



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 and crucial legal information for immigrants and refugees in Northwest Ohio. ABLE's advocacy is focused on keeping families together, protecting victims of crime, 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); The Supreme Court of Ohio Civil Justice Program Fund; United Way of Greater Toledo; Vera Institute of Justice; and many supportive individuals.



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We are living in times of tremendous suffering for immigrants, refugees, and many vulnerable populations. Hateful rhetoric and cruel policies have harmed so many of our neighbors, friends, colleagues, and classmates. Children all over the country, including in Ohio, have been ripped from the arms of their parents and separated for months. We know that children experience many problems when their parents are taken away, including depression, anxiety, acting out, sleeplessness, and poor school performance. The pain inflicted on immigrants and refugees will be long lasting, and in many cases, irreparable.

There is a significant unmet need for representation and immigration advocacy for low-income immigrants. In 2018, Ohio saw two very large workplace raids, and there are more than 10,000 removal cases pending before the Cleveland Immigration Court, which has jurisdiction over all of Ohio. In January 2017, there were only 6,000 such cases. A recent study found that only 37% of all immigrants and 14% of detained immigrants have counsel. There is a critical need to improve access to trustworthy and affordable legal services for thousands of Ohio's immigrants.

Through community presentations and legal clinics, we educated thousands of Northwest Ohioans on immigration laws, addressed and clarified speculation about changes to policy and law, and responded quickly and effectively to many immigration emergencies. After each community presentation, advocates answered general questions from the audience and provided one-on-one individual consultations. Participants in the sessions also received a copy of ABLE's "Preparing Your Family for Immigration Enforcement: Know Your Rights." This handbook 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 under especially stressful circumstances. With a grant from the Supreme Court of Ohio Civil Justice Program Fund, the handbook is now available in six languages: English, Spanish, Arabic, Swahili, Somali, and Mandarin.

In addition to our local and statewide work, Welcome TLC's Legal Services Committee Co-Chair and ABLE Senior Attorney, Patty Hernández, has been engaging in welcoming and immigrant integration work on a national level. In June 2018, she presented at the national Welcoming Interactive in Louisville, Kentucky, about her SPARK Fellowship and how her experiences as a fellow helped shape her work in Toledo. She was also invited by the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law to speak at their annual Racial Justice Institute Alumni Convening in Chicago about the immigration raids that took place in Ohio, as well as ABLE's response to such raids. In December 2018, Patty was invited by Welcoming America to speak at the National Immigrant Integration Conference in Washington, D.C. about the welcoming certification process. She was excited to share the possibility of Toledo-Lucas County becoming the first city-county combination in the nation to receive certification and the benefits of pursuing this lofty goal.

To keep our communities safe and secure, we must strive to protect our residents. By upholding due process, we will maintain trust in the justice system and our local institutions, including law enforcement. Having efficient, effective, and fair representation is the best way to keep the system working and keep us all safe.

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How ABLÉ's Immigration Advocacy Project makes a difference:

In 2018, ABLÉ reached more than **4,500** people directly through **54** 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 referrals from community partners. Thousands more were reached with written and online materials.



Results of Screening and Investigation:

Because 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	SPECIFIC CASE TYPE IN NORTHWEST OHIO*	SPECIFIC CASE TYPE IN LUCAS COUNTY
74% (236)	40 Naturalization & Citizenship	26
	157 Family Reunification (includes Refugee Adjustment of Status)	104
	45 DACA Renewal	23
	20 U Visa / VAWA	10
	27 Deportation	4
	6 Asylum	3
	24 Other	14

*INCLUDES LUCAS COUNTY NUMBERS



Lupita is a mother of two children, a good and reliable neighbor, a server at a local restaurant, and a survivor of domestic violence. The domestic violence started with verbal abuse, but it quickly escalated to her husband locking her out of the house and threatening to call immigration authorities if she ever reported the abuse. When she tried to escape the relationship, her husband attacked and assaulted Lupita, pushing her to the ground, holding her down, punching her face, and covering her mouth so she could not breathe. Lupita thought he was going to kill her. Lupita's friend was outside waiting to take Lupita to work. Because it was taking a long

time for Lupita to come out, she went inside the house and saw Lupita being attacked. The husband ran from the house, and Lupita's friend took her to the local police station to file an incident report. Lupita filed domestic violence charges against her husband and sought a protection order. She later connected with ABLE and filed her U Visa petition with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. U Visas are set aside for victims of certain serious crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and who are helpful to law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity.

After pending for more than four years, Lupita's U Visa petition was approved in late 2018. In a few years, she will be eligible to apply for lawful permanent residency and be on a path to citizenship.



Graciela is a hard-working mother of three and a full-time teacher's aide. She came to Toledo in 1984 when she was only a year old, and she has lived here ever since. As the United States is the only country she has ever known, she was excited and relieved to learn about Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in 2012 and applied for the program right away. Since being approved for DACA, ABLE has filed two DACA renewal applications for Graciela and both were approved within weeks. Because of DACA, Graciela has been able to work without fear and picks up odd jobs whenever possible. She sacrificed, but slowly and surely saved her money.

In 2018, she purchased her first home—right here in Toledo! Her children, all U.S. citizens, are thriving in school. They enjoy various extracurricular activities and perform regularly in a folkloric dance group. Graciela hopes and prays for a clean DREAM Act that will protect her and her family.



Antonio has lived in Toledo for 20 years. His U.S. citizen wife has long wanted to file a family visa petition for him, but because of current immigration law, Antonio would have to leave the United States during the pendency of any application she files for him. As Antonio is the family's only breadwinner, such an extended absence would leave his family without any means of financial support. The family's struggles are exacerbated by the fact that Antonio's wife is disabled, and Antonio is her main care provider. Despite these difficulties, Antonio and his wife decided to sacrifice and file the application anyway. Shortly thereafter, however, Antonio was stopped and

arrested by immigration agents while at a gas station. They placed him in removal proceedings.

ABLE is now representing Antonio in those proceedings and has filed a Cancellation of Removal application on his behalf. His trial is scheduled for June 2020.