Current Legal Services in Immigration Detention in Orange County

There are 2 detention facilities in Orange County – James A. Musick Facility and Theo Lacy. Once a month at James A. Musick, Public Counsel offers a Legal Orientation Program (LOP) to detainees, where they are offered advice on how to proceed with their case, if they have no attorney. There are Accredited Representatives there to do intake and attorneys to offer legal advice. On any given LOP day, there are about 50 folks seeking legal advice. The attorneys do NOT take of the cases themselves, but leave it to the detainees to complete the forms they are given and go through the removal proceedings by themselves. Four (4) of the Accredited Representatives are from Catholic Charities of Orange County and have been helping out with LOP for approximately 2 years. Theo Lacy currently is designated as one of the 10 worst facilities in the nation by Detention Watch Network and yet it has no Legal Orientation Program nor scheduled attorney visits.

Proposed Project

Catholic Charities of Orange County, through a collaboration among Public Counsel, Esperanza Immigrants Rights Project, and CLINIC (Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. - Bishop Kevin Vann, President), proposes to increase the legal representation for indigent and low income asylum seekers in detention by utilizing a supervising attorney and fully accredited Board of Immigration Appeals representatives to file asylum applications and represent clients in removal and bond proceedings. Other project staff will provide support to the attorney and representatives. **Proposed Budget: $150,000.**

The Need

**Asylum Seekers: the Most Vulnerable Population in Detention**

- Between 2012 and 2016, 65,218 immigrants presented themselves at the U.S. border and asked for asylum; they were immediately put in detention until the courts rule on their asylum petition (This may take years). *Dept. of Justice Report March 2017*
- Between 2011 and 2016 there were approximately 2,184 asylum seekers in detention in Orange and L.A. Counties. All were in removal proceedings in the Los Angeles Immigration Court.
- In general, they are poor, traumatized from events in their country and on the journey to the U.S.
- Often have no friends or family in California, nor in the U.S.
- They don’t understand the culture, often don’t speak English, and are clueless about how immigration courts work.

Conclusion

Applying for asylum is a complicated process that is almost impossible to complete for a person who is unfamiliar with the conditions under which it can be granted. Filling out the application is in itself a daunting task for people who have limited English, are not accustomed to filling out forms in any language, and have no knowledge of the legal system. Once the application has been completed, asylum seekers have a limited amount of time in which to gather evidence to support their claims. For people in detention, unable to contact friends and family in their home countries, this is an almost impossible task. Finally, appearing in court to defend themselves without an advocate, facing a judge and a government attorney trained to find the weaknesses in their cases, asylum seekers are simply unprepared and overwhelmed.

Ways You Can Help

*Asylum Seekers come to our shores from all over the world.*

*We need interpreters to help with asylum claims and application forms.*

*We are serving indigent and low income asylum seekers.*

*We need funding for the project.*
Immigration Detention’s Impact On Rates Of Representation And Success In Immigration Court In Los Angeles

![Detained Individuals by Representation Status Los Angeles](chart)

Rates of Success (%)
By Representation and Custody Status
In Los Angeles


- 68% of **detained** immigrants in California are **unrepresented**; of those, 6% are successful with their claims
- 32% of **detained** immigrants are **represented**; of those, 32% are successful with their claims
- In comparison, 67% of **released** immigrants who are **represented** are successful with their claims

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