spanish. However, roughly 50% of all new, prospective clients to the LSC this year were French speaking. Thus, we have leaned heavily on our French speaking paralegal; she has been conducting additional intakes in French, acting as an interpreter, facilitating trainings for Membership and Health Center staff on how to best serve asylee youth, and updating LSC flyers to be printed in a broader array of languages. We have also hired additional multilingual paralegals due to this increased need, who have provided further support for the French speaking youth in immigration detention in ORR shelters.

Separately, in June of 2023, The Door's Bronx Youth Center (BYC) moved into a much larger space, which has allowed our LSC to operate not only out of Lower Manhattan but also out of the Bronx. Notably, the Bronx has the highest poverty rate in all of NYC. Thus, having a new, larger space to conduct programming has allowed The Door to serve more Bronx youth within their own neighborhood, specifically those who have recently arrived to the city. At the BYC, we offer a Civil Intake Clinic, assisting youth with civil legal questions, and a virtual Criminal Law clinic for youth who have questions about their criminal cases. Additionally, we offer an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) class and several Know Your Rights (KYR)'s trainings. With this larger BYC space, The Door has provided essential legal assistance to a new youth population.

In the past year, we have saved taxpayers an estimated \$213,750. This is based on the completion of 114 custody and guardianship court matters. Without our representation, these youth would have been appointed counsel through the 18b panel at the government's expense, costing \$75/hour. As each case takes about 25 hours, we calculate taxpayer savings of $\$75 \times 25 \times 114$, for a total of \$213,750.

Lastly, the LSC's pro bono team continues to expand, as we recently received funding to support a Supervising Attorney and Staff Attorney based out of the BYC (who will be hired in May 2024). These additional staff members will provide technical assistance to our pro bono partners who are taking on cases, as well as launch and facilitate trainings and clinics for these partners. Overall, these two additional staff will critically increase our capacity to represent young people who are Bronx residents.

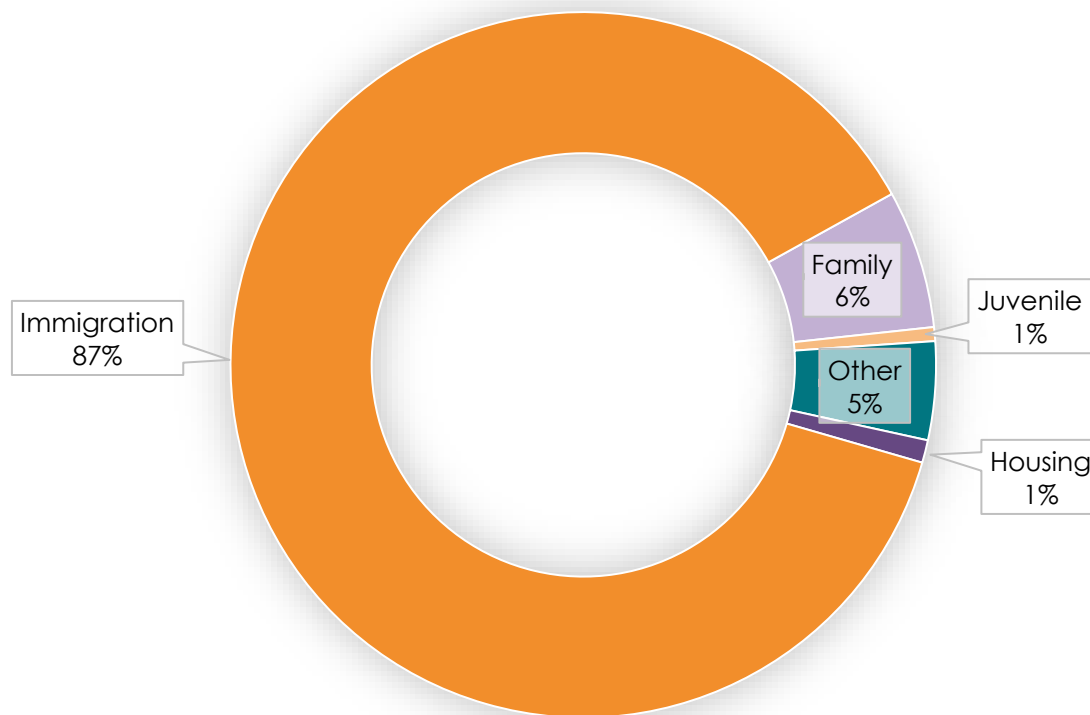
DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES



The Door conducts outreach in various ways to ensure that we reach as many youth with low-income in need of legal services as possible. Firstly, as the demand for services continues to increase, many of our clients learn of our services through word-of-mouth and seek us out as walk-in clients or through our hotline. Also, as many newly arrived youth enter the shelter system, they are referred to The Door for assistance, as we are Manhattan's designated drop-in center for runaway and homeless youth. Furthermore, because the LSC is located within a multiservice organization, we also receive internal referrals from other programs across The Door.

The Door also reaches young people in need through referral partnerships with the NYC Administration for Children's Services, the NYC Department of Education, individual schools, and other legal services providers. Additionally, many judges, social workers, guidance counselors, teachers, and foster care agency staff refer young people to our services. Our staff also conduct outreach presentations at local schools, community centers, and other youth development organizations. At these events and within The Door, our staff share multilingual print materials such as brochures, postcards, and/or flyers. For example, we continued our work with the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) to educate migrant youth around the city about SIJS and provide resources and information to help them connect with legal service providers. Due to the increase in newly arrived youth, both within the LSC and The Door overall, we ordered roughly 1,500 more copies of this flyer to meet the need. These flyers are currently offered in English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Hindi, and simplified Chinese. New to this year, we have also developed written Know Your Rights (KYR) resources specifically for migrant youth who seek advice regarding immigration court, interactions with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.), and their general rights as NYC residents. These resources are comprehensive yet youth-friendly and are delivered to young people who attend our brief service clinics.

CASES BY LEGAL PROBLEM AREA



Once young people are connected to The Door, our Membership department works to understand the areas in which they may require assistance by conducting a needs assessment, including screening for legal needs. Once referred to the LSC, our receptionist determines the type of case and the client's likely needs and assigns an attorney for legal intake. Initial LSC intake screenings are attended by an attorney and social worker, conducted in the client's language, and can take place either in-person or remotely. Attorneys conducting intake provide a thorough assessment to determine the client's legal and social service needs, potential path to legal relief, and next steps. If the client's need falls outside our purview, the attorney gives the client a list of local referrals and, whenever possible, connects the client to a provider directly. If we can accept the client for representation, the assigned attorney creates an electronic case record in Salesforce to begin tracking case progress. The intake form, which can be completed virtually via QR code or in person, is automatically linked with Salesforce. When a new form is submitted, our system sends out an email to the young person with a list of other organizations in the community that can also provide supportive services. In the past year, the LSC completed 3,116 intakes with NYC youth; 2,059 were conducted in person and 1,057 were conducted online. While we conducted phone intakes during the height of the pandemic, this year, we found it best to conduct intakes virtually or in person, following up with phone calls only when necessary.

CASE EXAMPLES

Example 1: The LSC has been representing Daly on a Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) case since 2021. Daly is a young woman who was abandoned by both of her parents in Jamaica and raised by her grandparents. Daly made the difficult decision to leave Jamaica and to travel to the U.S. for a better future at only 17 years old. Her petition for SIJS was approved in April 2023 and granted her Deferred Action and Employment Authorization. She was subjected to the visa backlog and her adjustment petition is not yet able to be adjudicated by USCIS. Despite the frustrating long wait times for visa eligibility to file an adjustment petition, Daly stayed engaged with The Door, participating in Career and Education programming. In early 2023, Daly was having a dispute with the person who had rented her a room in an apartment, leading to a Housing Court case that put her at risk of eviction. We decided to represent Daly in the case. We discovered that Daly had been overcharged for months, and thus entitled to a significant rent credit. With our help, Daly was able to get the court case dismissed and recover the money she was owed. Daly is now waiting for her visa number to become current before she will be eligible to adjust status to permanent residency.

Example 2: The LSC is also pleased to share a recent win at the asylum office. We began representing a French-speaking 15-year-old girl from the Ivory Coast in 2021, Fatima. She had been forced to undergo female genital mutilation at only 8 years old. At age 13, her father arranged a marriage between her and a much older man. Fearing for her life were she to refuse her father's demands, her mother helped her to flee to NYC where she was referred to The Door's LSC. In September 2021, we filed her asylum application with the asylum office, and she was scheduled for an asylum interview in November 2021. The asylum office failed to decide for over 2 years. We prepared to pursue mandamus action with the asylum office, however, in August 2023, the asylum office instead scheduled her for a re-interview. We represented her at the re-interview and helped prepare her, ensuring our approach was trauma informed. This was critical—as the re-interview meant our client would be forced to again recount her trauma to another asylum officer. In October 2023, our client's reinterview was conducted and the asylum office approved her asylum petition last December. We filed her adjustment of status petition and are awaiting final adjudication of that petition.

OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

This past year, The Door continued to offer a range of additional legal services in order to provide NYC youth with holistic and comprehensive support. Indeed, we offered trainings, referrals to other legal providers, and connections to social service supports. We continued to offer several targeted clinics for youth, the Civil Intake Clinic, Emancipation Clinic, Street Law, and Runaway and Homeless Youth clinics, as well as offered new clinics, such as our Name Change and Immigration clinics. We also provided 197 youth with pro se assistance over the entire grant term.

For example, we continue to conduct intake and assist immigrant youth who are detained in Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) shelters. As part of our Vera Institute of Justice contract, we also conduct intake and provide Know Your Rights (KYR) trainings to detained immigrant youth as needed. The trainings have proven to be critical, as many newly arrived youth come to NYC unsure about the city's legal system and their rights as migrant youth.

3,557
people benefited from
**Community Legal
Education**

Additionally, we facilitate a variety of clinics to provide youth with assistance on legal related matters. This past year, we introduced two new clinics to the LSC. Indeed, in June of 2023, we launched a monthly Name Change Clinic to provide education and direction for youth who seek to legally change their name. We decided to launch this clinic due to an increased demand for the service, especially for youth looking to apply for naturalization and/or green cards. This work has also been vital in supporting transgender youth and survivors of gender-based violence, as some youth seek to change their last names if they connect them to their abusers. We also most recently launched our Immigration Clinic in May 2023, which provides legal assistance specifically to immigrant youth in removal proceedings. The clinics are comprised of two components: a Know Your Rights training on the rights of immigrant youth in immigration court and a legal consultation with an immigration attorney. With the recent increase of NYC youth in need of immigration services and assistance, this clinic has already served as an invaluable resource for many young people, especially those who are new arrivals.

197
people
benefited
from
**Pro Se
Assistance**

We 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 uniquely embedded within a larger youth development agency, which enables our staff to eliminate the silos in delivering coordinated services. Indeed, 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 provides an innovative way to serve youth impacted by social and economic barriers.

Thus, this past year, the LSC's attorneys and social workers continued to connect eligible clients with The Door's comprehensive wraparound social services as needed, particularly those who are newly arrived youth. These referrals were critical in ensuring that LSC clients were supported in reaching their goals and pursuing stability and success. Indeed, the LSC referred many youth to The Door's Adolescent Health Center (AHC), which we often utilize to provide youth with medical exams required for green card approval. In the past year, many of these referrals were for young girls and women who are asylum-seeking survivors of gender-based violence in need of mental and behavioral health counseling, exemplifying the complex traumas and needs of many newly arrived youth. The LSC also worked similarly with The Door's RHY department, communicating with staff to connect migrant youth with housing and shelter placements. The LSC's unique embedment within a larger youth-development organization allows for these connections to be made. Indeed, it is crucial for newly arrived youth to have access to legal services alongside comprehensive social support to ensure their holistic integration and well-being in their new community.

TECHNOLOGY & IOLA TECH GRANT

In the past year, LSC staff continued to hear feedback from our clients that with language inaccessibility, 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 always feel confident about the status of their legal process. To help combat this confusion, we continue to send 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. This helps tackle the ongoing obstacle of keeping young people engaged in their typically complex and arduous legal processes. The Door has also updated our intake form with a QR code that, after gathering default information such as name and Door ID number, collects necessary immigration case information to quickly determine which services and forms of assistance the young person needs. Furthermore, due to the significant language gaps mentioned above, LSC staff have also been relying heavily on translator apps, such as those powered by generative AI. Considering the shortage of interpreters throughout the city, these apps have been integral for LSC staff, as they allow for more effective communication with young people who don't speak English or Spanish.

We used our supplemental 2023 IOLA Technology Grant funds to purchase nine new Dell Latitude 5540 BTX Base laptops, as well as a 13th Generation Intel processing units, Windows 11 Pro software in English, Spanish, French, and Brazilian Portuguese, and other necessary storage add-ons for each laptop. We provided these laptops to LSC staff members who need to conduct work both virtually and in person, which has greatly expanded the capacity of the LSC. Indeed, with more staff able to work remotely, we can work with clients who may not be able to travel to the LSC to receive in-person services. Staff are also able to work from a variety of locations, whether it be within the LSC, in a courtroom, or at home, allowing them to conduct their work with more flexibility. We are grateful to IOLA for supporting these purchases, as they have helped us improve the ways in which we serve NYC youth, particularly as we strive to meet the increased need for legal services seen among newly arrived young people.

Lastly, we continue to use technology daily to deliver our range of services. Indeed, we record and analyze data in Salesforce, which allows us to maintain data on client demographics, case notes, and case status, while maintaining client confidentiality. Through Salesforce, LSC leadership can track client outcomes and ensure case quality. We also use Salesforce to evaluate how our clients are accessing The Door's additional services, to better support their overall health and wellbeing.

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 421 pro bono attorneys to help us ensure effective service provisions for NYC youth in need of civil legal services. Our Pro Bono Managing Attorney has been essential in cultivating relationships with pro bono partners, who have been critical this past year. Indeed, these partners have helped us go through our waitlist and conduct intakes, allowing the LSC to help as many youth in need of legal services as possible.

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 12 law student interns, volunteer attorneys and fellows. The LSC also worked with Norton-Rose Fulbright, who placed two law graduates with The Door for 14-18 months.

Lastly, this past year, we worked with a fellow from Equal Justice Works (EJW). This fellow conducted critical work in bridging The Door's Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) and LSC, helping facilitate RHY legal clinics and provide support to young people with shelter placement issues. Since many newly arrived youth who came to the LSC this year were also experiencing housing instability, the fellow's work allowed these overlapping populations to access a diverse set of resources with confidence and ease. This fellowship could not have come at a more opportune moment in NYC—with the stark increase of immigrant youth in the shelter system and the ever-shifting changes to shelter policies and litigation. Our EJW fellow has been able to help advise RHY connected immigrant youth on their rights as they navigate youth shelters, Humanitarian Emergency Rapid Response Centers (HERRCS), or New York State foster care. She began in September 2023 and has already led trainings for RHY staff, developed materials for youth in response to *Callahan vs. City of New York* litigation, and testified at the City Council hearing on Immigration: Oversight, Experience of Black Migrants.

467 attorneys
volunteered **10,785** hours

12 law students
volunteered **1,820** hours

6 other volunteers
volunteered **4,012** hours

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

This past year, we partnered with several other legal service providers and community-based organizations to best serve the youth of NYC. For example, we continued our partnership with CUNY School of Law's Family Law Practice (FLP) Clinic, working closely with the clinic to provide direct representation with a shared client. FLP student attorneys have also been partnering with The Door to provide Know Your Rights Trainings for Door members at the Bronx Youth Center, The Door's Housing sites, and at The Door's Soho site. The Door also 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 migrant youth in NYC. Through our partnership, we have accepted referrals for youth in need of civil and immigration representation. We have also been supervising and providing technical support to a Covenant House attorney handling SIJS cases for youth in the shelter.

In March 2024, we also hosted Advocates for Children who trained our LSC staff on the rights of older youth, English Language Learners, and youth navigating the shelter system who are seeking to enroll in NYC school system. The LSC also partnered with Girl Be Heard this year, to launch "Be! Workshop Series" out of our BYC site. These workshops, facilitated by a bilingual teaching artist, were designed specifically for Spanish speaking young women and girls in immigration detention. Additionally, our LSC Co-Managing Directors provided several trainings to fellow legal providers this year. For example, one provided immigration practitioners and family law practitioners with substantive updates on the SIJS process, while another trained our pro bono attorneys, paralegals, and summer associates on our intake policies as they supported in clearing our waitlist.

Furthermore, we continued to partner with peer legal providers to respond to changes in immigration policy and provide additional support to migrant youth through targeted referrals and advocacy. The Door is a coalition member of the End the SIJS Backlog Coalition, now housed at the National Immigration Project, and a member of the New York Legal Services Coalition. We have also continued our partnership with 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. In response to the uptick in immigrant youth warehoused in NYC shelter system, the LSC has also deepened our collaboration with the Coalition for Homeless Youth in New York, attending monthly meetings, sharing our insights from the field, and learning about new policies and practices impacting Runaway and Homeless Youth in NYC.

This past year, we also continued to work regularly with many organizations to provide referrals, foster care supports, health insurance and benefits enrollment, ESOL, and shelter services, including: New Immigrant Community Empowerment,, Make the Road NY, Day One, 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. The Door’s LSC was also invited to chair the Supporting Immigrant Children and Families Working Group, together with Safe Passages, the Center for Family Representation, hosted by ACS. We are also a member of the ACS committee on Vera Providers and ACS working group, in order to develop and collaborate more effective for youth in immigration detention with ORR in need of transfers to New York State foster care custody.

CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

\$6,252,522

IOLA Funding	\$199,466
City & County	\$1,317,384
State	\$209,899
Federal	\$3,364,818
Foundations	\$601,500
Fundraising	\$542,455
Other	\$17,000

