

# *Immigration Affairs Office*

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2021 Annual Report

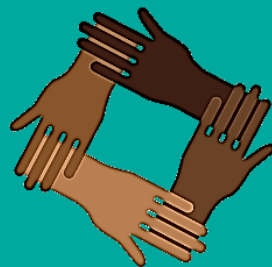
PREPARED BY

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Dane County Department of Human Services

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**Immigration Affairs  
of Dane County**





Dane County Department of Human Services  
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## Helping People Thrive in the Face of Adversity

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### Lending a helping hand

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If you have ever moved from your home you probably recall all the work and coordination involved. You had to find a place to live, get your belongings to the new place, and then make sure you had all the services like water and electricity turned on. You also had to consider what you would do to cover your expenses. If you had young children, you asked yourself where they would attend school. The farther the move, the more complicated it could become. Moving to another street in your neighborhood might be a hassle but you still know the area and can likely keep your routines. Moving across town would be more involved and you might want advice from someone who made a similar move. Moving out of state or across country, you would likely need professional help.

Now, imagine moving to another country. You have many of the same core challenges: Where will you live? How will you make money? In addition, there are social anxieties: What are the social norms? Do you need to learn a new language? There are also legal considerations: How long can you stay? When can you start working? What do you need to do to stay in the country and earn a living? Finally, you might wonder whether immigrating to another country will create a better life for your family.

The Immigration Affairs Office (IAO) of Dane County's Department of Human Services (DCDHS) works with people presenting with different legal statuses to help them understand and navigate the immigration process, address their basic human needs, and gain or maintain their legal status. IAO does this work with exemplary *empathy* for immigrants; all IAO staff are bilingual-bicultural and have personal, lived experience with the immigration process.

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With its extensive knowledge about immigration policies and regulations, IAO offers case management and direct services to meet the immediate and long-term needs of clients.

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IAO celebrates *diversity* by respecting others' beliefs and committing to assist, support, and advocate for immigrants and refugees. IAO *collaborates* with external agencies to provide universal representation, access to services, and advocacy for pro-immigrant policies. Additionally, IAO acts as a

key liaison on immigration initiatives involving community partners, healthcare providers, legal services, local government, elected officials, and law enforcement.

## 2021: A year of change and quick response

### Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

A change in the administration of the United States meant a shift in the needs of immigrants and refugees. During the Trump administration, existing DACA recipients could renew their work permits, but new applications were not accepted. With the start of the Biden administration at the beginning of 2021, new DACA applications were accepted. Given this change, IAO acted immediately – conducting outreach and assisting with filing fees. The window for new applicants was short-lived – December 4, 2020 to July 16, 2021 – when the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas prohibited the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) from granting initial DACA requests.<sup>1</sup> **Still, IAO assisted 88 clients (25% of the 359 clients served in 2021) in applying for or renewing DACA.**

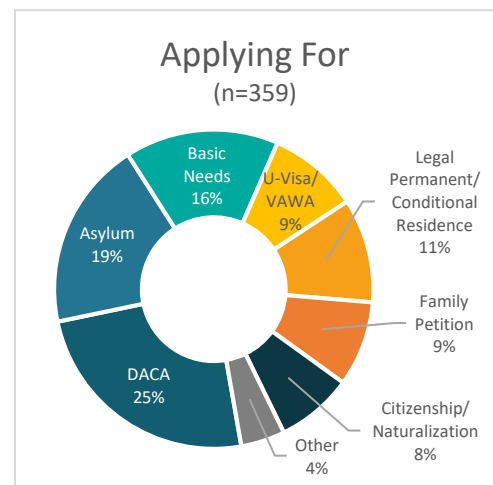


Figure 1: 2021 IAO client by type of immigration application/service requested

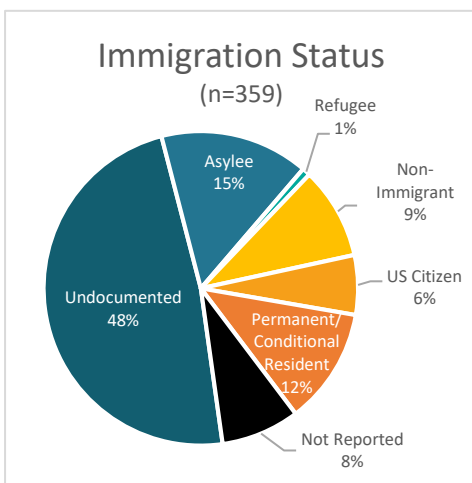


Figure 2: 2021 IAO client by immigration status

### An increase in asylum seekers

The change in presidential administrations also resulted in IAO working with more asylum seekers **(from 19 cases in 2020 to 69 cases in 2021, more than a 260% increase)**. Entrance requirements have been relaxed under the Biden administration. As a result, more asylum seekers are coming to the U.S. so they can live in safer conditions while they work on their immigration status. With this increase of asylum seekers, IAO has partnered with the Community Immigration Law Center (CILC) to conduct orientations for asylees, help them find an immigration attorney, assist with work permits, and provide financial support for filing fees.

### Afghans seek refuge in Dane County

On August 15, 2021 the Taliban took control of Kabul—the capital of Afghanistan. In the weeks that followed, thousands of Afghans left the country. Thirty-six (36) Afghan evacuees arrived in Madison.

<sup>1</sup> "Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)," U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, July 19, 2021. Accessed February 24, 2022. <https://www.uscis.gov/DACA>.

Jewish Social Services (JSS) coordinated resettlement assistance while the Catholic Multicultural Center Immigration Legal Services Program provided legal services.<sup>2</sup>

With this influx, IAO mobilized funds and provided staff support to Afghan families. **IAO advocated for \$50,000 to aid Afghan refugees.** Dane County Executive Parisi included the \$50,000 in the 2022 Dane County budget earmarked for Afghan refugee support. Additionally, IAO worked collaboratively with Jewish Social Services providing case management services for three families that involved:

- finding a Pashto interpreter to work with the families;
- collaborating with UW Hospital, Ronald McDonald House, JSS, Open Doors, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to make sure the families received needed medical care and treatment, temporary shelter, long-term housing, school enrollment, and immigration legal assistance for families of children who were hospitalized.

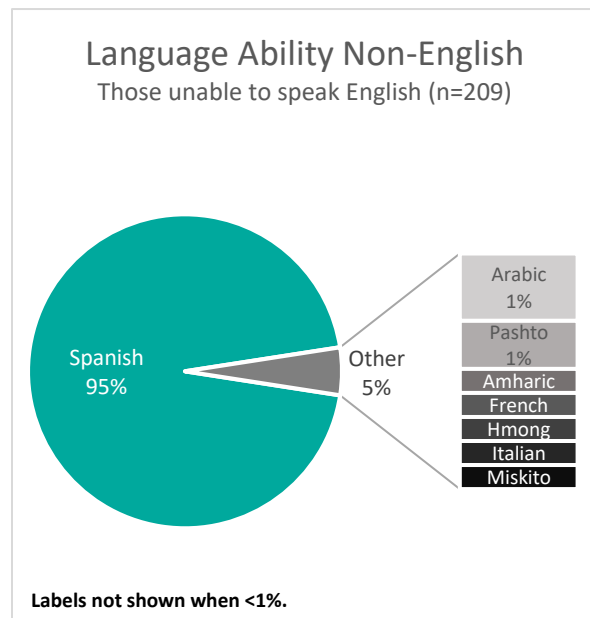


Figure 3: Languages spoken by 2021 IAO clients who do not speak English

**IAO’s work with Afghan refugees who speak Pashto exemplifies IAO’s ability to work with non-English speakers. More than one-half (58%) of clients served by IAO in 2021 could not speak English. Most are Spanish speakers, but some speak languages other than English or Spanish.**

## 2021: A year of unrelenting adversity

COVID-19 continued to challenge countries, economies, and people worldwide in 2021. IAO persevered to meet the immigrant community’s needs during the unrelenting stress of the pandemic. Simultaneously IAO supported Dane County Department of Human Services’ core mission to **provide access to effective, innovative, and evidence-based services and resources that support wellbeing, opportunities to thrive, safety, and justice to persons of all backgrounds.**

### COVID-19’s disproportionate impact on immigrant communities

COVID-19 strained all households nationally but the pandemic had a disproportional impact on the immigrant community. Many undocumented people work in low-wage service jobs. These were some of

<sup>2</sup> Emily Hammer, “Dane County doing its ‘small part’ to help support, welcome arriving Afghan refugees,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 30, 2021, [https://madison.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/dane-county-doing-its-small-part-to-help-support-welcome-arriving-afghan-refugees/article\\_312917a6-f409-5c98-88ca-7aceacf15231.html](https://madison.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/dane-county-doing-its-small-part-to-help-support-welcome-arriving-afghan-refugees/article_312917a6-f409-5c98-88ca-7aceacf15231.html).

the first jobs lost to COVID-19. This resulted in these families scrambling for other sources of income. While U.S. citizens were eligible for federal and state assistance, such as stimulus checks and unemployment insurance, undocumented workers were not eligible for this assistance. This made undocumented individuals and families extremely vulnerable to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this time, immigrants faced federally-mandated requirements to renew their DACA every two years. The renewal fee added additional financial burden during COVID-19 and was exacerbated by paperwork backlogs slowing the processing of these renewals. Additionally, Dane County immigrants felt added stress because of loved ones detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Stressors included crowded conditions, the possibility of contracting COVID, transfer of detainees to facilities far away from their family, and fear of deportation due to a lack of proper representation. During this time, family members and lawyers of detainees were often unable to visit detainees.

IAO extended a helping hand whenever possible. Throughout 2021, IAO supported members of the immigrant community by **distributing more than \$58,500** of combined funding from Dane County, Centro Hispano<sup>3</sup>, Dane County Supervisors wraparound, and donations. IAO met the need for filing fees such as those to file for DACA renewal. Additional funding went to support basic needs, translation, medical exams as required by application processes, consultation, passport fees, and emergency response.

IAO’s response to COVID-19 also included advocacy. IAO worked with Senator Tammy Baldwin’s office as needed to advance immigration cases and reached out to the Mexican Consulate to advocate for assistance with conditions in ICE detention centers.

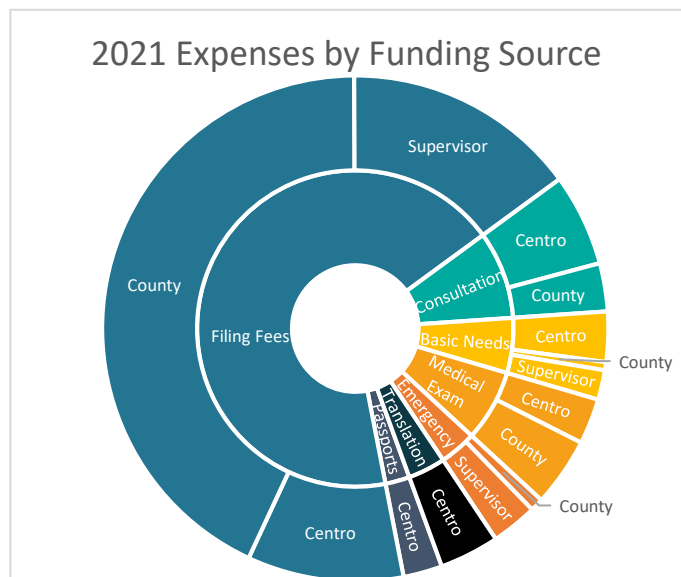


Figure 4: 2021 IAO expenditures by funding source

## 2021: A year of overcoming the odds and celebration

Partnership with Latino Health Council resulted in COVID-19 vaccinations

While COVID-19 disproportionately affected immigrant and refugee lives, IAO developed a partnership with the Latino Health Council (LHC) to vaccinate the Latinx community. The success of this partnership is reflected in Dane County’s vaccination status at the end of 2021, **“91% of the [Latino population] 12**

<sup>3</sup> IAO worked with the [Latino Consortium for Action](#) (LCA) to raise \$1.5 million to support Madison’s Latinx community. Centro Hispano disperses LAC Emergency Relief Fund to IAO to support emergency need as well as basic needs.

*and older have gotten at least one shot of the COVID vaccine.*<sup>4</sup> This was an important effort in advancing *racial justice* and *providing resources to support the wellbeing* of immigrants and refugees.

## Immigration Fair increases number of safety plans for families

In November 2021, IAO collaborated with Madison College, Centro Hispano, CILC, and other agencies to host the first two-day Immigration Fair attended by more than 200 people. This was a safe space for immigrants to ask immigration attorneys questions in private. Participants were also able to file papers with the Mobile Mexican Consulate from Milwaukee, receive a COVID-19 vaccine, and create safety plans. Safety plans help people think through what to do in case of an emergency – such as detainment by ICE or other emergencies that separate them from their local family. The safety plans cover what to do with important documents, who will take care of children if families are separated, and how to reunite the family again. Attendees were provided with a “Know Your Rights” folder and learned what Power of Attorney (POA) is and if they need it. They received instructions for obtaining passports for children as well as how to document bank accounts and contact information. The fair was impactful in *providing resources to support safety and justice* and IAO hopes it will become an annual event.

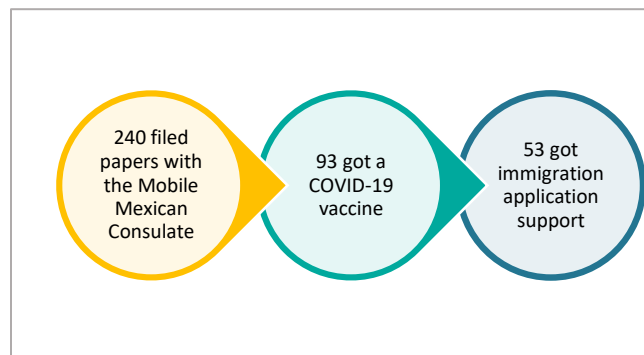


Figure 5: Outcomes form the 2021 immigration fair

## Dreams become reality

### *Providing pathways for social workers to support immigrant and refugee communities*

University of Wisconsin–Madison established the Center for DREAMers in 2021. “The Center for DREAMers empowers DACAmented students to achieve their higher education goals in Wisconsin through access to culturally responsive legal representation, social services, and educational and career services.”<sup>5</sup> IAO contributes to the center by supervising a Master of Social Work student intern. It is IAO’s goal to prepare future social workers to aid immigrant and refugee communities through this collaboration.

In addition to supervising the Center for DREAMers social work intern, IAO hosts student interns who provide case management and client response services for the IAO office. Student interns contribute greatly to the team. In the summer of 2021, after a successful internship, IAO hired one of these interns into an LTE position upon graduation expanding program case management capacity.

<sup>4</sup> Allison Garfield, “After outreach, 91% of local Latinos 12 and up have at least one COVID shot,” *The Cap Times*, December 20, 2021, [https://captimes.com/news/health/after-outreach-91-of-local-latinos-12-and-up-have-at-least-one-covid-shot/article\\_d16a27ec-4b9e-578e-8a3a-2f949f388290.html](https://captimes.com/news/health/after-outreach-91-of-local-latinos-12-and-up-have-at-least-one-covid-shot/article_d16a27ec-4b9e-578e-8a3a-2f949f388290.html).

<sup>5</sup> “About Us,” Center for DREAMers, Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://dreamers.law.wisc.edu/about/>.

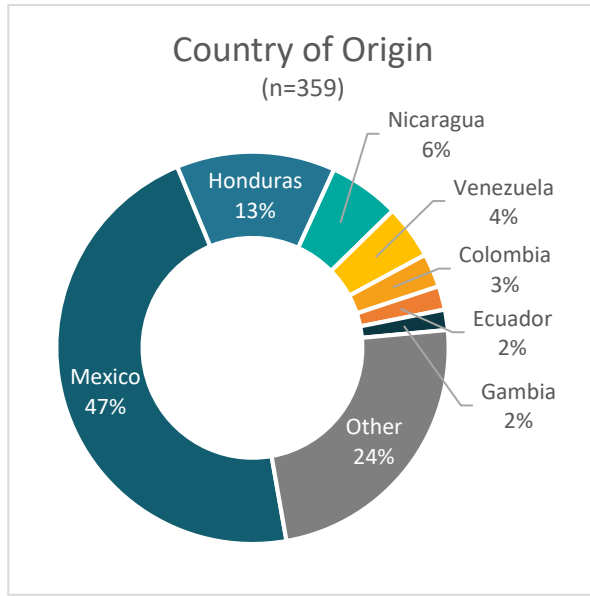


Figure 6: 2021 IAO clients by country of origin

### Reuniting with roots

Aside from advancing careers, IAO impacts their staff by helping them reconnect with their roots. IAO encouraged one of its staff to use vacation time for travel to their home country for the first time in 21 years. This staff member is a DACA recipient and was able to travel through Advance Parole. IAO plans to apply learnings from this experience to assist clients in applying for Advance Parole so they can safely travel outside of the U.S.

This is an important vision given the wide array of countries of origin of IAO clients. The chart to the left shows the most common countries of origin.

**About one-fourth (24% or 70 families) come from “other” countries of origin which represents 39 additional countries.**

### Years of work result in positive outcomes for two families

A single father of five children was referred to IAO two years ago after his immigration attorney recognized the family’s need for additional support. IAO helped with financial support for rent and immigration filing fees. The family got their Wisconsin state identification and Honduran passports with help from IAO and they were ready to make additional progress toward becoming U.S. citizens. **In 2021, the family reached a major milestone – their U-Visa application was approved!** IAO looks forward to continuing to support the family as the family continues their journey to full citizenship.

One Libyan mother defied the odds and was granted the visa she needed. IAO has worked with this client for years. The goal of the case was to reunite the client with her family in the United States. She was born in the U.S. then lived in Libya for some time where she had children. When conditions in Libya became unsafe for her, she returned to the U.S. However, she wanted to bring her children and husband, but they were not U.S. citizens and had to stay in Libya. When she spoke with immigration attorneys, many refused to take her case. IAO was able to intervene and convinced an attorney to supervise the Jewish Social Services Department of Justice (JSS DOJ) representative who took her case. She was making progress to bring her family to the U.S. when one of her children got sick and she needed to return to Libya. IAO found a volunteer to look after her apartment in Dane County. After her visa was approved, **she was able to bring her children and husband to the U.S. in November 2021.** IAO and the volunteer made sure they had a warm welcome upon arrival and transportation to Dane County from Chicago.

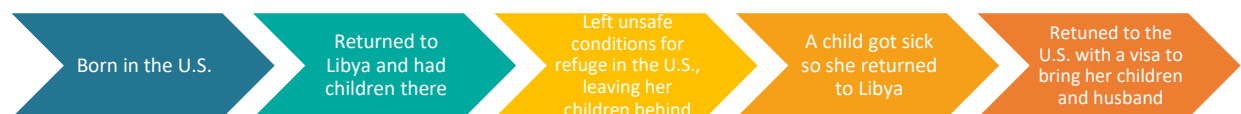


Figure 7: A Libyan mother's journey to immigration to the U.S. for herself and her family

## Check-in on goals

IAO will continue to adapt to the needs of the immigrant and refugee community in 2022, knowing that ever-changing external factors play a large role in their work making responsiveness and adaptability essential. Even with the need to be flexible, IAO is committed to three goals for 2022 to better serve Dane County's immigrant and refugee community:

### In 2021 IAO promised to... and delivered on...      In 2022 IAO will focus on...

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Designing and implementing a database to more effectively track client information and analyze program outcomes</li><li>✓ Raising \$10,000 for immigration filing fees and other client expenses with its Dane County partners</li><li>✓ Providing subject matter expertise in the Department's review of its translation and interpretation services</li><li>✓ Co-facilitating the Prevention and Early Intervention work group reviewing and recommending service delivery improvements to the Latinx community</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Using its new database to conduct more efficient case management with timely follow-ups</li><li>○ Mobilizing resources to address service needs for asylum seekers</li><li>○ Retaining and increasing staff with lived-experience</li></ul> |
|---|---|

## Reach out, get involved, make a difference

IAO relies on partners and the generosity of the local community. If you want to get involved or have questions about the IAO office, please reach out – IAO appreciates the opportunity to connect with community members.

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For more information, check out the IAO website

<https://www.danecountyhumanservices.org/Children-Youth-and-Family/Immigration-Affairs>

Or call 608-242-6260 to make an appointment to stop by the IAO office at  
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