

IN HOUSTON:  
MOBILIZING IN DEFENSE  
OF THE IMMIGRANT  
COMMUNITY

HOUSTON IMMIGRATION  
LEGAL SERVICES COLLABORATIVE

# OUR FRAMEWORK

The **vision** of the Collaborative is that no Houston immigrant goes without legal assistance while seeking legal status and navigating the complexities of the U.S. immigration system.

The **mission** of the Collaborative is to create a coordinated network of effective and efficient services to assist low-income immigrants access the information and legal representation that allows them to make choices in their own best interest.

# OUR PLAN

Founded in 2013, the Collaborative works to implement our “Community Plan,” completed in October 2014 and revised in 2016. Areas of focus:

- Organizational Development
- Legal services capacity
- Access to services
- Communications

Read community plan @ [www.houstonimmigration.org/about-us/](http://www.houstonimmigration.org/about-us/)

# COMMITMENT TO QUALITY SERVICES

Collaborative members...

- provide high-quality services
- provide free and low-cost services
- work in clients' best interests
- are successful at advocating for clients
- are trustworthy
- do not commit fraud or unauthorized practice of law
- have a demonstrated commitment to collaboration
- are committed to best-practices



# ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Strategic Intention:

A strong and growing **network** of service providers and funders collectively identifies gaps in services, implements solutions, holds each other **accountable** for the quality of services provided, and ensures that the Collaborative provides **benefits** to its members.

## Initiatives

- Became an official 509a3 **Supporting Organization** under the Greater Houston Community Foundation in 2016.
- Brought on a **Legal Director** in 2016 to provide mentorship and support to legal services non-profits.
- Developing **new local funders**. Have distributed over \$1.2M in funding (direct and aligned) since 2014.
- Growing the Collaborative's **membership**.

# LEGAL SERVICES CAPACITY

## **Strategic Intention:**

Increase the **quality** and **quantity** of high-quality, low-cost immigration **legal service providers** in the greater Houston region equipped to serve Houston's low-income immigrant population.

## Initiatives

- **Connecting** Collaborative stakeholders to training opportunities offered by technical assistance providers and local experts.
- In 2016, awarded \$426,000 in **grant funding** to 6 Collaborative projects that support services for DACA 2012, DAPA outreach and fraud prevention, and other legal services.

# LEGAL SERVICES CAPACITY

## Initiatives Cont.

- Prepared **contingency plan** for multi-agency workshops/screenings for DAPA/DACA+.
- Monthly **Pro Se Asylum Workshops** coordinated with volunteer attorneys and non-profits (Tahirih Justice Center & Human Rights First) provide limited legal assistance to asylum-seeking adults with children who do not have attorneys.



# LEGAL SERVICES CAPACITY

## Initiatives Cont.

- Host regular **trainings** for attorneys and BIA accredited reps on topics like: client interviews, self-care for attorneys, asylum strategy, screening clients for relief, etc.
- Provided support & training to 6 new organizations to become **BIA (DOJ) recognized**, able to legally offer limited immigration legal services.





# ACCESS TO SERVICES

## Strategic Intention:

**Improve** and **streamline** immigrants' ability to **access** existing immigration legal services and ancillary social services to which low-income immigrants lack adequate access.

## Initiatives

- Taskforce working on a **coordinated screening and referral** tool for immigrants seeking legal services in Houston.
- Partnering with Harris County Attorney's Office & Hispanic Issues Section of State Bar of Texas to combat **notario fraud**.
- Pilot project with local **mental health** provider to provide free forensic health evaluations and counseling to clients of immigration legal services providers.

# COMMUNICATIONS

**Strategic Intention:** Be a source of timely and accurate information for members, stakeholders, and potential clients of immigration service providers.

## Initiatives

- PSA runs regularly on ABC13 and Fox.
- Collaborative press statements
- Collaborative press conferences
- Host and participate in regular panels & KYR presentations about immigration policy and law.
- HILSC Twitter: @HTXimmigration
- HILSC website: [www.houstonimmigration.org](http://www.houstonimmigration.org)



## PIVOTS IN 2017

- 2016/2017: Co-facilitated **Welcoming Houston** Initiative, a city-wide strategic planning project about how to make Houston more welcoming to immigrants and refugees.
- **Texas Immigrant Rights Hotline**: 888-507-2970. Hotline gives KYR, referrals to organizations, and updates on policy.
- **Rapid Response**: Family Preparedness Workshops, coordination of pro bono attorneys (airport response, workshops, CLE's, etc), deportation defense training
- Creating **resources** for legal services providers and the community: <http://www.houstonimmigration.org/resources/>
- **Ongoing discussions**: expanding legal capacity to serve detained adults & inform impact litigation

# COLLABORATIVE ORGS SPEAKING TODAY



HOUSTON  
ENDOWMENT

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# CONTACTS

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