

**Immigrant
Advocates
Response
Collaborative**

2023 – 2024

Report

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Immigrant ARC (I-ARC) is a community of legal advocates and an immigration law training and policy institute, working together for New York’s immigrant communities. Our mission is to increase access to counsel and access to justice for immigrant New Yorkers. We reach our objective through our Friend of the Court (FOTC) program, capacity-building programming, and community education and legal know your rights (KYR) Workshops.

I-ARC initially debuted our Friend of the Court programming at 290 Broadway where we piloted the program; we have since expanded to Varick Street Immigration Court where we assist the E-33 (Change of Address) docket, and the non-detained juvenile docket. The expansion to Varick Street Immigration Court happened less than five months after debuting our FOTC programming at 290 Broadway in late July 2023.

I-ARC has trained and recruited over 153 individual (unique) volunteers for our FOTC program alone. We recruit pro bono attorneys, law students, paralegals, social workers, college students, language students, and other passionate individuals. Since its inception and as of April 12, 2024, FOTC has served 887 individuals in 14 different courtrooms (IJs Lloyd, Grogan, Chung, Perl, Brennan, Dodd, ACIJ ul-Haq, IJs Prieto, DeCure, Norkin, Lopez, Conroy, Mulligan, Burnham). I-ARC continues to work with the court administration and ACIJs to identify courtrooms to deliver our programming.



Service Area: Statewide

Population Served: Low Income Immigrant Populations

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:

Total Staff: 8.5 Lawyers: 3.5

Paralegals: 0

Others: 5

I-ARC's FOTC program has completed 356 change of address forms and assisted with 49 change of venue requests. We provide an extensive KYRs presentation to respondents to demystify the process of immigration court, we also provide resources respondents can take back with them such as an attorney tracker (which assists with seeking continuances), a one-pager with important information for seeking asylum, and a resource page on how to look up their case status. We recorded our KYRs presentation and made it available to those who may wish to rewatch the video.

I-ARC has delivered Friend of Court programming to individuals from over 34 different countries: Angola, Bangladesh, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Togo, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Venezuela.

Our capacity-building programming is centered around our members, the legal service providers. During this grant period we have provided logistical, programmatic, and on-the-ground support to providers implementing scaled pro se services to applicants for asylum, Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and work permits. During the grant period, I-ARC developed extensive technical resources regarding TPS and asylum, including templates, legal guides, clinic logistical documents, annotated immigration forms, and sample documents. Providers expressed an urgent need for written guides to give to pro se asylum applicants to guide them through the complicated process. I-ARC solicited and received permission from the Asylum Seekers Assistance Project (ASAP) to convert their pro se guidance website into stand-alone documents on various topics, partnering with the NYIC and Translingua to translate these resources into the most needed languages: English, Spanish, French, Haitian Creole, Arabic, Russian, Portuguese, and simplified and traditional Chinese.

Starting in February, I-ARC returned to Albany to support a series of weekly asylum clinics over two months. I-ARC developed clinic materials and procedures and volunteer training materials, headed volunteer recruitment and management, and provided on-site technical legal assistance. These clinics served about over 90 people living in area hotel shelters over their course. In March, we partnered again with the NYIC and local partners Jericho Road and Justice for Migrant Families to implement a series of three asylum clinics in Buffalo for those whose one-year deadline to apply for relief was approaching. I-ARC continued to support via volunteer recruitment and training and the expansion of applicant-facing pro se asylum application support materials translated into our nine languages (English, Arabic, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish).

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

At our Friend of the Court Program we assist newcomers with the initial master calendar hearings. We provide an extensive Know Your Rights/Court Orientation and conduct a brief intake with each pro se respondent. Friends of the Court provides materials to the pro se respondents that includes a one-pager on how to apply for asylum for those interested in pursuing that avenue of relief, how respondents can look up their case information on the EOIR portal, and an attorney tracker which assists them in their search to find an attorney and can be used to demonstrate to the judge their intent to retain an attorney. Finally,

Friends of the Court stand with the respondents when they are called before the judge to support the pro se respondent. Friends of the Court advocate on behalf of the pro se respondent if the respondent needs to change their address or venue, consolidate their cases, if they are a juvenile and need to be moved to the juvenile docket, if they need to submit applications, and other assistance as may arise.



887
people
benefited
from

887
immigration
legal cases
closed

CASE EXAMPLES

Immigration: Through Friend of the Court programming we assisted a mother with two young children from Ecuador appearing pro se. We assisted in first consolidating her case with her children's, having her children's names be corrected in the system, waiving her children's appearance for the next hearing, filing a change of address on her behalf, ensuring the judge accepted her I-589 to the Immigration Judge so she met the one-year filing deadline, and were able to refer her children to our partner organizations who offer SIJs representation. By sitting with individual pro se respondents one-on-one we are able to answer questions, assuage concerns, and assist both the respondent and immigration court.

OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

Venezuela was redesignated for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) on October 3rd, which allowed several thousand additional Venezuelan nationals living in New York to be eligible for relief. Grantees of the Welcome NY grant mobilized to assist hotel shelter residents to learn about TPS and apply if they were eligible. I-ARC developed a resource folder for both legal practitioners and TPS applicants to facilitate education and applications, including explanations of TPS, eligibility criteria, the documents necessary to apply for TPS, legal clinic processes, applications for a work permit, and next steps after applying. All materials for applicants were available in both Spanish and English.

In support of pro se application assistance efforts across the state, I-ARC also developed an additional intensive resource folder specific to asylum. Materials for legal practitioners included legal clinic procedures and resources; template language; translated versions of the form; sample pages; and annotated asylum application examples. Materials for pro se applicants (translated into nine languages) include guidance on applying for a work permit; biometrics; finding immigration legal help; supportive evidence for asylum claims; changing your address with different immigration agencies; and how to apply for asylum in and out of immigration court. I-ARC continues to update these materials in all nine languages.

3,859
people
benefited from
**Pro Se
Assistance**

5,663
people
benefited from
**Community
Legal
Education**

In late September 2023, I-ARC was approached by the White House, New York State, and New York City to implement an inaugural Employment Assistance Document (EAD) Clinic to assist migrants in shelter who were eligible via parole or asylum to apply for work authorization. In under two weeks, I-ARC planned and orchestrated the first EAD Clinic that assisted over 1700 eligible individuals. This first-of-its-kind partnership between I-ARC, USCIS, and NYC Health and Hospitals enabled I-ARC to coordinate and recruit over 390 legal volunteers from over 16 private law firms, innumerable member organizations, and 15 law schools, to serve 1700 migrants currently in shelter, with DHS able to receive applications and process biometrics on-site.

I-ARC created replicable materials and models to share across the country and the initiative was duplicated in Chicago, Los Angeles, and X, as well as continued by other providers in New York City. I-ARC has presented the replicable model at the National Partnership for New Americans, rapid response panels, and to our membership. As a result of our efforts, I-ARC hosted an extremely successful webinar on how to replicate the EAD clinic across the country which our Executive Director hosted that had 600 registrants and over 300 attendees.

275
people benefited
from
**Web-Based
Assistance**

I-ARC partnered with the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) and Columbia County Sanctuary Movement to host a hybrid remote legal clinic for Venezuelan TPS applicants November 1-4. We partnered with Board member Siana McLean to develop and record a TPS application training to train volunteers and disseminate to legal partners, particularly those serving newly arrived Venezuelans. We worked with Fragomen to secure free access to Kiteworks, a secure data-housing platform, to facilitate data storage and sharing during the hybrid clinics. I-ARC managed volunteer recruitment and management, created remote clinic procedures, and hosted the remote component of the clinic on the day-of. I-ARC staff also attended the clinic in person.

TECHNOLOGY

For our asylum clinic in Albany we retained “Docketwise,” an “all-in-one immigration and case management software for lawyers” to support document preservation and upload. We also utilized DropBox to ensure volunteers, staff, and partners were able to access intake forms, asylum applications, and supporting documents.

For our TPS Clinic for Venezuelan newcomers that we held in Albany from November 1st through the 4th, we utilized a hybrid clinic model in which the majority of volunteer attorneys and supervising attorneys supported remotely via zoom. The newcomers were in-person in Albany and with a small team on the ground we were able to upload client’s documents in real time to a shared folder where volunteer attorneys could access the documents necessary to complete the applications. From there the clients were sat at laptop stations, provided with headphones, an interpreter as required (based on the language skills of the volunteering attorney), and were connected to a volunteer attorney on Zoom who filled out the TPS application with the client.

After the applications were completed, a supervising attorney entered each “Zoom room” to review the application with the volunteer attorney, client, and interpreter. We also utilized WhatsApp and created a daily group chat so volunteer attorneys could notify clinic staff when they were ready to have a supervising attorney enter their Zoom room for review. Through this hybrid model we were able to complete 220 TPS applications.

IOLA TECHNOLOGY GRANT

Under the IOLA Technology Grant, Immigrant-ARC researched and met with several IT consultants and companies who could potentially audit our IT framework. This effort was prompted by the fact that we currently lack a managed IT system. Although a comprehensive audit was not conducted within the specified timeframe, we accumulated valuable knowledge and information regarding various technology enhancements that our organization could adopt.

Our strategic technology goals revolved around:

- Identifying vulnerabilities or weaknesses in our IT networks, connected devices, processes and applications.
- Implementing immediate solutions to strengthen and enhance our security posture.

With this grant, Immigrant ARC was able to acquire various software tools aimed at promoting awareness, enforcing secure practices, and actively safeguarding against vulnerabilities. Thanks to the IOLA grant, Immigrant-ARC has made significant strides in enhancing its operational efficiency and security.

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

I-ARC engages legal professionals, law students, and community members as volunteers. We aim to increase the availability of legal assistance for immigrant families and alleviate the burden on existing legal services providers. We have trained and recruited 676 unique volunteers in the last fiscal year; this includes 153 unique volunteers recruited for Friend of the Court, 390 for our Employment Authorization Document clinic, and 133 for our Albany Asylum Application Preparation clinic.

236

attorneys
volunteered **944** hours

182

law students
volunteered **728** hours

258

other volunteers
volunteered **1,032** hours

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

The New York Immigration Coalition is a significant I-ARC partner. Together we have successfully filed 104 asylum applications, 1728 work authorization applications, and 220 temporary protected status applications for recently arrived families living in New York City's shelters. I-ARC has also worked with member organization, CARECEN, and private firms, Fragomen, Kirkland and Ellis, Kilpatrick Townsend, and DLA Piper, as well as law schools, CUNY Law, New York Law School's Safe Passage Clinic, to fully staff Friend of the Court program dates. For instance, CARECEN covers every third Thursday of the month at Varick Street Immigration Court and the Safe Passage Project Clinic at New York Law School has covered the non-detained juvenile docket once a semester. Additionally, I-ARC's rapid response work with our EAD, TPS, and Asylum (Albany & Buffalo) clinics have opened the door to expand both our pool of individual volunteers but also the organizations and firms interested in supporting our programming.

Because our model is to foster collaboration and provide support to our members as they seek to serve immigrant New Yorkers, we also partner with most other civil legal service providers across the State.

I-ARC also partnered with NYC Health and Hospitals and USCIS to plan and orchestrate a two-week Employment Authorization Clinic (EAD) in late September and early October of 2023. I-ARC recruited over 390 legal volunteers to assist and determine eligibility of over 1700 individuals currently in shelter. Our partnership with NYC H&H allowed us to assist those migrants currently in shelter and our partnership with USCIS enabled us to submit EAD applications and conduct biometric screenings for applicants on site. I-ARC used the experience to develop template clinic materials, standard operating procedures, and EAD guidance documents for applicants. These materials were shared within the state to facilitate further EAD clinics with USCIS, including the continuation of I-ARC's original EAD clinic managed by the Hispanic Federation in partnership with the NYC Asylum Application Help Center. I-ARC also shared these materials and conducted one-on-one consultations with organizations and city governments across the United States set to host USCIS in a similar manner.

In response to a state-wide legal service shortage combined with a growing number of arriving migrants to New York, I-ARC partnered with Asylum Seekers Assistance Project (ASAP) and others to develop free guidance materials on topics like Temporary Protected Status (TPS), asylum, immigration court, legal clinic procedures, and the protection of private data in service provision.

Applicant-facing materials (documents on 23 different topics) were translated into nine languages (English, Spanish, French, Haitian Creole, Arabic, Russian, and Simplified and Traditional Chinese) and distributed to members and partners across New York. I-ARC also created legal guidance materials specific to practitioners, covering areas like affirmative and defensive asylum filings; troubleshooting issues with the asylum clock; TPS for Venezuelan children born outside of Venezuela; and TPS for Venezuelans who fled to a third country prior to traveling to the United States. First distributed in October 2023, we continue to add materials as members and applicants identify additional needs.

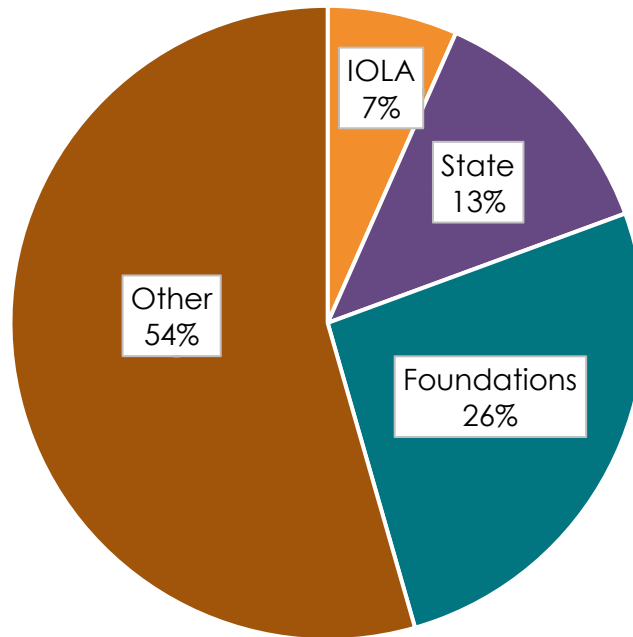
As legal service providers upstate struggled to cover the growing number of recently arrived migrants moving north of New York City, I-ARC initiated an outreach campaign to increase access to engaged and issue-educated volunteers. I-ARC coordinated with pro bono and student coordinators in law and policy schools across the state to funnel students and their professors into active legal clinics, including the University of Buffalo, Albany Law School, Cornell University, and Fordham University. This included outreach to students and language clubs for interpreter and translation volunteers. I-ARC also conducted outreach to pro bono coordinators at private law firms in NYC to engage attorneys for legal clinics upstate, especially Albany. I-ARC successfully partnered with the NYIC, Columbia County Sanctuary Movement, and Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen & Loewy LLP to hold a series of hybrid TPS clinics in the fall of 2023 using donated access to Kiteworks, a digital case management system. We also liaised with local and state-wide AILA chapters to secure adequate legal supervision at legal clinics upstate throughout the fall and spring.

I-ARC developed a variety of trainings and webinars to share methods with fellow practitioners and train volunteer cohorts on different immigration applications. I-ARC developed and conducted volunteer trainings on Temporary Protected Status (TPS), asylum, and work authorization, which were recorded and shared with members for use in their own pro se clinics. We also developed orientation presentations and volunteer assistance materials for use in the clinic setting.

I-ARC also gave one-on-one consultations and immigration orientations to organizations building new immigration legal teams, including the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo (in partnership with the NYIC) and Church World Relief.

CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

\$ 1,123,608



IOLA Funding	\$ 74,497
State Funding	\$ 143,407
Foundations	\$ 293,980
Other	\$ 611,724