

Immigration Affairs Office

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY

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Immigration Affairs
of Dane County

The Immigration Affairs Office

Overview:

The Immigration Affairs Office (IAO) of Dane County Department of Human Services is staffed with a bilingual-bicultural Supervisor and a bilingual-bicultural Social Worker that support the local immigrant and refugee community. 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. IAO also collaborates with outside agencies that focus on different aspects of immigrant concerns such as providing universal representation, access to local services, and advocacy for pro-immigrant policies. Through its community partnerships, IAO has established the Immigration Enforcement Response Team of Dane County, facilitated “Know Your Rights” information sessions, and worked with other local organizations that provide immigration services. Additionally, this office acts as a key liaison on immigration initiatives involving local government, elected officials, and law enforcement. IAO is located at 818 West Badger Road in Madison and co-located with Joining Forces for Families Badger Road and the Dane County Community Restorative Court.

Direct Services and Case Management:

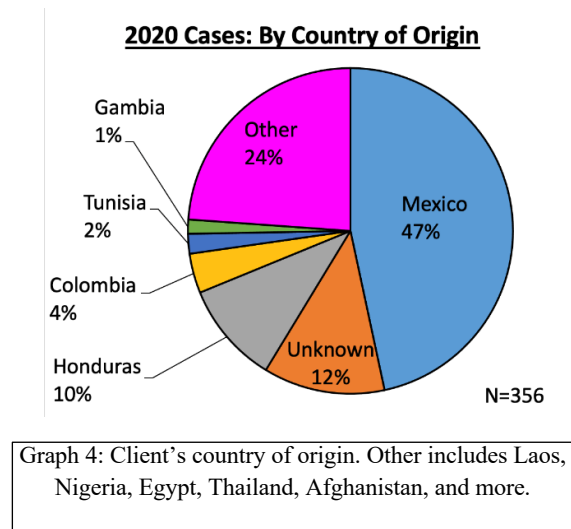
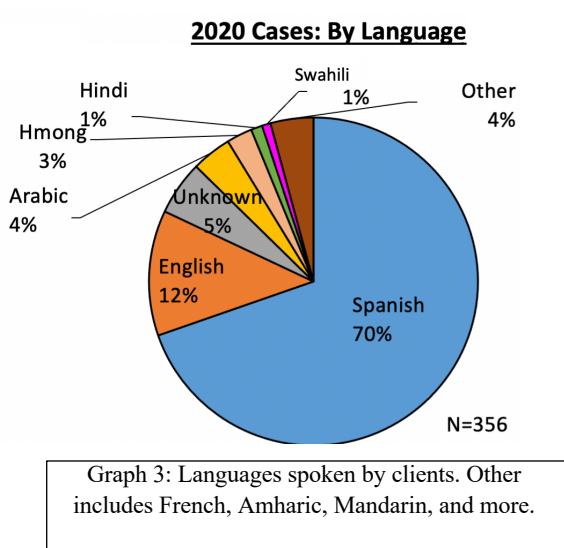
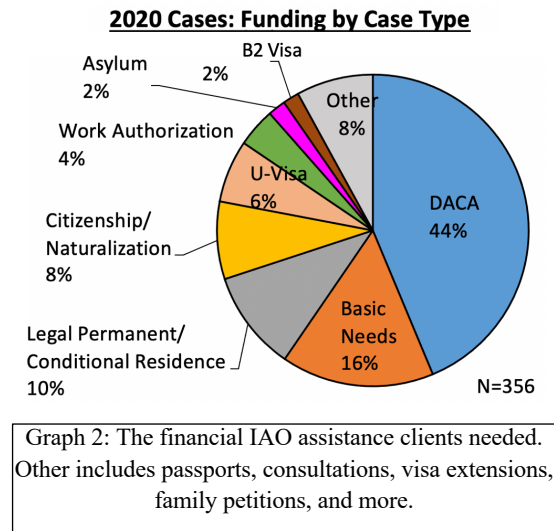
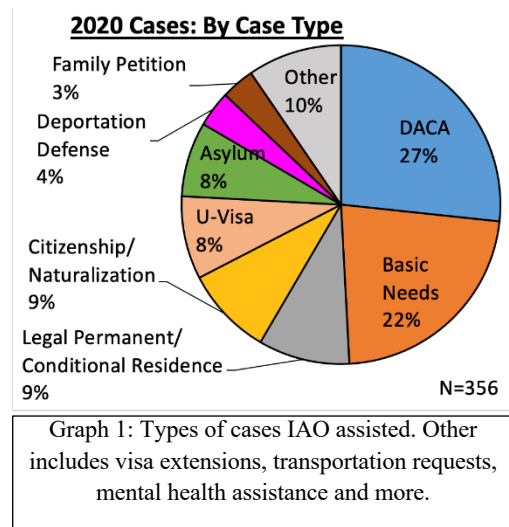
During 2020, IAO saw an increase in its caseload assisting an average of 30 families and individuals a month and 356 families for the year. These cases included immigrants and refugees with a variety of statuses such as asylees, refugees, undocumented immigrants, legal permanent and conditional residents, and U.S. citizens. IAO assisted Dane County immigrants detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) throughout 2020. The office connected individuals in deportation proceedings to attorneys from the Community Immigration Law Center (CILC) and the Immigrant Justice Clinic (IJC) to provide legal deportation defense. IAO also worked with the family of detainees to provide case management services in a holistic way. One aspect of this entailed the IAO Supervisor becoming a public notary to better assist in this work.

IAO works in partnership with other service providers to meet the needs of their clients. For example, since 2019, they have been working with a family of five seeking asylum. When IAO staff met the family, the mother was pregnant; her family did not have health insurance and were experiencing homelessness. They were also without support and legal representation regarding their asylum case. Since then, CILC has been providing the family with legal assistance. JFF has also helped them to obtain housing, medical services and assistance with other basic needs, including beds for their children and other household essentials.

2020 Data

Of the 356 families that IAO served in 2020, approximately 20 had contact or were open with the mandated child welfare components of DCDHS (e.g. CPS, Youth Justice and Foster Care). The charts below reflect the primary cases and demographics related to IAO's service population and are not necessarily mutually exclusive with regard to basic needs. IAO will provide much more detailed reporting on the population served and program outcomes with the development of a new data system in 2021.

IAU Client Data



COVID-19 Pandemic

IAO staff witness the hardships many of our community members face because of the pandemic. Individuals, families, and entire communities have shared their struggles with staff. These include:

- Food and job insecurity,
- Safety at work,
- Insufficient safe and affordable housing,
- Limited access to testing,
- Inadequate health care responses to mental health issues,
- Concerns about the education of their children and,
- A lack of information about the virus to guide them in their personal decisions.

IAO quickly pivoted to primarily a virtual response to meet community needs at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that undocumented immigrants did not receive stimulus relief, IAO collaborated with the Latinx Consortium for Action (LCA) to distribute \$1.18 million funds to 1,464 undocumented immigrants and their families. Latinx businesses were also able to receive funding. These funds helped meet immediate basic needs, primarily with rental assistance.

Special Projects:

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals - This past year Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) had a case pending in the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS). Anticipating a decision, IAO worked with community partners to ensure that DACA recipients were renewing their work permits in advance by providing pro-bono or discount services. Funding was available to individuals that could not afford immigration filing fees due to the impact of the pandemic on their finances. IAO coordinated efforts with CILC, IJC, and Centro Hispano of Dane County to provide outreach, disseminate information, and provide social services. Once SCOTUS made the decision to reinstate the program to its original state, local agencies prioritized assistance to first-time DACA applicants. As a result of this decision, applicants now receive access to a work permit, and a social security number. This allows them to have a driver's license in states where driver's licenses are not available to undocumented immigrants as is the case in Wisconsin.

Asylum – In July 2020, IAO recognized that there was a need of services for asylum seekers in Dane County. They wrote a successful proposal for the Community Immigration Law Center (CILC) to help with asylum orientations. Consequently, nineteen asylum-seeking families have been able to receive orientations since August of last year. This year these services will transfer from CILC to the Immigrant Justice Clinic (IJC). In short, IAO's efforts created additional services for asylum seekers.

Mental Health - IAO joined the Latinx Mental Health Coalition to advocate for increased access to mental health services for the uninsured Latinx community. Clients with limited or no health insurance face many barriers accessing mental health services. Currently, few organizations accept individuals without health insurance and most do not have bilingual/bicultural mental health providers. IAO hopes that their advocacy results in increased access to mental health services in 2021.

Fundraising - Due to the IAO's involvement with the Dane County Immigration Assistance Collaborative, the program received \$10,000 for the immigration wraparound fund, administered through Centro Hispano. The funding enables IAO to respond quickly and flexibly to the needs of immigrants in crisis. For example, the fund offers financial assistance for immigration-related expenses including immigration filing fees, consultation charges, and other immigration needs.

Advocacy - In addition to advocating for asylum orientations, IAO engaged in other forms of advocacy. It worked with Kids Forward and other immigrant and refugee advocates to provide input to Wisconsin policymakers on building a budget that addresses the needs of immigrant and refugee communities. They also collaborated with the Dane Sanctuary Coalition to provide free transportation to USCIS court and field offices in Milwaukee and Chicago. IAO staff also attended meetings with their community partners involving elected officials such as Tammy Baldwin, Mark Pocan, and Governor Tony Evers to discuss the impact of current immigration policies.

Partnerships:

In order to provide efficient and effective services to the immigrant and refugee community, IAO also engages in other local community partnerships and initiatives. Partners include Centro Hispano, Community Immigration Law Center, Immigrant Justice Clinic, Jewish Social Services (JSS), Open Doors for Refugees, Catholic Multicultural Center, Literacy Network, Latino Health Council, Latino Education Council, Latino Chamber of Commerce, Latino Academy for Workforce Development, UNIDOS against Domestic Violence, Dane Sanctuary Coalition, and Voces de la Frontera.

Additionally, IAO is also involved in several other collaborative efforts including the Latino Children and Families Council, JSS/Refugee joint meetings, Dane County Refugee Network, Latino Support Network, Immigration Enforcement Response Team, and Latino Consortium for Action.

2021 IAO Future Goals and Projects:

1. Design and implement a database to more effectively track client information and analyze program outcomes.
2. Raise \$10,000 for immigration filing fees and other client expenses with its Dane County partners.

3. Provide subject matter expertise in the Department's review of translation and interpretation services.
4. Co-facilitate the Prevention and Early Intervention work group reviewing and recommending service delivery improvements to the Latinx community.



Immigration Affairs
of Dane County

INCLUDE EMBRACE EMPOWER

Providing accessible services to the immigrant and refugee community in Dane County through outreach, advocacy, and case management.

Location

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