

# **CENTER FOR FAMILY REPRESENTATION**

2022-2023

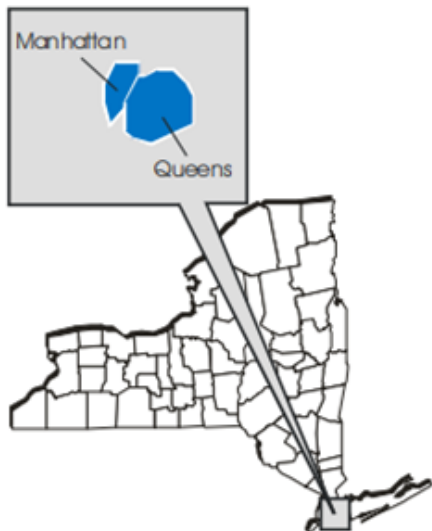
# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

CFR primarily represents low-income parents, who are summoned to Family Court in Queens or Manhattan, whose children are at risk of entering, remaining in or re-entering foster care, because ACS alleges their children are at risk of maltreatment.

Beginning in 2022 CFR began representing low-income parents in the Bronx in cases where the Bronx Defenders are unable to. ACS disproportionately investigates and prosecutes Black and Brown Families. CFR provides parents with holistic legal and social work support to lessen the devastating impact of CPS involvement and consequences of foster care.

In FY23, with our team model of a lawyer, social worker and a system-impacted parent advocate/mentor, we closed 1,710 cases, benefitting more than 5,000 people. 713 families reunified, 297 avoided a finding of neglect/and or abuse, 789 families avoided placement of children in foster care, and 19 avoided a termination of their parental rights. We completed 3 family defense appeals.

Indigent parents involved with the ACS often confront interrelated collateral issues, rooted in poverty, such as unstable housing, financial insecurity, or immigration problems; these have the potential to undermine a family’s success. To address these, our Home for Good (HG) program provides legal and social work services in housing, public benefits, and immigration. HG staff worked on 27 full representation housing cases, provided 7 clients with income maintenance assistance, and 28 families with immigration assistance. In FY23 we closed nearly twice as many HG cases as we did in FY22. Coordinated HG services mean we quickly avert crisis, and clients do not lose precious time having to access services from other agencies where there may be long wait lists or where practitioners lack expertise in ACS cases.



**Population Served: General Low Income**

**Total Funding: \$15,820,395**

**Total IOLA Grant: \$60,000**

**Staffing Full Time Equivalents:**

- Total Staff: 132.3
- Paralegals: 8
- Lawyers: 61.3
- Other: 63

# DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

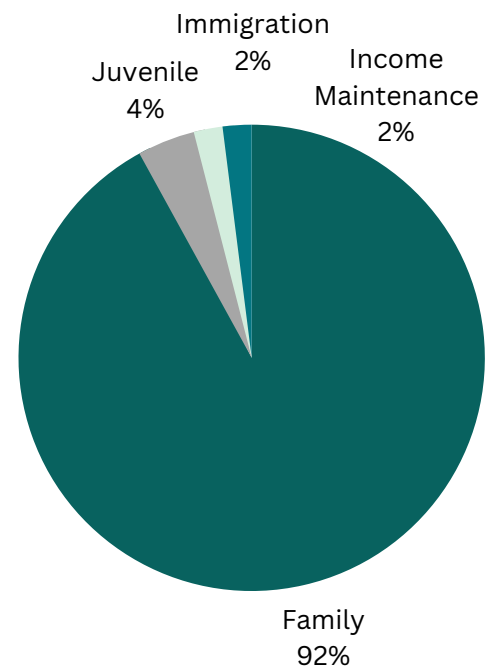
## Mr. R (FD and Immigration):

CFR’s family defense team met Mr. R when a neglect petition was filed against him in 2019. With the support of his attorney and social worker, Mr. R’s case was dismissed in 2020 with no findings of wrongdoing. When Mr. R applied for U.S. citizenship, a background check alerted immigration officials to the existence of a family court order of protection against him from 2019, when the original neglect case was filed. Mr. R was terrified when the immigration officer told him she could not approve his application, instead asking him to produce documents that would explain the order of protection and prove he complied with it. Mr. R contacted his CFR team, who were able to make an immediate referral to CFR’s immigration team for assistance.

CFR’s immigration team worked diligently to submit a response on Mr. R’s behalf, collecting documentation from the family court case with the assistance of his family defense team, showing that Mr. R was allowed to remain home with his family and his family court case was ultimately dismissed with no finding of neglect. The immigration team submitted photos of Mr. R’s family and statements from Mr. R and his wife, illustrating the strength and bonds of his family and that Mr. R never violated the order of protection, demonstrating his good moral character.

As a result of the zealous advocacy from CFR’s family defense and immigration teams, Mr. R was officially sworn in as a U.S. citizen on March 31, 2023 joining his wife and three young children as a U.S. citizen. Importantly, because he is now a U.S. citizen, not only is Mr. R’s family no longer living under the threat of separation, but he will be able to petition for a green card to bring his mother to the country from Bangladesh, further strengthening his family bonds.

**5,030**  
people  
benefitted  
from  
**1,710** legal  
cases  
closed



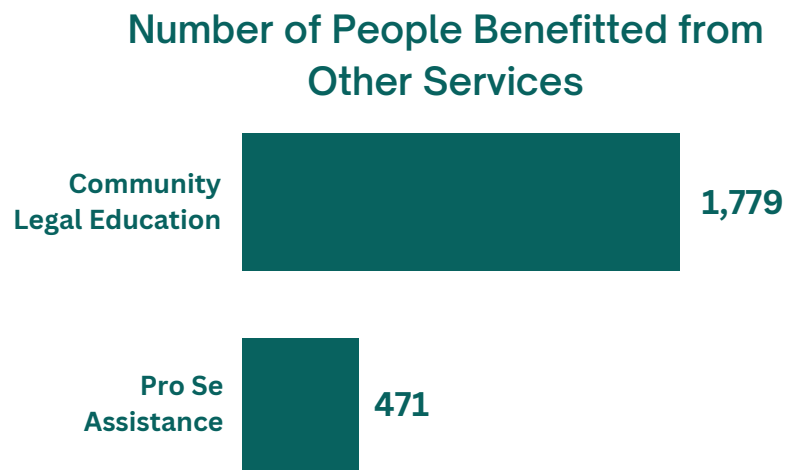
**Cases by Legal Problem Area**

# OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

CFR broadens the scope of our practices and policy efforts to improve the administration of justice and address a variety of challenges faced by families involved in the child welfare and family court systems. The Community Advocacy Project (CAP) provides direct legal representation and social work advocacy for parents in Queens, Manhattan and the Bronx during an ACS investigation. With the primary goal of avoiding the removal of a child or the filing of a family court prosecution the CAP team supports families during their investigations by addressing a range of concerns that come up. This support can include, informing parents of their rights, connecting parents to services, mitigating any crisis as it comes up, communicating directly with ACS workers and attending meetings. In CAP we also assist parents in modifying or completely sealing their SCR records by representing them directly in the fair hearing process and providing education. In FY23, we've closed 146 cases. CFR continues to be a leader in providing training and technical assistance, particularly in assisting other jurisdictions in replicating our service model. In the reporting period, CFR provided technical assistance to practitioners in California, South Carolina and Ohio.

**Community Based Legal Education:** CFR trained 1,331 practitioners and community members across the city, state, and country in FY23. These trainings included our inaugural Home for Good Conference, where we trained practitioners and community members from around the state on the collateral consequences of child welfare involvement. We also continued to offer Know Your Rights trainings and SCR information sessions for community partner organizations.

**2,250 People  
Benefitted from  
Services Other  
Than Direct  
Legal Services**



## OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

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In FY 23 CFR installed two Zoom Rooms. These are dedicated spaces equipped with hardware and software designed for high-quality video conferencing and presentations. This has allowed for enhanced collaboration between team members. Attorneys, paralegals, and other staff members can communicate and work together more effectively because the hardware streamlines the process for participating in virtual meetings. Zoom Rooms also allows CFR to provide a better client experience because clients can also take advantage of the convenience and flexibility of being able to participate in meetings and other legal proceedings utilizing larger screens and clearer audio when compared to a laptop.

During FY23 CFR also upgraded our server infrastructure. This upgrade has increased reliability and availability of CFR's computer system. The new servers are designed to take over if the primary server fails. Clients rely on CFR to provide them with timely and accurate legal advice and services. Any disruption to the firm's computer systems can result in delays or other issues that could negatively impact clients.

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## OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

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CFR's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Workgroup is comprised of directors, supervisors, and senior staff. A training subcommittee of that workgroup includes CFR staff. That group has arranged for several DEIB trainings throughout the year including workshops on antiracism and micro aggressions as well as educational emails and videos. CFR has also continued affinity groups from senior staff and supervisors. CFR is an accredited MCLE and CE provider and we continue to be dedicated to providing consistent and high-quality training to all staff.

All new staff attend an intensive, mandatory, introductory and interdisciplinary orientation that lasts approximately 6 weeks, split up into two three-week periods. We conducted this training in May 2022, July 2022, September 2022, October 2022, December 2022, January 2023 both virtually and in person. CFR hosted a half day statewide Home for Good Conference in October 2022. CFR organized a two-day panel discussion for NYC Family Court's Reunification Month about trauma inflicted on infants and adults on the unnecessary and preventable removal of children from their parents, and how to recognize signs of trauma when working with adults and children.

# PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

In FY23, CFR continued a collaboration with Simpson Thatcher & Bartlett for trial-partnering on a complicated child abuse case that will require multiple experts and possible depositions. Winston-Strawn has continued to work with CFR, at a pro bono rate. In FY23, CFR worked with 10 pro bono attorneys who provided over 230 hours of pro bono assistance on appeals, contracts and leases, direct representation of clients and support for CFR’s HR department. During FY23, CFR had 2 law student interns, 1 MSW social work intern and 3 investigations interns.



**10 Attorneys volunteered 239 hours**

**2 Law Students volunteered 102 hours**

**8 Other Volunteers volunteered 1,556 hours**

Each  icon is equal to 2 volunteers.

Attorneys are represented through the Green Figure.

Law Students and Other Volunteers are represented through the Grey Figure.

# SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

CFR had three attorneys serving on the New York City’s Bar Association’s Juvenile Justice Committee, including as co-chair. One major achievement this year was a two part panel discussion entitled, “A Conversation on New York City Youth and Gun Violence.” The panelists included New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, a system impacted young person, law enforcement, defenders and the presentment agency. As well, the co-chair of this committee served on the NYCBA Council on Children. In March 2023, CFR joined Brooklyn Defenders, Bronx Defenders, and NDS in submitting written and oral testimony to the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare.

CFR has partnerships with a variety of community based agencies. Partnerships include making referrals to one another and conducting or hosting trainings. Some of our current partner include: New York County Defender Services, Up Next, Single Parent Resource Center, Rising Ground, Puerto Rican Family Institute, Chances for Children. New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE), Ackerman, Fortune Society, Child Center of New York (CCNY), Greenwich House, New Horizons, Realization Center, Sanctuary for Families, Samaritan Village-Veritas House, Forestdale’s Fathering Initiative, Strong Mothers Program, and ABC Dyadic Therapy program, New York Presbyterian Hospital’s Toddler Infant Parent Program, Rise, Safe Horizon, The Door, Steps to End Family Violence, Latin Women in Action, New York Psychotherapy and Counseling Center, Manhattan Family Justice Center, Edwards Mentoring, Green Hope, Odyssey House, Hour Children, and Henry Street Settlement, FEDCAP Women’s Program, Planned Parenthood, Western Queens Counseling Centers, Jewish Board Family of Services, Family Resource Center of Western Queens, Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS), CUNY Fatherhood Academy, and Queens Defenders. To serve immigrant clients, CFR partners with African Hope Community, American Family Community Services, Arab-American Family Support Center, Sakhi for South Asian Women, NY Asian Women’s Center, Elmcors, Adhikaar, Vida, Chinese Sunshine House, and Sauti Yetu.

## SOURCES OF FUNDING

<b>City and County Funding</b>	<b>\$13,783,364</b>
<b>State Funding</b>	<b>\$1,386,700</b>
<b>Foundations</b>	<b>\$590,331</b>
<b>IOLA Grant</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,820,395</b>

