



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) provides quality legal services, advocacy, and crucial legal educational information for low-income immigrants and refugees in Northwest Ohio. ABLE's advocacy is focused on protecting victims of crime, keeping families together, and building a stronger community.

Our work is made possible by the commitment of our funders, including the Board of Lucas County Commissioners; Consulate of Mexico in Detroit; Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement; Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation (OLAF); Toledo Community Foundation; United Way of Greater Toledo; and many supportive individuals.



Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. (ABLE) works to ensure the availability of quality immigration services to members of the Northwest Ohio community who are seeking a better life.

In 2017, ABLE faced, and responded to, immigration crisis after crisis. Through community presentations and individual sessions, we educated thousands of Northwest Ohioans on immigration laws and these immigration emergencies—from three versions of the Travel Ban, to an increase in home and workplace raids, to the effective termination of prosecutorial discretion, to the repeal of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), and, current as of this writing, the potential end of Temporary Protected Status as we now understand it.

After each community presentation, advocates answered general questions from the audience and provided one-on-one individual consultations. Attendees received a new ABLE publication developed in early 2017. This handbook, “Preparing Your Family for Immigration Enforcement,” was drafted and produced by ABLE in response to a marked increase in immigration enforcement. It includes details on individuals’ Constitutional rights, a Limited Power of Attorney for childcare needs, and a family emergency planning guide—all aimed at empowering families to make critical decisions for themselves in advance, rather than risking they be made later by government or agency officials. ABLE also produced wallet-sized “Know Your Rights” cards for individuals encountering law enforcement officials. Further, ABLE launched its own immigration resource website—immigration.ablelaw.org—for clients and community members to stay current on constantly-changing immigration topics.

Beyond education, ABLE provided direct legal representation to more than 400 people in 2017, prioritizing family unity and stabilization cases and cases protecting individuals from domestic violence and other crimes, persecution, torture, and human trafficking. ABLE advocates also protected immigrants and refugees from *notarios*, or consumer fraud scammers, who prey on these vulnerable members of our community.

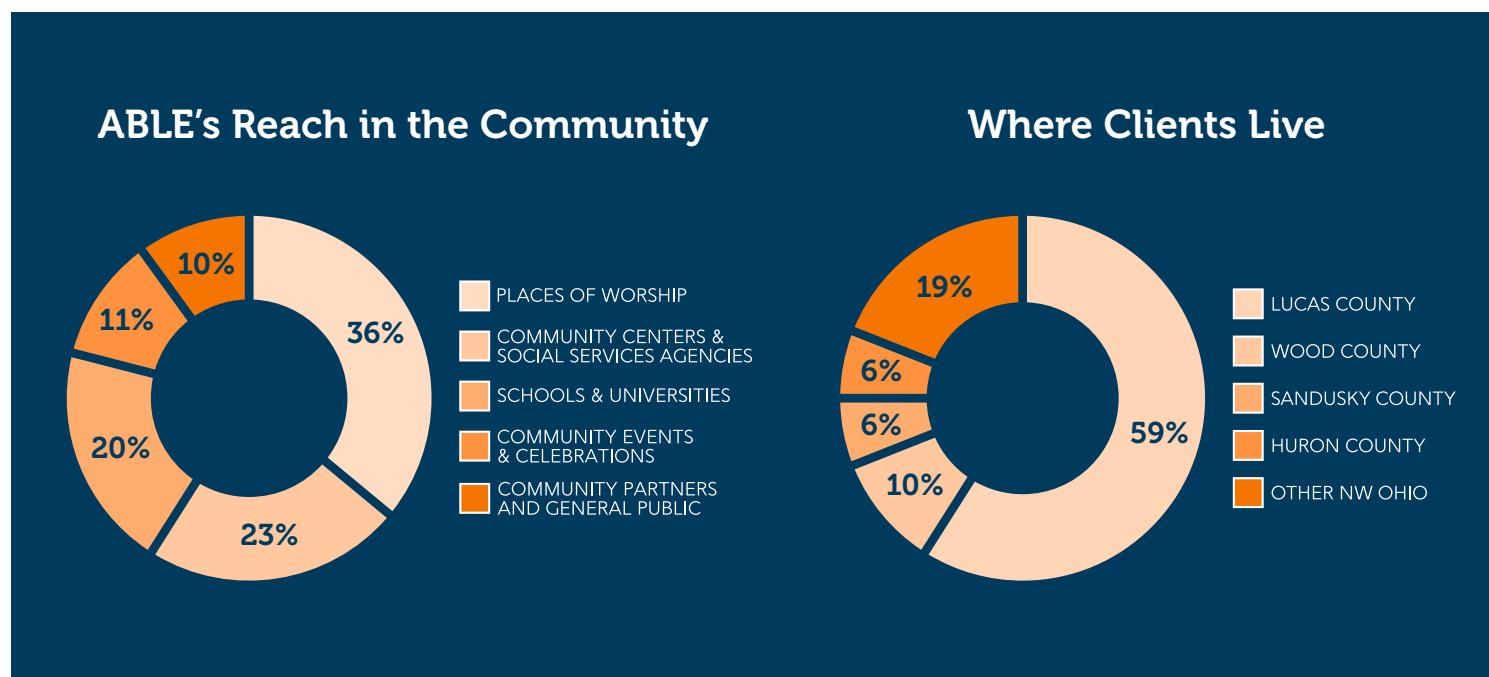
We need to stand with people who are, understandably, fearful.

ABLE also held several clinics in 2017—an informational session and legal clinic on naturalization (in partnership with Adelante, Water for Ishmael, and Welcome TLC, with funding provided by the Toledo Community Foundation), two emergency DACA clinics that occurred within weeks of the Attorney General’s announcement to end the program, as well as numerous clinics regarding increased immigration enforcement and Limited Powers of Attorney. These clinics were successful in several ways—they assisted immigrants with their direct legal issue, and they brought new lawyers into ABLE and Welcome TLC’s mission to help in future matters and thus better meet the significant community demand.

On a national level, Welcome TLC’s Legal Services Committee Co-Chair and ABLE Senior Attorney, Patty Hernández, was named a SPARK Fellow by Welcoming America. She is one of only eight people from around the country to receive this honor. Through this two-year fellowship, Hernández has met with other fellows, advocates, and community leaders from around the U.S. to discuss and exchange ideas about achieving complete immigrant integration that would result in an even more welcoming and vibrant Toledo-Lucas County.

How ABLE's Immigration Advocacy Project makes a difference:

In 2017, ABLE reached more than **4,500** people directly through **79** community outreach presentations and many news articles through various media outlets. Hundreds were provided with brief counsel and advice following outreach and presentations, and through professional communications from community partners. Thousands more were reached with written and online materials.



Results of Screening and Investigation:

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

CASES ACCEPTED FOR
FULL REPRESENTATION

91% (374)

CASES ACCEPTED FOR
COUNSEL & ADVICE ONLY

9% (39)

SPECIFIC CASE TYPE IN NORTHWEST OHIO*

48

Naturalization & Citizenship

27

178

Family Reunification

(includes Refugee Adjustment of Status)

122

25

Deportation

9

20

U Visa / VAWA

10

16

Asylum

11

60

DACA & DACA Renewal

25

66

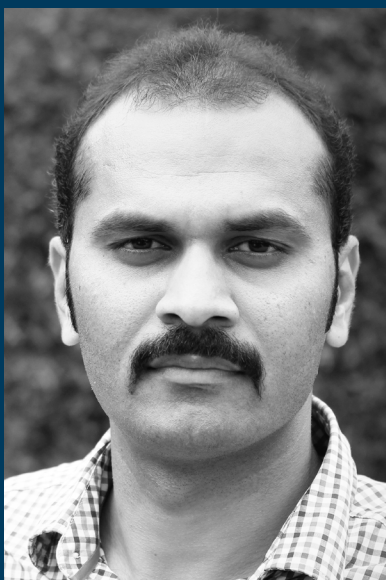
Other

41

*INCLUDES LUCAS COUNTY NUMBERS



Isabel works tirelessly to care for her disabled mother, a lawful permanent resident of the United States, and her own four children who have a variety of special needs and limitations. Her scarce free time is spent in service to her church community. Isabel has lived in the United States for the past 16 years but lacks valid immigration status. Without Isabel, her mother and children would be unable to care for themselves. ABLE is representing Isabel in removal proceedings before the Cleveland Immigration Court and has filed a Cancellation of Removal application on her behalf, with a trial scheduled for January 2019. **Isabel worries constantly about what will happen to her family if she is forced to live in Mexico.**



Brought to the United States from Mexico when he was two years old, Manuel succeeded in school and dreamed of joining the military to serve his country. Upon trying to enlist after high school, however, Manuel learned he lacked any U.S. citizenship documentation. Without any of the necessary paperwork from either country, Manuel was also unable to obtain a Mexican passport. To support his family, he made a living working numerous underpaid jobs due to his documentation limbo. The private attorneys he turned to for help charged him exorbitant fees merely to evaluate his eligibility for DACA, without any tangible relief. Manuel's stress was compounded by the domestic violence he suffered during the years of his marriage. An ABLE attorney met Manuel during a mobile Mexican Consulate session and began representing him in the DACA process. Manuel's status as a survivor of domestic violence made him eligible to file for protection under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which seeks to safeguard victims regardless of gender and provides a pathway to citizenship. His case is ongoing as he seeks permanent residency. Manuel now holds a work permit, social security number, and driver's license, allowing him to find better paying work. He can be with and provide for his children. **However, continued legal representation is essential to keep Manuel from slipping through the cracks and being forced to leave his children and his country.**



Alain felt fortunate to be granted political asylum status in the United States after arriving here from the Democratic Republic of Congo. His happiness was complete when his young children were able to join him as dependents under his asylum application. He dreamt of U.S. citizenship for himself and his family, and freedom from the threat of persecution in his home country. Alain contacted ABLE in 2016 for help filing for Adjustment of Status for his children. With ABLE's assistance, Alain's children received their permanent resident cards a few months after their applications were filed. During the same time, Alain attended one of ABLE's naturalization clinics, going on to file for naturalization and successfully passing the interview and civics test. He is excited about being sworn in as a U.S. citizen. **ABLE will continue to work with Alain as he seeks certificates of citizenship for his two youngest children, who now automatically become U.S. citizens.**