

El Calvario Access to Justice Legal Services Strategic Plan

by El Calvario Immigrant Advocacy Center

in partnership with Justice for Our Neighbors El Paso

November 2021



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to all the participants, legal service providers and community organizations, without you and the dedication to your work this project would not be possible. Special thanks to Kristen Bowdre, Executive Director Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON) for lending her expertise to implement the first phase of this project. Finally, we would like to thank the State Bar of New Mexico for funding this project.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

El Calvario received a grant from the State Bar of New Mexico to fund this project, which we now call the El Calvario Access to Justice Project. The project called for a three step approach to develop, define, and implement an effective collaboration and action plan related to providing legal services at El Calvario. The first phase of the project included connecting one-on-one with legal service providers. We reached broadly to legal service providers in New Mexico and the El Paso area. Understanding that legal services providers are busy people, we developed a survey based on the interview questions to help streamline the process. This phase continued and ran parallel with phase two community outreach to ensure we gave legal service providers enough time to participate. During phase two, we reached out to community organizations working on causes related to immigration and many working with the immigrant community. In total we reached out to sixteen legal service providers and ten community organizations. A total of twelve legal service providers participated, while five community organizations participated. The third and final phase of planning is to convene legal service providers to present our findings and ask for feedback on our strategic plan, which is based on the actions taken in the first two phases of planning. We want to avoid any unnecessary redundancy and do our part to add to the legal services already being provided in our region. In 2022, we plan to begin implementing our strategic plan and providing services.

EL CALVARIO MISSION

El Calvario United Methodist Church's (ECUMC) mission is "to serve the poor, the stranger, and the captive." We accomplish this by providing a platform which helps establish a full, abundant life and restore dignity, capacity, and resilience to the communities we serve.

JUSTICE FOR OUR NEIGHBORS MISSION

JFON El Paso is a faith-based ministry providing affordable, high-quality immigration legal services and advocating for immigrants' rights in West Texas and Southern New Mexico. We provide legal services, community education, and advocate at local, state, and federal levels for policies that support immigrants.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

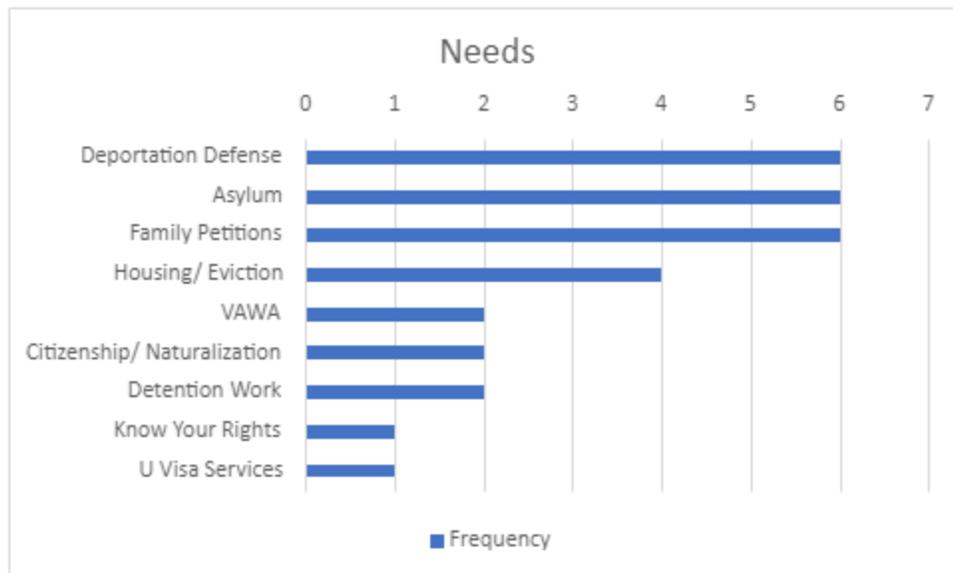
KEY QUESTIONS

1. Based on your organization's interaction with the local immigrant community, what are the most common legal services that are needed or requested?
2. What are the most common challenges or barriers to accessing legal services for the immigrant community?
3. Based on your organization's interaction with the immigrant community, what gaps in service have you noticed or identified?
4. What services do you or your organization provide/specialize in?

RESULTS

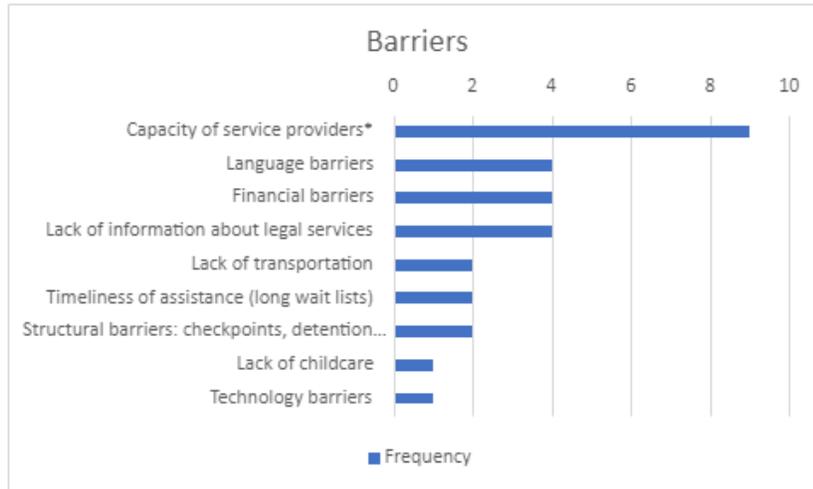
Identified needs

Based on your organization's interaction with the local immigrant community, what are the most common legal services that are needed or requested?



Identified barriers

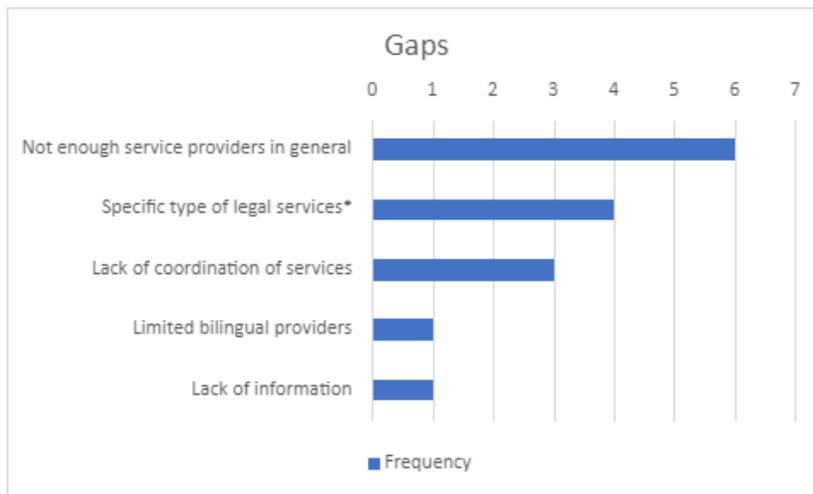
What are the most common challenges or barriers to accessing legal services for the immigrant community?



* Including funding restrictions or lack of funding, references to difficulties of attracting legal talent

Identified gaps

Based on your organization's interaction with the immigrant community, what gaps in service have you noticed or identified?



*Specific legal services cited include: non detained asylum, U visas (long backlogs), civil services for immigrants - eviction defense, family law, guardianship, Title 42, Kids in CYFD custody who needed SIJ representation, citizenship, services for farmworkers, services to rural areas, and services for survivors of DV

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our initial findings indicate a need for assistance with civil legal service, access to information about services, and connecting with services providers/additional services providers.

Platicas

Know Your Rights/Legal Clinics

We host legal clinics but call them “platicas” and these would be workshop/ teach-in style seminars focusing on topics that provide information to help the Las Cruces immigrant community learn every day/basic law to help them navigate life in the U.S. For example, have they established a voluntary guardianship for U.S. born children should parents be deported. How to protect a bank account, property, insurance beneficiary, housing issues if they have established any of these things. We can identify other topics as well. In addition, we can help answer questions about how/if folks can work or can they get a driver’s license. This is basic information that is easily overlooked.

El Calvario JFON Partnership

As a result, of our findings El Calvario has partnered with JFON to bring additional services to Southern New Mexico. The goal of this collaboration is to provide accessible and consistent legal services and information sessions to the immigrant and migrant community living in or passing through Southern New Mexico. This partnership allows us to address all three areas identified in our initial phases: assistance with civil legal service, access to information about services, and connecting with services providers. JFON also has an established Know Your Rights Program and can help facilitate the platicas.

PARTICIPANTS

Participating Legal Service Providers

Catholic Charities of Southern New Mexico
Colonias Development Council
Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services
El Calvario Immigrant Advocacy Center
Innovation Law Lab
La Casa, Inc
Lauren Armstrong, Origin Immigration Law
New Mexico Immigrant Law Center
New Mexico Legal Aid
Ray Rojas Law, LLC
Santa Fe Dreamers Project
Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid

Participating Community Organizations

ACLU of New Mexico
Advocate Visitors with Immigrants in Detention (AVID)
El Paso County Office of New Americans
Hope Border Institute
NM Café

Existing Services Offered

Participating legal service providers and community organizations shared the current services they offer. Services cited include:

Legal Services

- Advocacy
- Asylum
- Citizenship services and classes
- Crime victim services
- Deportation Defense
- Detention work
- DV related services
- Family based petitions
- Information & Referrals
- R Visas
- Trafficking victim services
- U Visas
- Work Authorization

Other Community Services

- Advocacy
- Community Convening
- Community organizing
- DV related services
- Humanitarian and Social Support
- Research