

CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEE CENTER

2022-2023

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

During the 2022-2023 grant year, CARECEN expanded our legal services capacity to continue providing the high-quality legal services that have been our hallmark for nearly four decades. We have continued to grow our staff, bringing on a Managing Attorney, two additional attorneys, two and a half additional paralegals, and promoting a staff attorney to Supervising Attorney. This has allowed us to take on more complex cases and expand into new practice areas, while also reducing docket size to help avoid staff burnout. We also implemented CampLegal, a new cases management system, that has made case management easier and more efficient for our growing staff.

Legal Services:

During the grant period, CARECEN transitioned back to providing some legal services in person, although the majority continue to be offered remotely. We have found that this service provision model is convenient for our clients, many of whom have transportation and childcare challenges. This allowed CARECEN to meet our clients where they are while also increasing our geographic reach.

During the grant year, CARECEN provided a wide array of pro bono and low bono direct legal services to 2,090 immigrants on Long Island. Services included lighter-touch cases, such as advice and counsel and screenings for immigration benefits, green card renewal and applications for work authorization, as well a representation on naturalization applications, adjustments of status, and complex removal defense cases.



Population Served: Low Income Immigrants and Refugees

Total Funding: \$1,700,455

Total IOLA Grant: \$98,746

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:

- Total Staff: 16
- Paralegals: 5
- Lawyers: 9
- Other: 2

Because CARECEN orients our services towards low-income immigrants, approximately 96% of clients assisted during the program year fell below 150% of the federal poverty line. This income level made these clients eligible for a reduction or waiver of federal immigration fees for various immigration benefits, amounting to a total savings of \$258,995 to these individuals.

One key programmatic expansion was the creation of a Special Programs team. This team is responsible for leading limited duration legal programs, such as CARECEN's new Afghan Legal Assistance Program funded by the New York State Office for New Americans. The Special Programs team also leads our organization's recruitment of legal talent through internship and externship opportunities. The creation of this team has been integral to our work in creating a pipeline of attorneys to work in immigration legal services on Long Island, a highly underserved area.

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

Case Example One - Immigration:

Humberto, a citizen of El Salvador, is a single parent who fled his country with his 4 year old son after he was threatened with death after publicly criticizing the ruling political party in El Salvador. He and his son were detained at the border and placed in removal proceedings. They were granted asylum by an immigration judge in December 2022.

Case Example Two - Immigration:

Rosalía, a lawful permanent resident from Perú, wished to petition for her adult daughter who lives in Perú. However, because of an error at the time her daughter's birth was registered, there was a discrepancy between Rosalía's legal name and her name as it appears on her daughter's birth certificate. CARECEN worked closely with Rosalía to compile evidence that would prove to immigration that she was her daughter's biological mother. Immigration approved the family petition for Rosalía's daughter in March 2023.

964
people
benefitted
from
964 legal
cases
closed

OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

CARECEN has a robust community education program that empowered thousands of immigrants through education and access to information and resources. This community education is geared towards all immigrants across Long Island.

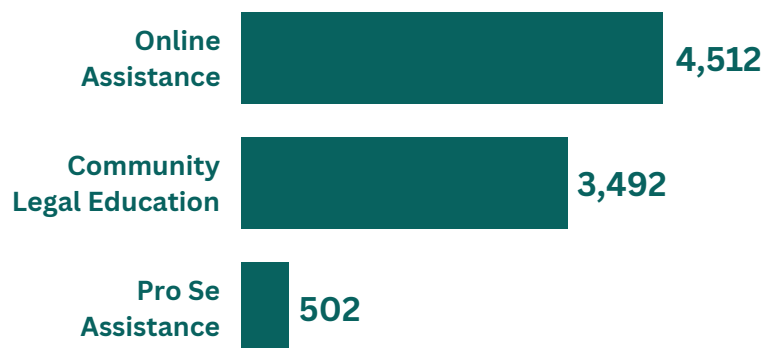
Community Education Workshops: During the grant year, CARECEN provided community education sessions on a variety of topics relevant to the immigrant community. These topics were selected based on expressed community need, with a particular focus on emerging issues in immigration law and resources to assist in economic recovery from COVID-19. Examples of topics offered include “Updates in Immigration Law”, “Immigration Options for Immigrant Youth”, “Applying for U.S. Citizenship” and “Accessing Mental Health Services”. On emerging, novel issues – such as changes to federal immigration law and policy – CARECEN aimed to offer the community education session within a week of the change.

While the majority of community education sessions were offered virtually using platforms such as Facebook Live, Instagram Live and Zoom, a significant portion was offered in person starting in the summer of 2022.

Citizenship classes: Through our volunteer-led citizenship classes, CARECEN helped prepare 132 immigrants across Long Island to represent themselves at their naturalization interviews. These classes, offered both during the day and in the evenings to accommodate a variety of work schedules, focus on the fundamental English skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening that are required to pass the naturalization test.

8,506 People Benefitted from Services Other Than Direct Legal Services

Number of People Benefitted from Other Services



OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

During the 2022-2023 grant year, CARECEN increased our use of technology in service provision. In addition to continuing to utilize the technology platforms we have implemented over the past three years, CARECEN implemented a new online case management system, CampLegal. Incorporating CampLegal into our practice has been revolutionary as it has allowed for more efficient, streamlined case management. The system allows clients to submit information and documents directly to the online portal, reducing the case processing time and facilitating more rapid communication between the client and their legal representative.

OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

During the 2022-2023 grant year, CARECEN continued the focus on staff training we commenced during the past two years. While CARECEN makes extensive free training available to our staff, such as those offered through the NYC, I-ARC, and Practising Law Institute (PLI), we have found a desire and need among staff for specialized training not commonly offered through standard outlets. To address this issue and ensure that legal staff receive the continuing education they need to grow in their fields, in addition to the existing training offerings, CARECEN implemented a uniform professional development stipend for all staff in January 2023. This initiative will allow staff to personally select the training opportunities best suited to their roles and professional development goals. All training opportunities covered by this initiative are subject to supervisory approval.

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

With the launch of our new Special Programs team, CARECEN has redoubled our efforts to recruit and train talented law students and young attorneys to practice in the immigration field on Long Island. These efforts have increased our law student participation over the grant year. Through this program, during the summer of 2022, CARECEN hosted a Long Island Immigrant Advocacy Fellow from Hofstra University School of Law for the summer and fall terms. Also, CARECEN hosted a team of Brooklyn Law School students for a week-long asylum program in January 2023, many of whom have subsequently applied for internship positions at CARECEN. CARECEN also participated in the Public Interest Legal Career Fair at NYU School of Law in February. Finally, CARECEN is hosting a Pro Bono Scholar during the spring 2023 semester.

Two private attorneys and 16 law students assisted CARECEN staff in the analysis and preparation of cases in a practice area where they have expertise, as well as in providing staff trainings. One of these was Lauris Wren, Clinical Professor and Director of the Hofstra Asylum Clinic, is a nationally-recognized expert on asylum law. During the grant year, she provided specialized supervisory support to CARECEN's supervising attorney on removal defense cases. An additional 32 volunteers assisted with citizenship class instruction, administrative and other tasks.



2 Attorneys volunteered 15 hours

16 Law Students volunteered 1,413 hours

32 Other Volunteers volunteered 405 hours

Each  icon is equal to 5 volunteers.

Attorneys are represented through the Green Figure.

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

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

During the grant year, CARECEN built on our long-established cooperative relationships with other organizations serving Long Island's immigrant community to improve services provision and increase outreach effectiveness.

This year, CARECEN launched the Immigration Collaborative of Long Island (ICLI). This interdisciplinary coalition, composed of legal service providers and social service providers from across Nassau and Suffolk counties, strives to provide a proactive, collective response to the needs of Long Island's immigrants. ICLI members meet on a monthly basis to share trends, resources, and best practices to ensure that the services available for new Americans in our region are made widely available.

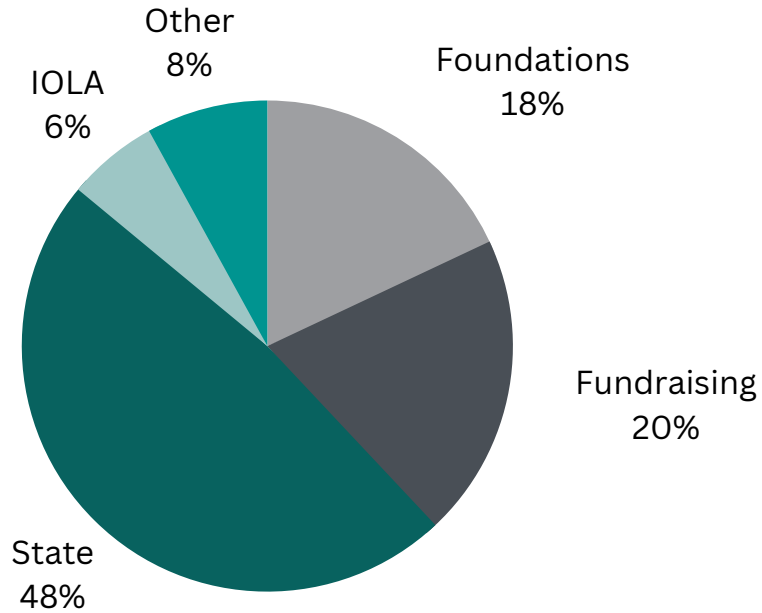
One of the major collaborations was our partnership with the Immigrant Justice Corps. Through this partnership CARECEN hosted five IJC fellows during the grant period. Under the supervision of a supervising attorney at CARECEN, this team provided direct representation to more than 300 Central American immigrant children and families at risk for deportation.

As a founding member of Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative (I-ARC), and a member of the Steering Committee, CARECEN continues collaborating with organizations state-wide around immigrant advocacy issues. CARECEN participates in monthly I-ARC Steering Committee meetings and regular general membership meetings which focus on sharing resources and best practices with other practitioners.

Finally, CARECEN continued our support group for parents of unaccompanied children through The Golden Door Program. This collaborative project between CARECEN, Children's Village, and the New York State Office for New Americans entered its sixth and final year during the grant period. This group empowered parents through education and provides them a toolkit to assist them in parenting children in the United States. During the grant year, due to the inability to meet in-person, this group met on a weekly basis via Zoom.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

Central American Refugee Center received **\$1,700,455** in total funding this past year



State Funding	\$807,745
Fundraising	\$346,944
Foundations	\$311,803
Other Funding	\$135,207
IOLA Grant	\$98,746
<hr/>	
Total	\$1,700,455