



Advocates for Basic  
Legal Equality, Inc.

## ABLE IMMIGRATION ADVOCACY PROJECT REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



**The Immigration Advocacy Project at Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. (ABLE) ensures that low-income immigrants in the Miami Valley have access to quality legal services, advocacy, and educational information in order to stabilize their immigration status. ABLE is committed to providing legal representation to immigrants and refugees in order to keep families together, build a stronger community, and protect victims of crime.**

Our work is made possible by the commitment of our funders, including the Consulate of Mexico in Indianapolis, Dayton Foundation, Montgomery County Human Services Levy Contingency Fund, the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation (OLAF), Welcome Dayton, and many supportive individuals.

Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. (ABLE), with the support of community partners, has created a project to expand the availability of quality immigration services to members of the Miami Valley community who are seeking a better life but cannot afford a private attorney.

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Since 2014, ABLE has improved access to quality immigration services to members of the Miami Valley community who are victims of crime, have family ties in this community, or are fleeing persecution in their home country. But the progress we have made over the past two years is at risk.

The current political climate has caused immigrants and refugees living in the Miami Valley to be concerned. Given potential changes at the federal level, immigrants and refugees are seeking assurance that everyone living in the United States has certain basic rights under our U.S. Constitution.

This time of uncertainty makes the need for ABLE's services more necessary than ever. The right to legal representation is a key part of a larger movement to obtain justice and fairness for immigrants.. Despite the catastrophic consequences of deportation, there is no right to free legal counsel for low-income immigrants in deportation proceedings. Approximately 37% of immigrants in deportation proceedings have legal representation, according to a September 2016 American Immigration Council report. All foreign-born residents need a resource available to assist with possible immigration options.

### **We need to stand with people who are fearful.**

Through community outreach and partnership collaboration, ABLE provides immigrants and refugees with the information and tools necessary to keep families together and prevent deportation. Advocacy tools include providing educational and legal information about immigrant rights, presentations informing immigrants about available immigration resources and benefits, and direct legal representation. ABLE services include screening for eligibility and providing service for whatever option is in a client's best interest, including humanitarian relief options, such as asylum, U Visa, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), T Visa, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), and deportation defense.

Working together with Welcome Dayton, ABLE has conducted asylum, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Refugee Adjustment of Status, and naturalization workshops and clinics, and provides leadership on the Welcome Dayton Committee, and Government and Justice Subcommittee.

**As immigrants and refugees in the Miami Valley face uncertainty about the future, ABLE is prepared to lead a multifaceted advocacy strategy, working with all relevant stakeholders, members of the city, county, and state administrations, faith communities, members of the business community, and union leaders.**

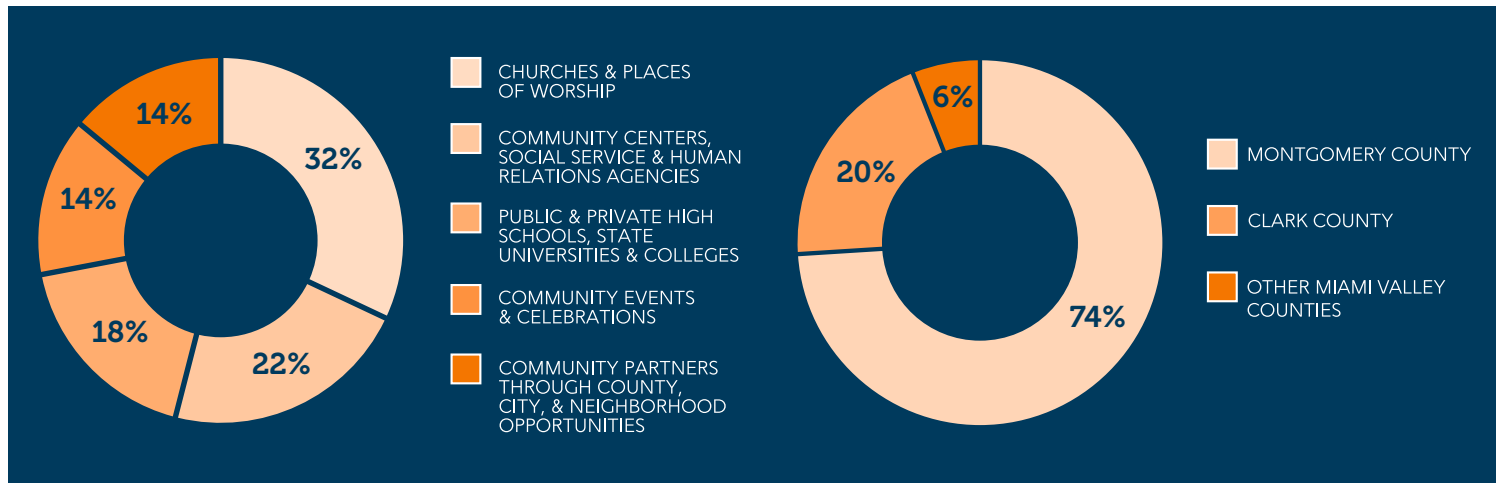
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## How ABLÉ's Immigration Advocacy Project makes a difference:

In 2016, ABLÉ reached more than **1,000** people directly through **31** community outreach presentations and a number of news articles, stories, and information shared through various media outlets. Thousands more were reached with written and online materials.

IMPACT OF COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS AND OUTREACH

RESIDENCES OF CLIENTS FOR REPRESENTATION (including Counsel and Advice)



Hundreds of people in the Miami Valley were provided with counsel and advice following each outreach presentation and through professional courtesy calls and e-mails from community partners. As a result of ABLÉ's immigration questionnaire and in-depth screening, the majority of individuals screened were eligible for some immigration benefits and retained ABLÉ to represent them in that application for relief.

## Results of Screening and Investigation.

As a result of ABLÉ's immigration questionnaire and in-depth screening, the majority of individuals screened were eligible for some immigration benefits and retained ABLÉ to represent them in that application for relief.

CASES ACCEPTED FOR FULL REPRESENTATION

**70% (133)**

CASES ACCEPTED FOR COUNSEL & ADVICE ONLY

**30% (58)**

SPECIFIC CASE TYPE IN THE MIAMI VALLEY

Naturalization & Citizenship	13
DACA & DACA Renewal	19
Family Reunification	57
U Visa / VAWA	41
Immigrant Children	36
Asylum	6
Other	19



Vivienne's traffickers promised her a better-paying job and the chance to go to school in America. What they gave her when she arrived from Malawi was a brutal life of domestic servitude. For more than two years, Vivienne endured physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Attorneys from ABLE became part of Vivienne's rescue team. They helped Vivienne acquire a T Visa so she could continue living and working in the United States. They also represented her while Vivienne assisted with a federal investigation of her traffickers. Vivienne stills deals with the physical and psychological effects of her trauma. **Yet she has built a wonderful life for herself, achieving self-sufficiency through her job and continuing on the path to citizenship.**



Ana's story began in Guatemala, where she was born. Her father died when she was four, and Ana spent the next several years caring for her sick mother. When her mother died, Ana was left in the care of her godmother, who brought her to the United States. Since the two were not related, U.S. officials would not allow them to stay together. Ana's godmother decided to return to Guatemala and leave Ana in custody. Ana spent four months in foster care, and ABLE became involved as her advocate. Finally, the Office of Refugee Resettlement located her older sister, who did not know Ana had been brought to the United States. **Now living happily with her sister, Ana enjoys a normal carefree childhood and dreams of becoming a police officer.**



Arriving in the United States, Caleb experienced both safety and sadness. He was now far away from the rebels in his home country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who had beaten and starved him. However, Caleb had to leave his wife and five children behind when fleeing for his life. Caleb needs ongoing medical attention to treat the effects of his torture. The staff of ABLE knew his family's support was essential for Caleb to heal and live a productive life. **With their help, Caleb acquired visas for his wife and children. After three years, the family reunited to celebrate their first Christmas together in the United States.**



After coming to the United States to live with family, Sylvia fell in love and married a U.S. citizen. Soon, her husband became physically and emotionally abusive. He threatened to have Sylvia deported if she reported his attacks. Sylvia's husband also had control over her ability to obtain a green card. For more than nine years, Sylvia was held hostage by abuse and threats. Her escape began when a friend referred Sylvia to ABLE. Staff helped her file a VAWA self-petition, a special residency status for domestic violence victims married to U.S. citizens. ABLE referred Sylvia to a local safe house and resource center for abuse survivors. **With these tools, Sylvia became a lawful permanent resident and completely self-sufficient.**