

MINKWON CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

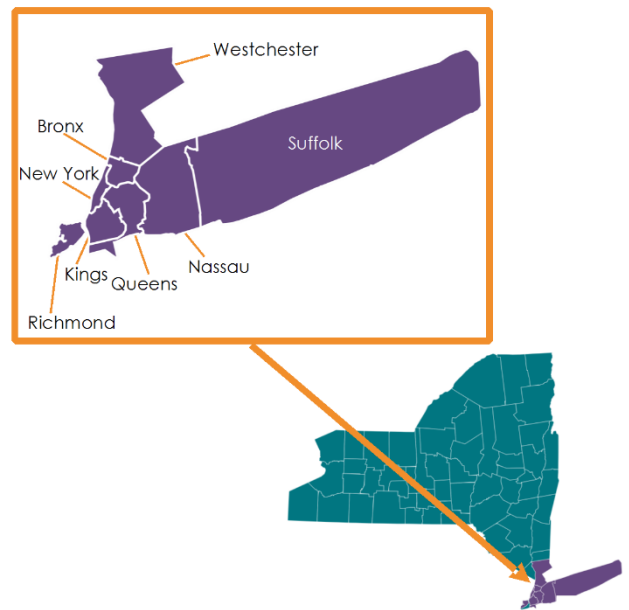
**2023 – 2024
Report**

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

MinKwon Center for Community Action works to deliver culturally competent and linguistically appropriate legal services to the underserved and under-resourced Asian American community in New York City. One of the most hindering barriers to the Asian American community is its inability to access resources and critical legal representation due to linguistic isolation. MinKwon provides free immigration and housing legal services, ensuring that our community members are able to access resources and fair access to the legal system regardless of language capacity, immigration status, and income. MinKwon closed 822 cases benefitting 1,081 people in immigration and housing matters and helped our community members save \$197,220 in filing fees, rental payments, and other arrears.

MinKwon works with many local community organizations such as shelters to provide services. Undomiciled individuals often do not have important identity documents such as Social Security cards, proof of immigration status, or IDs due to loss or theft. Without proof of immigration status though, individuals are unable to apply for and receive benefits or health insurance. In these cases, MinKwon typically submits a FOIA request to USCIS to uncover evidence of lawful status. Armed with this crucial information, MinKwon is able to help the individuals renew their status or apply for replacement green cards, as well as referring them to our other social services staff for assistance with public benefits and health insurance enrollment.

During covid, many community members accrued significant rent arrears and landlords would file nonpayment petitions in housing court to remove the client. MinKwon would work with the client to apply for financial assistance to cover all or part of the rent arrears such as ERAP or one shot deals, negotiate with the landlord to come up with a payment schedule and to reduce the arrears or simply to gain enough time for the client to find other accommodations to move out, as well as working with other community organizations and city agencies to receive other housing services.



Service Area: New York City Metropolitan Area

Population Served: Low-income members of the Asian American community

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:

Total Staff: 11	Lawyers: 4
Paralegals: 2	Others: 5

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

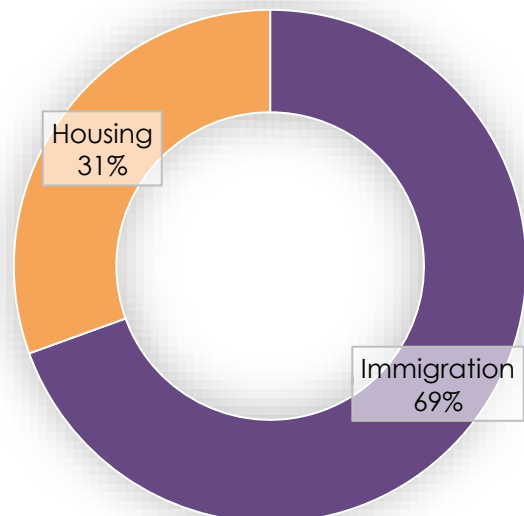
Immigration: MinKwon has been providing DACA services since the program was first created in 2012. As DACA needs to be renewed every two years, many of our DACA clients have been coming to us for over ten years and our staff have been able to see them grow in their lives and celebrate milestones with them. Throughout the years, many of our DACA clients have graduated school and gotten married, and subsequently have sought assistance with adjustment of status and naturalizations, thus completing their immigration journey with MinKwon.

Housing: Many of the clients in our housing legal services program are low-income, limited English proficient seniors. As such, a typical housing client has difficult reading and understanding their lease, as well as communicating with their landlord and paying rent on their limited income. They will usually come in for assistance as they are unable to receive a renewal lease from their landlord or management office after many repeated requests.

Our housing staff attorney will then intercede on their behalf, obtain a renewal lease after many rounds of communication with the landlord, review it for accuracy, and will then often have to send it back to the landlord as the rent amount will be incorrect. The attorney will also work with the client and our benefits staff to apply for housing benefits that will alleviate the rent burden for the client.



CASES BY LEGAL PROBLEM AREA:



OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

MinKwon provides community education on immigration and housing both in-person and via Zoom. In-person meetings are held at MinKwon and also presented through Zoom as an option for those unable to attend. MinKwon generally holds about 4 immigration workshops and 1-2 housing workshops a year. For this reporting period, we held 5 workshops and reached 35 participants in-person. Our in-person workshops are mainly targeted towards the Korean American community and conducted in Korean. Materials are available in English, Korean, and Chinese.

We also regularly provide important immigration and housing updates and education through our monthly newsletters and social media platforms.

Example #1, Immigration workshops: MinKwon has regularly provided workshops which provide an overview of important federal immigration policies, as well as know your rights workshops for any potential encounters with law enforcement authorities.

Example #2, Tenants' Rights workshops: MinKwon provides workshops dedicated to educating our community on their rights as tenants, as well as providing information on how to identify and respond to landlord harassment and unlawful evictions.

22,395

people
benefited
from

**Community
Legal
Education**

TECHNOLOGY

MinKwon has used the IOLA technology grant to strengthen our cybersecurity and hold trainings for staff on the following topics:

- Understanding common types of data breaches
- Introduction to phishing
- Ransomware basics
- Intro to business email compromise
- Data privacy in the US
- Internet safety and social media

- Mobile security
- Clean desk policy

These trainings and the use of outside IT professionals to monitor our systems and draft best practices allow MinKwon to better protect client data and uphold standards of confidentiality.

IOLA TECHNOLOGY GRANT

With the support of the IOLA technology grant, MinKwon is able to work with an outside technology consulting company, Claro Consulting, to develop and implement a plan to bolster MinKwon's cybersecurity. As a small community organization, MinKwon does not have any IT personnel on staff so this funding was integral to our ability to procure professional services. Our consultant has reviewed MinKwon's current cybersecurity settings and is currently drafting a set of best practices and technology policies, and has also conducted trainings for staff on different types of security threats. They have also been regularly monitoring our network and patching equipment to ensure there are no vulnerabilities in the system.

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

MinKwon has been working with pro bono attorneys at Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati on an immigration removal proceeding case starting from 2012 and the case was finally closed in 2023. MinKwon Center usually recruits volunteer attorneys and law students from the greater New York City area through professional associations, listservs, and social media platforms. All volunteers are provided training by MinKwon staff attorneys and DOJ-accredited staff prior.

Pro bono volunteers assist with conducting eligibility screenings, intakes, and application assistance, as well as creating case records.



5

attorneys volunteered **210** hours



9

other volunteers volunteered **70**

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

MinKwon works closely with local community organizations and shelters such as KCS, KAFSC, Nanoom House, and Jesus Love House Mission to share referrals and provide services and community education. MinKwon is also part of the Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative (CILEC), which provides representation, legal advice, and referrals for immigrants residing in New York City. CILEC consists of six legal service providers and six community based organizations. MinKwon receives referrals from partner organizations needing assistance for a Korean or Chinese speaking client, and likewise MinKwon is able to refer cases to partner organizations where our cultural and linguistic competencies are not a match.

CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

\$ 1,716,252.00

City and County	\$ 321,810.00
IOLA Funding	\$ 85,000.00
Foundations	\$ 565,250.00
State Funding	\$ 739,717.00
Other	\$ 4,475.00

