



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 the Miami Valley. 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 Consulate of Mexico in Indianapolis, Dayton Police Department, Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation, The Supreme Court of Ohio Civil Justice Program Fund, Welcome Dayton, 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, ABLE educated thousands of people in the Miami Valley 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 being forced to make them during the stress of the worst-case scenario. 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.

ABLE advocates in 2018 took their advocacy to the national level and made headlines for their efforts. Jessica A. Ramos, who has been recognized for her work representing unaccompanied immigrant children, was invited by Senator Rob Portman to testify before the U.S. Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations in Washington, D.C. Jessica offered her opinions on how the government can better protect these vulnerable children from human trafficking and abuse. ABLE advocates also continued their representation of Maribel Trujillo Diaz, a mother of four U.S. citizen children who was unjustly deported to Mexico in 2017. After winning before the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in early 2018, ABLE secured Maribel's return to the United States to continue fighting her case, which allowed Maribel to reunite with her family and community.

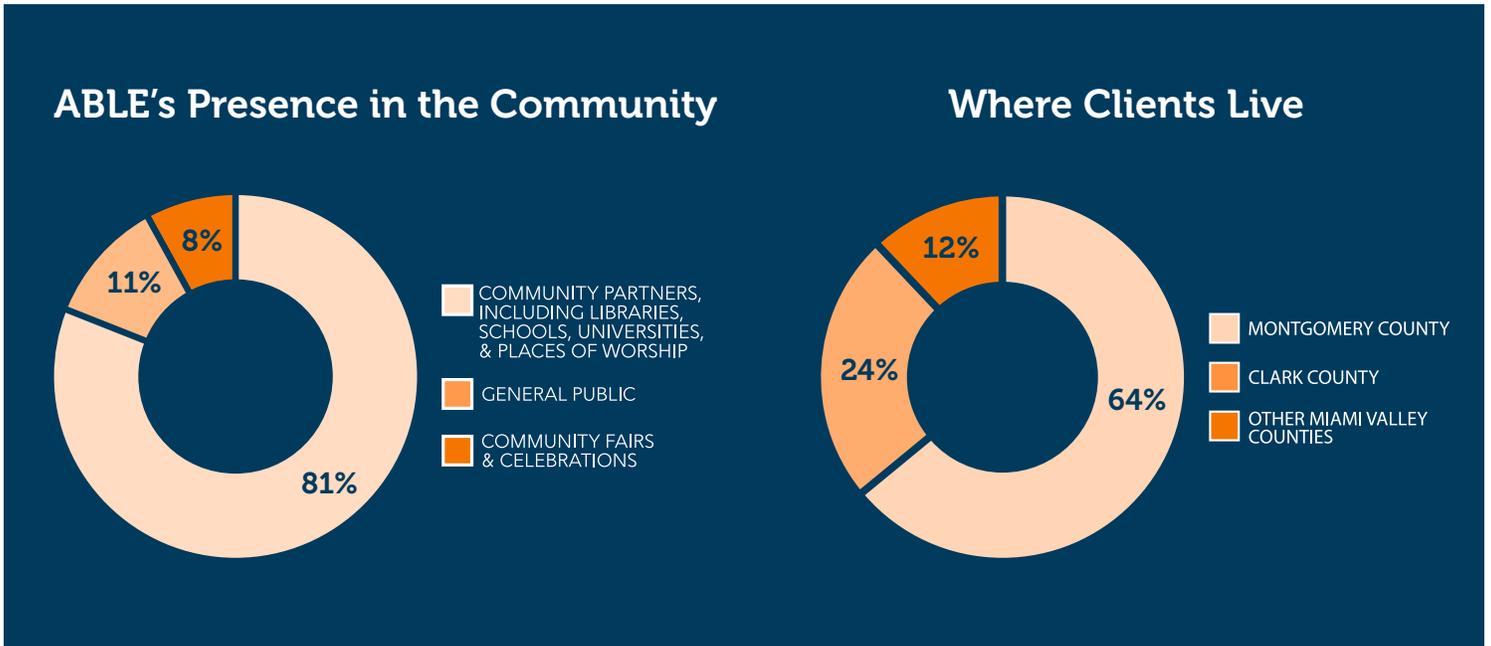
Working together with Welcome Dayton, ABLE has conducted asylum, DACA Renewal, Refugee Adjustment of Status, legal screening, and naturalization workshops and clinics, and provides leadership on the Welcome Dayton Committee, and the Government and Justice Subcommittee.

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 **1,500** people directly through **58** 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

83% (91)

CASES ACCEPTED FOR COUNSEL & ADVICE ONLY

17% (18)

SPECIFIC CASE TYPE IN THE MIAMI VALLEY

Naturalization & Citizenship	4
Family Stability & Reunification	28
DACA Renewal	8
U Visa / VAWA / T Visa	29
Immigrant Children	22
Asylum	5
Other	13



When Sidra and her husband moved to Dayton in 2013, she thought that it would be the perfect place for them to raise their four-year-old daughter. But her dream quickly turned into a nightmare as her husband turned violent and began to abuse her regularly. He would watch videos about how to get away with murder and monitored her every move. Sidra developed the courage and support to report the abuse to the police and her husband was arrested and convicted of domestic violence. But despite her husband being in jail and subsequently deported, he continued to find ways to make Sidra miserable. He had a friend falsely report that Sidra was a terrorist

and was about to commit an imminent attack. Hailing from a Muslim country, Sidra was immediately approached by several different law enforcement agencies. She was already receiving assistance from ABLE's partner organization Legal Aid of Western Ohio, and ABLE attorneys rushed to her defense. Sidra endured several rounds of questioning by the FBI and the Joint Task Force on Terrorism, as well as searches of her home and electronics. She cooperated fully with the authorities, and due to her status as a victim of a serious crime, Sidra was able to apply for a U Visa with the help of ABLE advocates. **After many years of waiting, Sidra finally received the good news that her petition was approved, and that she and her daughter can remain safely in the United States.**



Growing up in Honduras, Victor had a very poor upbringing, living in a house made of dirt with only one room to sleep, eat, and live, along with his mother and three other siblings. His mom became ill and could no longer work, and Victor was then forced to leave school because the family had no money. Victor worked odd jobs doing chores around the community in exchange for food. In August 2017, Victor's uncle was murdered by police officers in Honduras and his cousin was badly injured. The police officers who murdered the uncle began contacting Victor and his mother by phone, threatening them with harm and jail if they did not come to the police station to sign

documents absolving the officers of fault. Victor and his family knew the police would not help them because of the corruption, and they reported the murder to a citizens' rights group in hopes the organization would assist them. The organization did not assist the family, and Victor's neighbors began warning the family that at night police officers came to the neighborhood around their home. Victor and his family then fled to the United States for safety. ABLE is representing Victor in his asylum and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) cases. **ABLE has filed his asylum application and it is pending. ABLE also assisted Victor in placing him in the custody of a relative and is preparing to file an application for SIJS soon.**



Siblings José and Elena came to the United States when José was a toddler and Elena was a baby. They grew up in the United States, attending primary, middle, and high school. José participated in the ROTC program in his high school and dreamed of joining the military. When he went to register, he was asked for a Social Security number. He went home to ask his parents for information, and they told him he was living in the United States without immigration status. José graduated high school and began to wonder what his future would be if he could not work, join the military, or attend college in the country he had called home since he was a young child.

José and Elena's high school referred them to ABLE. An attorney screened José and Elena and found them both eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA. DACA is a program that allows people brought to the United States as children who meet certain educational and other requirements to gain temporary protection from deportation and work authorization in the United States. ABLE represented José and Elena in their DACA applications, which were both granted in 2018. Both José and Elena are now safe from deportation and are able to live and work peacefully in the United States. **José now works full time and is exploring his options for college. Elena is a senior in high school and works part time to help support her family.**