



**Department
of State**

**NEW YORK STATE OFFICE FOR NEW AMERICANS
2021 ANNUAL REPORT:**

PURSUANT TO SECTION 94-b (5) (n) OF THE EXECUTIVE LAW

FOR SUBMISSION TO:

**TEMPORARY PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, Andrea Stewart-Cousins
SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY, Carl E. Heastie**

June 29, 2022

Kathy Hochul, Governor

Robert J. Rodriguez, Secretary of State

STATE OF NEW YORK

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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KATHY HOCHUL

GOVERNOR

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June 29, 2022

To the Governor, Temporary President and Speaker:

I am pleased to provide you with the 2021 Annual Report of the Office for New Americans, as required by Executive Law § 94-b (5) (n).

This report summarizes the activities and accomplishments from January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021.

Throughout 2021, the Office for New Americans carried out its mission to assist all new Americans with accessing and navigating a variety of free services and support through its statewide network of community-based providers.

Additional information about the Office for New Americans can be found on the agency's website at <https://dos.ny.gov/office-new-americans>

Respectfully submitted,

Robert J. Rodriguez
Secretary of State

Executive Summary

The New York State Office for New Americans (ONA) is the first state-level immigrant assistance office of its kind created by statute in the United States. Since its creation in 2012, ONA has provided assistance to over 400,000 of the 4.4 million immigrants living in New York State through its statewide network of community-based service providers. ONA has also grown substantially over the past few years and in 2021 administered over 90 grants.

This annual report details the achievements of ONA and its partners in 2021, a year which continued to be significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, while also providing opportunities to support innovative and creative ways in which to ensure services were available to all immigrants. This year was also challenging as the country engaged in a massive international effort to support vulnerable Afghans, including those who worked alongside the United States in Afghanistan for the past two decades, as they safely resettle in New York State and elsewhere.

Throughout the reporting period, ONA continued to expand upon its efforts to offer all immigrants residing in New York State the tools to participate in the economic and overall well-being of their community, and the Office continued to set the standard that each state in the nation should follow. ONA and its partners have been supporting recovery efforts in immigrant communities across the state, and much of ONA's programming has been a lifeline for those impacted by the pandemic.

In 2021, the ONA network of community-based providers continued their virtual service delivery models due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while also beginning some in-person activities, with safety precautions in place. By continuing to facilitate service delivery via online and virtual platforms, ONA's partners worked hard to ensure that new Americans across the state continued to have access to accurate information and needed services. A major focus in 2021 for many of ONA's partners was the promotion of the COVID vaccine while ensuring that any fears or misinformation in the immigrant community were addressed. The goal was to vaccinate as many eligible individuals as possible in the interest of health and well-being for their communities.

In 2021, ONA launched two new programs through federally-funded competitive grants: Professional Pathways for High-Skilled Immigrants and Opportunity Centers and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Both of these programs directly addressed the needs expressed by new American communities as a result of the pandemic, for professional development and skills training, and ESOL with a focus on workforce development. Both programs have taken a hybrid approach, providing services both in person and remotely, which has made it possible for more

participants to take part, bringing a larger number of immigrant clients to access these much-needed services.

In September 2021, directed by Governor Hochul, ONA responded to the devastation caused by the flooding caused by the remnants of Hurricane Ida, by administering the Ida Relief for Excluded New Yorkers Fund. This Fund provided support to immigrant survivors not eligible to receive storm recovery assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Individual Assistance Program or other means. This funding, distributed through grants to an established network of community organizations, helped to close gaps in aid and assist new American New Yorkers who would not otherwise have this vital support.

Finally, ONA and its partners quickly pivoted towards the end of 2021 to respond to the rapid increase of Afghan arrivals to New York State. Through its network of legal providers as well as its workforce programs, ONA was able to provide critical services to this population, as they resettled in different areas of the state. ONA also played a key role in coordinating state services between various agencies by ensuring information and resources were accessible, in Dari and Pashto languages.

Looking towards the future, ONA will continue to ensure that new American communities are supported and assisted through programming that addresses their unique needs at the local level, especially as New York State recovers, and builds back, from the negative effects of COVID-19.

Background

In compliance with section 94-b (5) (n) of the Executive Law, the Department of State respectfully submits this annual report on the activities of the Office for New Americans (ONA). Except as noted, this report covers the period from January 1, 2021, through December 31, 2021.

New York State has historically served as a leader in the United States on immigrant issues. It is an internationally recognized port of entry, symbolizing the struggles and opportunities that constitute the immigrant experience. Today, 4.4 million immigrants live in New York State, and one in four New Yorkers of working age was born outside of the United States. Like past waves of immigrants, today's new Americans come seeking opportunities. Our country and state have historically lent a hand in helping new Americans achieve this goal.

In 2012, New York State established ONA, the first statutorily created immigrant services office of its kind in the nation and directed it to provide the community with the tools necessary for their participation and integration. In 2014, the Legislature enacted, and the Governor signed into law, Chapter 206 of the Laws of 2014, which laid out

the powers and duties of ONA.

In the delivery of its services, New York State’s ONA defines “new Americans” as “an individual born abroad and their children, irrespective of immigration status.” New York understands the complexity of each individual’s situation and as such, new Americans are not defined solely by their immigration status, but by their desire to contribute to the state’s social, civic, and economic life. ONA’s statewide network of immigration service providers are nested within existing community-based organizations that deliver a variety of services and support, including legal services, to New York’s new American communities across the State.



ONA’s Areas of Work

ONA’s services seek to provide a holistic approach to assisting new Americans. Through its programs and services in the following areas, ONA assists both the individual and family in their civic and economic engagement in New York State. In addition, ONA staff engage directly in a variety of constituent, outreach, and policy initiatives that help to support New York State as a leader in welcoming new Americans and supporting their well-being.

CIVIC & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ONA has several programs that engage in outreach and support to the new American community, to ensure their

civic participation, including putting them on the path to citizenship. ONA has found that by sharing information with immigrants through its trusted network of partners, including Opportunity Centers and Navigators, services become more accessible, and trust is built with the community.

Opportunity Centers – Civics

Overview

ONA's statewide network of 24 Opportunity Centers provide free and confidential services to all new Americans in New York State. Housed within community-based organizations, ONA Opportunity Centers provide naturalization and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) application assistance, host Citizenship Preparation classes, provide referrals to English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) classes, host community seminars on topics relevant to new Americans, and host legal consultations. Each Opportunity Center is supported by ONA Legal Counsels, experienced immigration attorneys who provide free legal support to new Americans.

Opportunity Centers continued to face challenges in 2021 related to delivering services during the pandemic, however, they continued to find creative and innovative solutions, including remote and hybrid models of services, to reach the communities they serve. During the reporting period, Opportunity Centers provided the following services:

Citizenship Preparation Classes and ESOL Referrals

- In 2021, 1,467 people attended remote citizenship preparation classes. The classes provided Green Card holders with English language skills and content knowledge of U.S. civics, history, and government, needed to prepare for the naturalization exam. Citizenship preparation classes were taught by instructors and dedicated volunteers. In addition, the ONA Opportunity Centers provided 7,956 individuals with referrals to ESOL assistance.
- Due to the ongoing pandemic, individuals joined these classes remotely. The virtual classroom setting allowed students more flexibility, as they could join the classes from home instead of having to travel to a physical site or obtain childcare. For others, the challenges of digital access remained a barrier.

Naturalization/ Deferred Action for Childhood Assistance (DACA) Application Assistance

- Opportunity Centers continued to provide remote immigration application assistance, to ensure services

were accessible by phone and through other virtual platforms. In 2021, ONA Opportunity Centers provided 2,335 individuals with application assistance for naturalization, DACA applications, and DACA renewals. All applications were prepared by qualified Department of Justice (DOJ)-accredited representatives or immigration attorneys.

Community and Informational Law Workshops

- In 2021, ONA Opportunity Centers assisted 9,485 clients at community and informational law workshops. Workshops provided new Americans with trusted resources and reliable information necessary to fully participate in their communities. Workshop topics included but were not limited to: affordable housing, back to school safety, health insurance, health and wellness, child tax credit, adult literacy and continuing education for new Americans, financial aid for immigrant students, domestic violence awareness, natural disaster prevention and preparedness, COVID-19 vaccine, digital safety tips, excluded workers fund, advance parole for DACA recipients, Afghanistan status, certificate of disability, humanitarian parole, immigration options for immigrant youth, N-648, naturalization, overview of the asylum process, temporary protected status and the federal Violence Against Women Act.
- Opportunity Center community workshops were primarily provided remotely in 2021, but in areas where COVID cases were declining and gathering could be done safely, the workshops were conducted in person. The ability to continue to provide workshops virtually allowed for additional community members, who may not have ever participated in person previously, to join. ONA Opportunity Centers were creative in the use of various online platforms to meet the communities where they felt most comfortable and could easily access the trainings, such as utilizing Facebook Live and WhatsApp.

Immigration Law Consultations

- ONA Opportunity Centers, in partnership with ONA Legal Counsels, held 236 free immigration law consultations in 2021. Consultations provided individuals the opportunity to meet one-on-one with the ONA Legal Counsel to discuss their individual immigration law questions. In addition, ONA Legal Counsels held legal clinics, including virtually and by phone, to assist individuals with immigration related applications.

Success Story

An ONA grantee shared the following client story:

- “One of our ESOL/Citizenship students, MR joined our ESOL program, and her exposure to our new program gave her more practice and as a result more confidence in her English skills. This was a key strength at her interview, and she is now a proud new U.S Citizen. MR continues taking classes with our ESOL Program to further strengthen her English which is also very important for her job.”

An ONA Analyst shared the following after a site visit with an ONA Opportunity Center:

- “The agency presented one success story during the visit, that ZM has lived in the U.S. since 2013. She attended the agency’s citizenship preparation course at the ONA Westchester site, passed the test, and became a U.S. citizen on Jan. 18, 2022. Now she is pursuing a professional education and registered with a program at BCC Community College to become a teacher’s assistant and hopes to start working at a school.”

Table 1: Opportunity Centers – Civics

New Americans Served by ONA Opportunity Centers	Clients Served Between February 1, 2021, through January 31, 2022*
Number of Legal Consultations Held	236
Clients Attending Legal Consultations	1,404
Clients Participating in Citizenship Preparation Classes	1,467
Clients Receiving Referrals to ESOL Classes	7,956
Clients Receiving Naturalization/ DACA/DACA Renewal Application Assistance	2,335
Clients Attending Community Seminars and Informational Law Workshops	9,485
Total	21,243

*Due to reporting schedules, data runs through January 31, 2022.

Immigrant Community Navigators

Overview

Established in 2017, the ONA Immigrant Community Navigator program ensures that there is dedicated outreach and community welcoming efforts to help low-income immigrants gain access to the same opportunities available to all others throughout New York State. In 2021, ONA Immigrant Community Navigators assisted over 4,000 clients.

The eight ONA Immigrant Community Navigators are located throughout the state, each with oversight of a specific region. These local leaders are responsible for coordinating and conducting outreach to low-income immigrant and refugee communities, and for creating a grassroots network of support and services. Through these efforts, ONA seeks to maximize the participation of low-income immigrant community members in New York State's civic and economic life.

In 2021, ONA Immigrant Community Navigators continued to build on their successes through ongoing outreach with the low-income immigrant and refugee community, while also leading community conversations, workforce development workshops, trainings, impact days, and roundtable meetings with stakeholders. All of this allowed them to build strong credibility and relationships within their communities.

Success Story

An ONA Analyst shared the following after a site visit with the NYC ONA Navigator:

- “The ONA Navigator shared that they heard from one community partner and other organizations that there was a lot of anxiety about going back to school and being safe, and as a result, the grantee wanted to hold a community conversation to engage with community members. The ONA Navigator shared that a lot of parents expressed their concerns regarding hybrid school schedules, anti-Asian hate crimes, and health. The ONA Navigator also noted that a lot of low-income immigrant families have language barriers that cause tension with the children and families did not know who to reach out to if there were issues. Conversations held included whether parents know who to reach out to at their children's school, and if more resources are needed around this issue. The ONA Navigator shared that the feedback received inspired a two-part mental health training series provided by the

agency.”

Table 2: ONA Community Navigators

New Americans Served by ONA Navigators	Clients served between January 2021-December 2021
Immigration stakeholder roundtable meetings held	79
Workforce Development Workshops	343
Community Conversations	268
Navigator Trainings	305
Impact Days	4,130

North Country Immigrant Resource Coordinator

Overview

ONA began providing targeted support in the North Country with a pilot in 2018, to ensure that the availability of dedicated outreach and community welcoming efforts in this under-served region and help immigrants gain access to the same opportunities available to all others throughout New York State. Due to the unique rural nature of the North Country, being at the border of New York and Canada, and the general lack of resources, the pilot program eventually transitioned to a more permanent North Country Immigrant Resource Coordinator program to meet the distinctive needs of new Americans in the region.

In 2021, the work of the North Country Immigrant Resource Coordinator, based at the Joint Council for Economic Opportunity for Clinton/Franklin Counties (JCEO) in Plattsburgh, continued to be impacted by the pandemic. The bulk of the ONA Immigrant Resource Coordinator’s work, as the pandemic continued, was related to the Canadian border closure, which prevented asylum seekers from crossing into Canada. These cases required extensive services that were not easily available. The ONA Immigrant Resource Coordinator worked closely with a local agency, Plattsburgh Cares, along with the ONA Liberty Defense Project attorney in the region, to coordinate and locate resources to meet the needs of the individuals and families who found themselves “stranded” in the North Country. The ONA Legal Counsel for the North Country, Hiscock Legal Aid Society (HLAS) based in Syracuse, also

continued to advise on legal matters, conducting legal consultations and hosting clinics in the region.

The extensive collaboration required by the ONA Immigrant Resource Coordinator to assist individuals and families in need allowed for the formation of an informal network of support, which highlights this region's changing demographic and organizational landscape. More on the formalization of this partnership – the creation of the Cross-Border Network collaborative – is discussed in the National and International section of the annual report below.

Success Story

During 2021, the North Country Immigrant Resource Coordinator assisted over 400 asylum seekers who found themselves stranded at the irregular crossing to Canada at Roxham Road. One particular family had arrived from Columbia via New York City. This was a family of four: the father was a retired neurosurgeon, mother, a retired dentist and the two daughters were in their late teens. After almost four months of living in the area, Roxham Road reopened and they crossed over to Canada. They informed the Immigrant Resource Coordinator that they were in Montreal, had found an apartment and one daughter found work in designing and the other is in school. This is an extract from one of the family's letters to the Immigrant Resource Coordinator:

- “I don't know how I can ever thank you for all you have done for my family and me. What we had to go through has not been easy, it was a test of patience and a lot of courage, but today I thank God for putting you in our path. Thank you for genuinely helping us, for always looking out for us, for taking care of us, and for making sure we were well; as we told you, you are the chaos coordinator. Part of this experience also helped me see that we can all help somehow; thank you for showing me that through language, I could also serve others. Thank you for teaching me with that passion for helping and wanting to contribute to others. I will take that with me forever; thank you for being my mentor in that sense. In my heart, there is only gratitude for you; I know that God will return what you do for all the people who go through this situation. I consider you an extraordinary person, and I hope to keep in touch with you again, being happy on the other side :) Thank you very much.”

Data

- Through this grant, 425 individuals were served in 2021, accessing different community services. The types of resources sought for individuals the ONA Immigrant Resource Coordinator assisted were comprehensive

and included:

- Transportation- 60 families* were served
- Legal Services- 25 consultations were hosted
- Interpretation- 40 referrals for families needing language assistance was provided
- Housing needs referred to Dept of Social Services
- Emergency housing- hotel lodging was provided for 150 families
- Temporary Shelter Supplies to assist families with travel needs (car seats, food, clothing)-food and clothing were provided for 150 families

*Families consist of more than one individual

Ida Relief for Excluded New Yorkers

Overview

In September 2021, Governor Hochul and Mayor de Blasio launched the “Ida Relief for Excluded New Yorkers Fund,” which made \$27 million available to provide relief to immigrant survivors of the flooding caused by the remnants of Hurricane Ida. The Fund was geared toward those who were not otherwise eligible for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Individual Assistance Program or any other means. Administered by ONA, this funding was distributed through grants to an established network of community organizations, including current ONA grantees.

Immigrant residents impacted by Hurricane Ida in the following counties were eligible to apply for the fund:

- Bronx
- Dutchess
- Kings
- Nassau
- Orange
- Queens
- Richmond
- Rockland
- Suffolk
- Westchester

Success Story

An ONA Ida Relief grantee shared the following feedback in their first quarterly report:

- “We were able to get our process up and running very quickly and as a result, we were able to distribute reimbursements early in the process to applicants that were very much in need of assistance. By setting up screening appointments and starting to fully process applications concurrently, we could disburse funds in batches and not make people wait too long. Some notable reimbursements: we were able to provide rental assistance for one household as the applicant was able to get a lease in place. This applicant (mother and daughter) had their basement apartment completely destroyed, they lost all of their belongings, including their life savings.”

Table 3: Ida Relief Fund

Ida Relief Fund for Excluded New Yorkers	Totals Between September 27, 2021, and December 27, 2021
Number of Calls to the ONA Hotline	1,065
Number of Calls/Walk-Ins Received	2,151
Number of Initial Applications Completed	486
Number of Applications Finalized Per Unique Household	154
Number of Referrals Made to FEMA	580
Number of Households That Have Received Funding:	100
Total Amount of Funding for Housing Related Assistance Disbursed to Households:	\$62,825.00
Total Amount of Funding for Other Needs Assistance Disbursed to Households:	\$417,157.70
Total Amount of Funding Disbursed to Households	\$479,982.70

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

In 2021, ONA launched a new initiative to assist new Americans gain the English Language skills

they need to support themselves and their families. The Opportunity Centers – English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) began providing services starting in October 2021 and were selected through a competitive procurement process. Funded by federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding, this program targets low-income new Americans, and provides free English classes at all levels, and regardless of immigration status. Additionally, ONA continued to expand upon and grow the number of users for Cell-Ed, which is a free program that allows new Americans to learn English on the go, through any mobile device.

Opportunity Centers – ESOL

Overview

This new ONA initiative offers a stand-alone ESOL program that combines English language training with a workforce development component, to prepare participants for employment in New York State. To directly address the needs identified in the communities ONA serves, this program provides regular ESOL classes combined with individual workforce support and innovative technologies including Cell-Ed. Each Opportunity Center-ESOL hired an experienced ESOL teacher to provide instruction to low-income immigrants as well as to provide assistance to participants with resume building, interview techniques, and employment opportunities. The ONA Opportunity Centers-ESOL also provide workforce development workshops for the community.

Starting October 2021, the ONA Opportunity Centers-ESOL began offering the ESOL program to assist low-income immigrants and refugees with opportunities to learn English as well as provide information to help navigate their communities. Through a competitive procurement process, ONA partnered with 16 community-based partner organizations located in the counties across New York State to conduct this work.

Success Story

An ONA Analyst shared the following after a site visit with an Opportunity Center - ESOL:

- “There are three teachers in the agency for the ONA ESOL program. All of them has a

master’s degree in teaching. The agency highly praises their teachers, the way they manage to work with slightly different levels of students in one class, to make the class attractive and energetic to students, and the way they encourage students to keep continuing pursuing English learning. The agency sees a good teacher is key to retain student to the class as well as a successful to the program.”

Table 4: Opportunity Centers - ESOL

New Americans Served by ONA Opportunity Centers	Clients served between October 2021-December 2021
Clients participating in ESOL Classes	586
Clients receiving guidance resume building, interview techniques and employment opportunities	254
Clients attending workforce development workshops	7
Total	847

Cell-Ed

Overview

Cell-Ed is a first-in-the-nation public-private partnership established by New York State in 2015. It is a phone-based English learning system providing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes to individuals who have difficulty reaching an actual classroom. Cell-Ed has the capability of reaching and educating more new Americans than traditional classroom settings and has proven to be a successful tool for immigrants seeking to learn English and build skills for life and work. This program provides unlimited access to Cell-Ed’s complete course catalog of English Language Learning, plus literacy, numeracy, civics, job readiness, digital literacy and more.

Five years since the program was introduced to New York State as the first-in-the-nation mobile English-learning program, the pandemic demonstrated how needed Cell-Ed is, and how impactful it is in the lives of immigrants and refugees.

During the pandemic, Cell-Ed has provided a valuable tool for community organizations serving new Americans throughout the State.

Given Cell-Ed's flexibility of access, in the midst of the pandemic, access to COVID-19 information, health, education, closures, etc., was accessible via Cell-Ed, helping address limited access to Wi-Fi and online services that new Americans experience.

While most users were drawn to the ESOL and Citizenship courses offered through Cell-Ed, in 2021, many were also drawn to the expanded catalog of courses, which now included a WorkReady series, and SkillBuilderSeries/Pre-HSE (literacy, numeracy, social studies, writing, etc.). In 2021, Cell-Ed continued to develop its digital literacy program, which seeks to meet the new workforce needs of a post-pandemic world.

Success Stories

The following feedback was shared by users of Cell-Ed:

- “Cell-Ed has helped me with a lot of situations in my daily life. When I was looking for an apartment, I remembered that lesson. I am also practicing some lessons when I speak with my son's teacher. I want to become a nurse someday.”
- “My goal in life is to have a better job and speak English well, to say the words perfectly when I speak without stopping.”
- “Before Cell-ed, I did not know how to use a cell phone to learn. I wanted to apply for citizenship and after studying with Cell-ed, I decided to apply for the citizenship exam and I became a US citizen in October 2020.”

Data

- In 2021, users doubled the average amount of time spent on Cell-Ed to almost eight hours, with a total of 157,903 lessons completed and 344 courses completed. Despite not having the traditional outreach campaign to promote Cell-Ed and onboard new users, ONA welcomed over 800 active users to Cell-Ed and graduated over 179 users.

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

The pandemic has highlighted the needs of the new American community to have access to free and confidential services that address their mental health and family well-being. Two of ONA's programs, Golden Door and Ramirez June, which have both been running for several years, seek to address these needs and during the pandemic, both programs were able to quickly adapt and provide remote services in creative ways to reach communities in need of this type of support.

Golden Door Parent Support Program

Overview

Named after the famous line in Emma Lazarus' New Colossus poem, etched on the Statue of Liberty, Project Golden Door works through a partnership between ONA, the Children's Village, and community organizations serving immigrants. In 2021, the parent support program continued to provide a cost-efficient support system and equipped these caregivers with the confidence to protect their children, prevent their isolation, improve their own lives, and in turn, enrich New York's communities by providing the necessary tools for these children to integrate into their new communities.

Many parents and sponsors of unaccompanied and undocumented minors residing in New York State are among the most vulnerable and marginalized residents in the state due to economic, social, and linguistic barriers. Their situation is made worse by a lack of access to basic information as well as fear of engaging with government agencies because of their legal status. Their lack of understanding of the issues they face, and lack of access to mental health services, not only hinders the adjustment and integration process for the child, but also of the family unit as a whole. Golden Door and its network of "parent support groups" located at 12 sites statewide and led by qualified mental health counselors, took on additional importance during the pandemic, providing perhaps the only source of "outside family" communication and access to mental health support for many of New York's new Americans. In addition to running family support groups, the Golden Door program provided direct counseling with program supervisors as a crossover to individual therapy, counseling, family therapy, domestic violence shelters, case managers at site locations, and the suicide hotline.

Parent Support Groups

- In 2021, due to COVID-19, Golden Door programming continued to be mainly done virtually. Group topics included Bullying, How to Teach Children About Life, Sexuality & Healthy, Responsible Decisions, Stress Management, Early Intervention, Avoiding Scams, Contingency Planning, Navigating the Educational System in the US, Labor Rights, Domestic Violence and Child Abuse, Human Trafficking, Health Care in the U.S., Financial Literacy, Understanding the Citizenship Process, and Nutrition: Healthy Eating.

Success Story

- Golden Door site U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) in Albany has been able to provide multi-lingual services under this grant, in the languages most commonly spoken by the immigrant and refugee populations they serve, making the information shared more accessible to the populations they are trying to reach. In 2021, USCRI hosted Golden Door workshops with interpretation and/or presentations in languages such as Pashto, Dari, Burmese, Karen, Kinyamulenge, and Kinyarwanda.

Data

- In 2021, Golden Door “parents support groups” connected over 330 immigrant families to under-utilized supportive public and private organizations and existing resources and services, including mental health counseling.*

*Based on the number of clients who attended group from Jan 2021-August 2021

Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator

Overview

Since 2019, the ONA Ramirez June Initiative has built the capacity of the ONA network to serve immigrants with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. The ONA Ramirez June Initiative, a first of its kind state-run program, provides targeted technical assistance,

outreach, and builds partnerships among immigrant service providers and developmental disability service providers in New York State. The Ramirez June Initiative is a three-year grant funded by and in partnership with the NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC).

In 2021, the ONA Ramirez June Initiative continued to engage new American communities and service providers through virtual outreach due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Initiative conducted 18 total outreach events in English, Spanish, Mandarin, and American Sign Language. Initiative events incorporated accessibility features such as captioning. In the Initiative's outreach survey, 164 individuals reported satisfaction with ONA Ramirez June Initiative and 159 individuals reported that they feel better able to support individuals with I/DD as a result of their participation with the ONA Ramirez June Initiative.

In September 2021, the DDPC shared that due to their satisfaction with ONA Ramirez June Initiative achievements, they intend to extend the grant for an additional two years, at full-funding pending a vote from the DDPC's Community and Systems Change Committee and the DDPC's Full Council in January 2022.

ONA Ramirez June Initiative Outreach and Resources

- In 2021, the ONA Ramirez June Initiative created *Voyage*, a multi-lingual resource book which helps new American families learn the early signs of disabilities and get help. *Voyage* was created in collaboration with the NYS Act Early Ambassador to the CDC, the NYS Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) State Advisory Team, and Waveline Direct Publishing. In June 2021, 3,000 copies of *Voyage* were printed in Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Bengali, Haitian Creole, and Korean. Copies of *Voyage* were requested by ONA network grantees, NYC public libraries, and community-based organizations. To meet the needs of the ONA network and partners, the ONA Ramirez June Initiative mailed a total of 1,260 free copies of *Voyage* in 2021. Additionally, The ECCS procured their own 1,000 copies of *Voyage* to distribute to their regional pediatric practice partners and to members of the ECCS state advisory team.
- “Human Trafficking and New Americans with Developmental Disabilities,” an ONA Ramirez June Initiative webinar was hosted in January 2021, National Human Trafficking

Prevention Month. The webinar was in collaboration with the NYS Governor's Interagency Taskforce (ITF) on Human Trafficking and the Unity House of Troy and welcomed 145 participants including ONA network grantees and service providers from various disciplines from New York, California, Colorado, Illinois, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

- Webinar recording: <https://youtu.be/IYnt83-pmE>
- A series of five regional Community Conversations were held in July 2021 and engaged 94 participants including ONA network immigrant service providers as well as leadership and staff from the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and Care Coordination Organizations (CCOs). The Community Conversation series was an opportunity to build connections between immigrant and disability services providers and to discuss resources available for new Americans with I/DD and how to overcome barriers in access to developmental disability services.

ONA Ramirez June Initiative Partners

- In 2021, the Ramirez June Initiative further developed its network of partnerships with a variety of state entities and initiatives. Partnerships included the NYS Office of Mental Health, and the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), a fellow member of the DDPC led Community of Practice (CoP) on Cultural and Linguistic Competence in Developmental Disabilities. The ONA Ramirez June Initiative continued its partnership with the New York Act Early Response to COVID-19 Initiative to receive technical assistance from the NYS Act Early Ambassador to the CDC to engage new American communities and immigrant service providers with information about the early identification of disabilities.
- In a unique role for ONA, and in recognition of the barriers immigrant families face accessing early identification of developmental delays and disabilities in young children and connecting with disability services, the ONA Ramirez June Initiative continued its partnership with New York State initiatives supporting children and families. The ONA Ramirez June Initiative was a participant of the New York State Governor's Early

Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), and ONA’s Director of Immigration Research and Policy, Dr. Laura Gonzalez-Murphy, was invited to become a Governor appointed member of the ECAC. The ONA Ramirez June Initiative also participated in the NYS Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Impact Initiative State Advisory Team which merged with the New York Act Early Response to COVID-19 Initiative (NY Acts).

Success Stories

In 2021, the ONA network and community partners were surveyed about the impact of the ONA Ramirez June Initiative. When asked, “What do you think worked well?” Survey respondents replied:

- “Cynthia [The ONA Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator] did a fantastic job of identifying gaps and pulling people together to address solutions.”
- “Terrific presentations; I learned a lot about the needs of immigrant families who have children with disabilities / the risks of abuse of people with disabilities esp. where there is an additional language barrier or lack of familiarity with rights/resources in the U.S.”
- “The constant communication and webinar opportunities.”
- “Breadth of information.”
- “Networking, valuable information exchange.”
- “Cynthia is reliable, accountable, and passionate. When she says she'll do something, she does it well and ahead of schedule. She sees the big picture and is great at forming connections.”

ONA Analysts shared the following feedback from different ONA grantees about the ONA Ramirez June Initiative following their site visits:

- “The LDP Attorney mentioned that she found all the webinars to be helpful and informative. They highlighted the Hard of Hearing webinar hosted by the ONA Ramirez June Initiative on 3/30/2021. It made the LDP Attorney think through whether deaf or hard

of hearing clients would need to know ASL with regards to N-648 applications. When asked for suggestions for more webinar topics, they mentioned it would be good to see more webinars connecting immigration and disabilities issues.”

- “The agency shared that they found some of the ONA webinars to be beneficial to the community. The agency found the ONA Ramirez June Initiative webinar on “Understanding & Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing” helpful because the agency works with people who are deaf.”
- “The agency shared that they found the ONA Ramirez June Initiative webinar on human trafficking and new Americans with disabilities and the digital literacy webinar to be helpful.”

Table 5: Ramirez June Initiative Presentations

Date	Title	Presenter
1/13/2021	Ramirez June Initiative Presentation to the <i>Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities</i>	Cynthia Stewart, Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator
1/26/2021	Human Trafficking and New Americans with Disabilities— Awareness and Prevention	Laura Gonzalez-Murphy, Language Access Coordinator & Director of Immigration Policy & Research, ONA / NYS DOS Cynthia Stewart, Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator, ONA
2/9/2021	Mind the Gap Initiative Informational Webinar	Suzannah Iadarola, Director of the Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities
2/9/2021	Ramirez June Initiative Presentation to the NYS OPWDD Regional Office Front Door Coordinators	Laura Gonzalez-Murphy, Language Access Coordinator & Director of Immigration Policy & Research, ONA / NYS DOS; Cynthia Stewart, Ramirez

		June Developmental Disabilities Navigator, ONA; Jackie Hayes, Diversity and Inclusion Program Specialist, NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
2/23/2021	Disability Rights Training to <i>InterFaith Works</i>	Will Tronsor, Staff Attorney at Disability Rights NY
2/24/2021	Ramirez June Initiative presentation to Care Coordination Organizations (CCOs) monthly training meeting	Cynthia Stewart, Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator, ONA; Jackie Hayes, Diversity and Inclusion Program Specialist
3/30/2021	Understanding and Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Creating a Barrier Free Environment	Jodie Chibi & David Wantuck, Deaf Access Services
4/15/2021	New York Association for the Education of Young Children (NYAEYC) Conference Presentation	Cynthia Stewart, Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator, ONA Jenny Munoz, Policy Associate, Assistant Language Access Coordinator
4/22/2021	Georgetown University's National Center for Cultural Competence Transformation Leadership Forum	Laura Gonzalez-Murphy, Language Access Coordinator & Director of Immigration Policy & Research, ONA / NYS DOS; Cynthia Stewart, Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator, ONA; Jackie Hayes, Diversity and Inclusion Program Specialist
4/24/2021	Parent Leadership Conference	Cynthia Stewart, Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator, ONA; Jenny Munoz, Policy Associate,

		Assistant Language Access Coordinator
5/26/2021	Ramirez June Initiative Presentation to the Bureau of Refugee Service Providers (BRS)	Cynthia Stewart, Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator, ONA
6/16/2021	Naturalization-Related Guardianships presentation to the New American Campaign (NAC)	Cynthia Stewart, Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator, ONA
6/22/2021	Housing Resources for New Americans with I/DD in collaboration with the Chinese American Planning Council, Brooklyn (English and Mandarin)	Claudia Luna Torres and Irene Pagonis, Care Design NY; Wendy Deleon, Adapt Community Network
7/23/2021	Presentation on <i>Voyage</i> to the DDPC Cultural Competency and Language Access Workgroup (English, Mandarin, Spanish)	Cynthia Stewart, Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator, ONA;
8/6/2021	Presentation on the ONA Ramirez June Initiative's Collaboration with NYActs	Dr. Romina Barros, NY Act Early Ambassador
8/12/2021	Early Childhood Resources presentation to the NYC Mexican Consulate	Jenny Munoz, Policy Associate, ONA

	Spanish	
9/14/2021	Creation of <i>Voyage</i> Multilingual Resource <i>Book to the DDPC</i> <i>Community Systems Change Committee (CSCC)</i>	Cynthia Stewart, Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator,
9/24/2021	DDPC Language Access Summit: Let's Talk Language Access	Laura Gonzalez-Murphy, Language Access Coordinator & Director of Immigration Policy & Research, ONA / NYS DOS; Jenny Munoz, Policy Associate, ONA; Cynthia Stewart, Ramirez June Developmental Disabilities Navigator, ONA

LEGAL SERVICES

In 2021, ONA continued to support and expand its statewide network of free and expert immigrant legal service providers. ONA funded attorneys stepped in to assist clients throughout the state with urgent legal matters as well as recent arrivals including Afghans, and also during challenging circumstances with the pandemic. ONA’s legal providers support all of ONA’s programs in ensuring that clients can access an attorney and get assist with their immigration case through a “universal representation” model, meaning any client in need of assistance can receive these free legal services.

ONA Legal Counsels

Overview

ONA Legal Counsels provide free legal services and direct representation to immigrants, provide regular legal consultation days at ONA Opportunity Centers, and provide law-related workshops and trainings, including Know Your Rights. In 2021, ONA Legal Counsels continued to adapt

their service delivery models to address the health and safety concerns caused by the pandemic, while remaining responsive to the immigration legal needs in the community. While most legal consultations were conducted remotely in 2021, some in-person activity resumed as well, ensuring that clients could be assisted with their immigration legal services in a variety of ways.

Direct Representation

- In 2021, ONA Legal Counsels provided direct representation to 4,117 immigrants in select cases related to immigration proceedings. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the disruption of the U.S. immigration system, including but not limited to the suspension of immigration court hearings and increased application processing times, which led to many challenges for immigrants across New York State. During the ongoing pandemic, the ONA Legal Counsels continued to provide support and services to immigrants in need, often doing so online or by phone, and sometimes in person.

Success Stories

ONA Legal Providers shared the following client stories:

- “We have a successful story for one of our clients, an asylum seeker from Pakistan, persecuted for her conversion from Sunni to Shia Islam. She was repeatedly physically assaulted, not only for being part of a despised religious minority but for her perceived disobedience to her family. She received numerous death threats. The attacks escalated, culminating in an attack at her home by armed men, who pounded on her door and fired shots while she and her young sons hid in the back of the house. When she attempted to make a police report, the police refused to record the name of the person responsible, citing his prominent political position. Our client and her sons fled to the United States where she filed for asylum in 2018. She attended an asylum interview in 2019, but no decision was ever made. Our office made complaints to the ombudsman and requested Congressional inquiries. Finally, in October 2021, USCIS called her for a second interview. We prepared the client extensively for the interview and represented her there. At her interview, client again explained her religious conviction, her fear of return, the abuse she had suffered, and the unwillingness of the authorities to protect her. We assisted in providing additional

documents and submitting a written closing. In early December, USCIS granted Client’s asylum claim. The client, her eighteen-year-old son, and her six-year-old son can finally start their lives over in the United States.”

- “Counsel has continued to be successful in challenging SIJS cases. Counsel recently obtained the requisite Family Court orders and applied for SIJS for a child who lost her father last year and whose mother abandoned her when she was a small child. Alone in the United States, with only a few distant, young relatives, the child’s school principle is now the child’s legal guardian and will be caring for her long-term in addition to helping support her in her immigration case.”
- “I advocated with the help of Senator Gillibrand’s office to have a client whose removal proceedings we successfully terminated during the Trump administration scheduled for her immigrant visa interview in Guatemala. The client had been required to leave the United States in mid-2021 to avoid accruing unlawful presence, but struggled to secure an appointment to renew her Guatemalan passport due to Covid-related issues. If she hadn’t departed on time, she would never have been able to get her green card for the rest of her life. I advocated with the Guatemalan Consulate in New York, conveying the urgency of her predicament. When she secured the appointment, she learned a hold had been placed on her passport in Guatemala. Her family and I advocated with a local government agency in Guatemala until the hold was lifted, allowing issuance of the passport. After she returned to Guatemala, she was forced to wait 5 months there for her immigrant visa interview, separated from her husband. I asked Senator Gillibrand’s office weekly to contact the Department of State, until eventually the client was scheduled for her immigrant visa interview. She is now reunited with her husband and a lawful permanent resident.”

Table 6: ONA Legal Counsel Services

New Americans Served by ONA Legal Counsels	Clients Served Between February 1, 2021, through January 31, 2022*
Clients Attending Informational Law Workshops	2,605

and Know Your Rights	
Clients Attending Legal Clinics	832
Clients Receiving Intake Screenings/ Direct Representation by ONA Legal Counsels	4,117
Total	7,554

*Due to reporting schedules, data runs through January 31, 2022.

Liberty Defense Project

Overview

Since its creation in 2017, the Liberty Defense Project (LDP) has supported free and expert legal services through a universal representation model, which services any immigrant in need of legal representation, including those facing detention or deportation. In 2021, the LDP remained a critical source of support in New York State for the thousands of new Americans who have been assisted with much needed free legal services during a time of ongoing uncertainty due to changing federal immigration policies as well as the ongoing pandemic. In addition, the LDP remained a vital funding source for immigration attorneys, whose experience and legal expertise was critical to the success of these programs. Under the LDP, over 50 immigration attorneys were funded in 2021 at community-based organizations across New York State.

LDP Regional Rapid Response

- In 2021, the LDP’s Regional Rapid Response network of LDP-funded attorneys continued to provide a variety of legal services to new Americans in each of the 10 Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) regions of the state. LDP Regional Rapid Response attorneys provided services including rapid legal response for urgent cases, direct representation, removal proceedings, assistance to individuals in immigration detention centers, Know Your Rights presentations, and law-related support to families of

those facing deportation. In 2021, 16,029 individuals were assisted through the LDP Regional Rapid Response program.

Upstate New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)

- Since 2017, the LDP has funded the Upstate New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP), a program which expands the New York City NYIFUP program to cover clients appearing before the four upstate New York immigration courts. In 2021, this program continued providing direct representation to all eligible immigrant clients in the upstate immigration courts and to eligible clients who had their cases transferred from upstate courts to NYC immigration courts. In addition, in 2021, ONA issued an RFA for the Upstate Immigration Court program, a continuation of the upstate NYIFUP work. In 2021, new grants were awarded in the competitive procurement process with contracts starting January 1, 2022.

LDP Pro Bono Project

- Since 2017, the LDP has funded the Pro Bono Project led by Catholic Charities Community Services, Archdiocese of New York, a program to expand the pool of volunteer attorneys available to represent clients in both affirmative and defensive immigration matters by training currently practicing and retired non-immigration attorneys on immigration law. In 2021, this program continued to represent clients in affirmative and defensive immigration matters before immigration courts and USCIS, recruiting and training new pro bono attorneys and volunteers, and conducting outreach throughout the mid-Hudson Valley, while adhering to COVID-19 safety guidelines.

NYC Rapid Response Legal Collaborative

- Since 2019, the LDP has funded the New York City Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, an initiative of NYLAG, UnLocal, and Make the Road, to assist with the most complex legal cases that were not being assisted through the NYIFUP program in New York City. In 2021, this program continued to fill a critical gap in services by providing direct representation to individuals who would otherwise most likely have been deported and

separated from their families, despite the additional challenges of providing such assist during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Success Stories

ONA LDP providers shared the following client stories:

- “LASROC assisted a survivor of severe human rights violence in an African country to file a complex asylum case with USCIS. USCIS declined to adjudicate the case and referred client to the immigration court. LASROC continued representing the client who was now in removal proceedings. LASROC worked with client's pastor who was able to locate family and newspapers in Africa. With this new evidence the client was able to prove her case and the immigration judge granted her asylum.”
- “We experienced a number of successes this quarter. One of our successes involves, MJ, a man from Iraq. MJ had previously obtained asylum in the United States as an engineer in Iraq. He worked closely with American companies and as such, he was targeted and threatened. MJ fled to the United States. Our LDP attorneys assisted MJ in applying for asylee status for his wife and were able to get MJ’s case expedited due to his wife’s unfortunate diagnosis of cancer in order to reunite the family in the United States as quickly as possible.”
- “...we had a major success in representing a long-term Lawful Permanent Resident of the U.S. who had been deported to Haiti after a conviction for a firearm offense that is no longer a viable grounds for removal. The man attempted to re-enter the U.S. but was. Arrested and transferred to federal criminal custody where he was charged with Illegal Re-Entry After Removal. The Federal Defenders office got the criminal charges dropped by asserting that the underlying removal order was not valid. The man was then transferred to ICE detention where RRLC took over the case. Our attorneys filed both a Motion to Reopen the underlying removal proceedings and requested a Reasonable Fear Interview. During two months of intense advocacy, we represented this man in a successful Reasonable Fear Interview, Bond Hearing, Master Calendar hearing to present a Withholding of Removal and CAT claim, a Motion to Reopen his prior removal order, and when the prior removal

order was reopened, we consolidated the old removal case with the new Withholding Only case and successfully advocated for both to be terminated. We did additional advocacy to have the man released from ICE detention, arguing that his Lawful Permanent Residency had been re-instated and that he was not subject to ICE enforcement or removal. He is now a free man, does not have to attend ICE check-ins, is not in a removal process, and we are working on obtaining his green card and other evidence of his lawful status.”

- “The Legal Director at UnLocal presented oral arguments to the Second Circuit Court of Appeals for a Rapid Response case. This case has been a Rapid Response case with many components and illustrates the level of work and expertise involved in Rapid Response work. The Legal Director and team at UnLocal represented this man starting in April of 2020, when he had already been detained by ICE for 18 months. They filed for humanitarian parole, conducted a bond hearing, appeal the bond denial to the BIA, filed a Motion to Enforce with the Western District of New York on a habeas, which they won, finally securing the release of the client from ICE custody in January 2021. UnLocal was simultaneously litigating the underlying removal case at the 2nd Circuit and advocated for the client at ICE check-ins regarding his ankle monitor and work authorization card after his release. The oral arguments at the 2nd Circuit focused on differences between withholding of removal and asylum, two forms of humanitarian protection that many of our clients seek, and will hopefully create precedent to help obtain relief for other post-order clients.”

Table 7: LDP Regional Rapid Response

Services provided January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021	Number of Individuals Served
Legal Screenings & Intakes	3,394
Direct Representation	995
Assistance in ICE Detention Facilities	32

Know Your Rights trainings	10,035
Law-related Support	1,573
Total	16,029

Table 8: LDP Special Initiative Programs

Services provided January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021	Number of Individuals Served
Upstate New York Immigrant Family Unity Project	260
LDP Pro Bono Project	664
NYC Rapid Response Legal Collaborative	231
Total	1,151

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

While the COVID-19 pandemic provided many challenges for ONA’s programming and its partners, ONA was able to launch or expand on two new workforce development-focused programs, to directly address the needs expressed by new Americans impacted by the pandemic, many of whom were seeking employment. Through federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) funding, ONA expanded on the New Americans Can Code, launched in 2020. ONA also launched a new program for high-skilled immigrants, Professional Pathways. Both programs assist low-income new Americans gain the skills and credentials necessary to (re)enter the workforce.

New Americans Can Code

Overview

Launched in September 2020, the New Americans Can Code program continued to expand in 2021 to provide workforce development initiative for low-income immigrants in New York State. This initiative, in partnership with CanCode Communities, provides access to free virtual digital literacy training in basic computer skills, as well as more advanced software training courses.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed how important digital literacy is for those who may not already have these skills, and who may have had to seek new employment that required them to work remotely, which was further strengthened by ONA's survey of its partners in 2020 as well as feedback from ONA grantees and the community.

In addition to the digital literacy training, participants in this program in 2021 received assistance with updating their resumes and participation in employer roundtables to ensure that the digital computer skills they learn translate to potential employment opportunities. Students did not need to already have a computer at home to participate in the virtual digital literacy training, CanCode provided laptops and software at no cost for those in need.

Success Story

In 2021, the New Americans Can Code program was featured on a local news station in the Capital Region, which also highlighted the story of one of its students: <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/capital-region/news/2021/10/19/digital-literacy-courses-teach-new-americans-computer-basics#>

- “Ysabel Barreto, who lives in Kingston, is one of McPeters’ students. She came to America from Peru in 1996. While she knew some of the basics, the courses taught her how to create a webpage. She’s now taking more advanced courses, including how to use JavaScript. “It was a little hard but interesting and at the same time, learning things, new things that I never imagined in my life to get into,” said Barreto.”

Data

- Thirty participants enrolled in the digital literacy training courses that ran from April 2021 – June 2021, and September 2021 – December 2021. Each course ran for 10 weeks. 20 participants completed the courses.

Professional Pathways for High-Skilled Immigrants

Overview

Launched in July 2021, following a competitive procurement process, the ONA Professional Pathways for High-Skilled Immigrants program provides employment coaching, skills training, and job placements for new Americans with prior work experience and education. With six ONA Job Coaches based in not-for-profit organizations across the state, as well as one statewide Lead Agency, Upwardly Global, the Professional Pathways program is able to meet the needs of new Americans impacted by the pandemic, who are seeking to build on their professional experience and education they received in their home country, prior to coming to the United States. In addition, Professional Pathways became a key source of support for Afghan arrivals in the latter part of 2021, many of whom arrived to New York State ready to work with the significant professional work experience, training, and English language skills they gained working with the U.S. military in Afghanistan.

Success Stories

An ONA Analyst shared this success story following a site visit with a Professional Pathways partner:

- “An ONA Job Coach enrolled a client who was a middle school teacher in their home country. The intake noted that the individual was a cleaner as their current employment and was looking to obtain a job as a Spanish instructor in a language school. The ONA Job Coach shared that the client was highly frustrated at the beginning because they were not receiving responses for an interview. However, after joining the Professional Pathways Program and working with the ONA Job Coach (i.e., adjusting resume) the client is now interviewing with private schools, organizations and with the school district.”

The Professional Pathways Lead Agency shared this job seeker success stories:

- “AF moved to the U.S. 2 years ago. They worked in different survival jobs and started learning programming/software development on their own. They started working with the ONA Job Coach in October 2021. Their goal was to get into a certificate program in

programming/coding to build experience in the field. AF and the job coach worked on some free training applications together to Code the Dream and Per Scholas. They also prepared for interviews and other application processes together. After a successful application process AF was accepted into a 25-week free coding training "React Front-End" at Code the Dream. The training starts on March 16, 2022. Code the Dream also offers career support for alumni through employer partnerships. AF and the job coach will reevaluate goals and continue working towards obtaining full-time meaningful employment after the training.”

- “FC is a non-profit/governmental professional with 8 years of experience in diplomacy and government from their country of origin, Ecuador. They came to the U.S. as asylee, where initially they had to do different types of survival jobs from food delivery to health home aide. When they joined UpGlo, FC was unemployed. Right after completing the online training, FC worked closely with their ONA job coach and participated in different webinars and mock interview events organized by UpGlo. FC was also put in the mentorship program where they worked closely with an UpGlo volunteer as a mentor where they practiced interview and networking skills. ONA job coach presented their resume for an opening to one of the UpGlo employer partners. FC got selected for interviews and after 5 rounds, including here a presentation, they got a job offer from The Harlem Commonwealth Council for the Account Manager role making \$50,460 per year.”

Table 9: Professional Pathways Clients Assisted

Professional Pathways services provided July 2021-December 2021	Numbers of Individual Served
Candidates screened	185
Clients accepted to the program	75
Clients placed in employment	5
Clients referred to Job Training	75

Clients completing Job Training	44
Total	394

ONA RESOURCE COORDINATION & OUTREACH

ONA provides resource coordination and outreach through a variety of methods. Most importantly, ONA’s free and confidential New Americans Hotline (1-800-566-7636) connects callers with multi-lingual information and referrals for a variety of services across the state. ONA also shares up to date information and resources with the new American community through its website and social media platforms. Through ONA’s constituency work, ONA staff directly support immigrants and refugees seeking urgent legal assistance and other referrals. ONA’s monthly webinars have also continued to be a lifeline of information for other free state services and important topics for the new American community.

New Americans Hotline

Overview

The ONA network is supported by a toll-free, multi-lingual New York State New Americans Hotline, which provides live assistance in more than 200 languages and operates from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (EST), Monday through Friday (excluding Federal holidays). The New Americans Hotline is operated by Catholic Charities Community Services, Archdiocese of New York.

The New Americans Hotline responds to general immigration and naturalization questions and provides referrals to the caller’s local Opportunity Centers, ONA legal service providers, as well as to other public and private immigrant-related programs. It also acts as a resource to coordinate and refer to the appropriate District Attorney immigration assistance fraud complaints. The New Americans Hotline number is 1-800-566-7636.

Data

In 2021, the New Americans Hotline operations remained remote due to the pandemic. However, and despite being remote, the Hotline answered over 25,394 calls and made over 44,911 referrals.

Topics included questions about the Afghan Arrivals, federal changes in immigration practices and regulations, and questions related to accessing COVID-19 resources.

- In response to immigration related changes at the national level, ONA, in partnership with Catholic Charities Community Services and media partners, hosted a New Administration phone bank which yielded a total of 669 calls in a course of 2 nights (February 3rd and February 4th.)

ONA Website & Social Media

Overview

In 2021, ONA continued to utilize its website (<https://dos.ny.gov/office-new-americans>) to share important information with the new American community, as well as all New Yorkers. This has been particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic, as timely information needed to be accessed and shared digitally. Through its resource page on the website, ONA shared up to date information on “public charge” as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically tailored for new Americans. ONA also shared multi-lingual flyers and resources on a variety of ONA services. ONA posted monthly events to its calendar in to promote the numerous community seminars and workshops conducted by its partners.

ONA utilized social media posts on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/NYSNewAmericans>) and Twitter ([@NYSNewAmericans](https://twitter.com/NYSNewAmericans)) to reach community members across the state. Through social media, ONA shared partner events, information on program services, important immigration policy updates, and linked to announcements and information on the New York State response to COVID, including information on the COVID vaccine.

Outreach materials on website

- ONA created the COVID-19 Resource Guide to help fill the service gap. The guide is a crowd sourced list of food pantries/community fridges, mutual aid groups, cash funds or grants, and other digital resources available to immigrant New Yorkers. The list breaks down resources based on nationwide, statewide, and NY REDC region availability, and is updated every month at a minimum.

Constituency Work

Overview

In 2021, ONA's constituent team continued to assist new American constituents, as well as other members of the community, with important legal referrals and other resources. ONA received constituent requests through the New Americans Hotline, from the Governor's Office, through its network of providers, and other state agencies.

Referrals made directly to ONA from the New Americans Hotline in 2021 included callers needing urgent direct referrals for immigration legal services from ONA's legal partners because of their fear of deportation. Callers cited other needs in addition to legal assistance, including mental health, guidance relating to domestic violence, rent relief, and reporting cases of housing discrimination relating to immigration status.

Additionally, ONA responded to constituents who contacted the Governor's office with immigration-related queries. In the responses to these constituents, ONA provided guidance on how to apply for a gubernatorial pardon, made direct referrals for immigration legal assistance, and helped connect constituents with their Federal or State Representatives. ONA also responded to immigration related calls made directly to the NYS Department of State and followed up with constituent needs that arose from participation in outreach events, both in person and virtual.

Data

- In 2021, the Office for New Americans constituency team responded to over 340 constituents directly, to understand their situation and connect them to the services and information they needed.

ONA Webinars

Overview

Through the monthly Webinar Series, ONA connected its grantees and the greater network of immigrant serving community-based organizations with timely information and assistance on topics such as digital literacy, combatting hate crimes and discrimination in our communities,

Beyond Humanitarian Parole and Asylum: Exploring Pathways for Afghans in New York and abroad, and more. ONA’s webinar series is also a platform to convene its grantees so that they can learn from one another.

Table 10: Webinars coordinated by ONA in 2021

Date	Title	Presenter	Recording Link
1/26/2021	Human Trafficking and New Americans with Disabilities— Awareness and Prevention	Cynthia Stewart, ONA Ramirez June Initiative	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_IYnt83-pmE&feature=youtu.be
2/23/2021	Digital Literacy for All New Yorkers	AnnMarie Lanesy, New Americans Can Code	https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=0ed26a7b24284ccd bc05c4a87c20fe25
3/30/2021	Understanding and Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Creating a Barrier Free Environment	Jodie Chibi & David Wantuck, Deaf Access Services	http://bit.ly/ONAWebinarRecording_210330
4/30/2021	Cell-Ed - Mobile Learning for Life and Work for all New Yorkers	Dr. Jessica Rothenberg-Aalami, Cell-Ed CEO & Founder, Pilar Gomez-Marmolejo, Cell-Ed Coach, Stephen Kochenash, ESOL Instructor at Make the Road NY, and Elise del Castillo, Executive	- https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=3b30832a38f3abf609f56442bfaa9f6a

		Director at Central American Refugee Center.	
5/25/2021	Combating Hate Crimes & Discrimination in Our Communities	Jo-Ann Yo, Executive Director of Asian American Federation, Juo-Hsi (Sylvia) Peng, ONA Navigator at Asian American Federation, the New York State Police, the New York State Division of Human Rights,	https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=b304a7f1480d46339416f54b56bd3ea7
6/29/2021	Language Access	Andrea Salazar, New York State Language Access Coordinator, Ashley Bustos, Manager of Compass Interpreters, The Center, Pearl Ngai, Education Chair, Cornell University's	https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=81e8f0bf07bc4370b49b58a303cac3a0

		Translator-Interpreter Program, Tony Hua, Chief Operating Officer, VIVA Translate	
8/31/2021	Accessing Mental Health Services for New York's New Americans	Matt Canuteson, the Diversity and Inclusion Officer at the New York State Office of Mental Health	https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=aa0cc67064db79ae391e03006f4e7a16
9/28/2021	Applying for Naturalization? Avoiding the top-three reasons for continuations or denials	Janice Owen, Community Relations Officer, U.S.C.I.S., and Shyconia Burden, Community Relations Officer, U.S.C.I.S	https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=0e1ea1cbcb1fa1fe528de9ab7d8f45b3
10/26/2021	Supporting Career Pathways for New Americans	ONA Professional Pathways and ONA Opportunity Center - ESOL grantees	https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=e8713e8a57d07c6bff2ce713ec0e8e57

11/9/2021	Beyond Humanitarian Parole and Asylum: Exploring Pathways for Afghans in New York and Abroad	Discussion moderated by Professor Lenni Benson	https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=da9808ea91f115799b62fdc11cb6f804
12/21/2021	Health Resources for New Americans	Wilma Alvarado-Little, DOH; Fiona Wolfe & Alexia Mickles, Empire Justice Center; Tom Keenan, Phil Plessas & Susan Town, OTDA/DOH, Melanie Warren. New York State of Health	https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=b91462777132a6b3a93624b814211c7e

ONA IMMIGRATION POLICY & RESEARCH

To address the impact of federal policy changes and demographic flows, including new arrivals to New York State, ONA monitors such changes and advocates at the State and Federal levels on their behalf. This is accomplished by implementing agency policies, allocating resources towards the implementation of such policies, targeting programs that inform stakeholders, and facilitating the incorporation and acculturation of immigrants to life in their new chosen home.

State Immigration Policy

Overview

In 2021, ONA continued to engage in several state immigration policy initiatives to raise awareness regarding the issues most impactful to the immigrant community in the State: human rights, mental health concerns, access to benefits they are entitled to, among others. Sharing accurate information with stakeholders and the public is significant, and ONA serves as the lead

agency at the State level.

First Official Public Account of New York's Immigration Policy

- On October 4, 2021, ONA published the first scholarly account of New York State's immigration policy in a chapter titled "New York State's Immigration Policy – An Immigrant Policy" in the New York Bar Association book, *Immigration: Key to the Future – The Benefits of Resettlement to Upstate New York*. The book examines how refugees contribute to and even rejuvenate their communities by offsetting demographic and economic decline through paying taxes, rebuilding housing stock, opening new businesses, and taking unfilled jobs. New York's Chapter provides an overview New York's innovative response since the 1980s to the needs of its residents and the lived realities of immigrant families – a response based on a recognition of the value that this community has historically had on New York's economic, social, cultural, and civic well-being.
- *Immigration: Key to the Future* stands as a major statement on the contributions made by refugees to their adopted communities in the United States. It demolishes old myths and replaces them with an array of facts that are compelling, persuasive, and overwhelmingly positive. [Immigration: Key To The Future - New York State Bar Association \(nysba.org\)](https://www.nysba.org/immigration-key-to-the-future).

Protecting Immigrant New Yorkers Task Force

- ONA has been a member of the Protecting Immigrant New Yorkers (PINY) Task Force since its creation in January 2013. The PINY Task Force was created to strengthen enforcement against the unauthorized practice of immigration law through enhanced coordination between the state agencies, New York State Attorney General's Office, District Attorneys' offices, local government consumer affairs departments and federal agencies. The PINY Task Force meets monthly to promote best practices, encourage dialogue and idea-sharing, coordinate enforcement action against scammers, produce common materials including public awareness ad campaigns, know-your-rights flyers, and consumer scam advisories. In 2021, as a result of the pandemic, the Task Force met virtually. The ONA Hotline also served as the Task Force's main means of reporting immigration fraud by the public.

- In 2021, trainings were created by PINY to be presented to non-profit agencies and legal service providers across the state. Included in the training were tips to prevent fraud along with points highlighting what attorneys should and should not be doing regarding immigration applications. The ONA Hotline was a resource mentioned in these training presentations.
- In 2021, to respond to upstate fraud concerns, ONA led the creation of an upstate subcommittee of PINY, which is currently strategizing on ways to engage relevant stakeholders to provide support in the area when needed.

Response to National Policy Changes

Overview

As President Trump took office in 2017, a series of strategic federal immigration related executive orders, rules, and proclamations were issued, many with a drastic impact on New York's immigrant families. Such policies increased the fear of deportation for many of New York's immigrant families and led them to go into hiding instead of taking care of their health, continuing to access nutritional programs, sending their U.S. citizen children to school, etc. This generated a dramatic and long-lasting "chilling effect" that ONA needed to address. In 2021, as the new Biden Administration worked to reverse the impact of such policies, ONA continued engaging its network of community partners, state agencies, research institutions, and stakeholders to evaluate and develop recommendations pertinent to such efforts, such as the Biden Administrations call for comments on a new revised "Public Charge Rule." ONA continued to submit comments to the federal administration highlighting the economic, social, and cultural impact of its immigration policies and built on New York State immigration position of prior years.

On October 25, 2021, the New York State Secretary of State submitted comments on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (USDHS) Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Relating to the Public Charge Rule published in the Federal Register on August 23, 2021 (86 FR 47025) soliciting feedback on the Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to guide the development of Public Charge Rulemaking.

- U.S Comment ID USCIS-2021-0013-0166
<https://www.regulations.gov/comment/USCIS-2021-0013-0166>

National and International Engagement

Overview

New York State ONA, as one of the first examples of state governance and direct engagement in how best to welcome and integrate newcomers, provides an opportunity to share evidence-based practices and to inform the development of similar mission initiatives across the country and the world.

National Network of Office for New Americans

- Since 2015, ONA has been part of a small and unique network of state government offices for immigrants and refugees, intent on sharing information, resources, and tools, and learning from each other on how to best serve the nation’s new American communities.
- Having started with four Offices for New Americans (ONA) in 2015, in 2021, the ONA State Network member states were: New York, Michigan, California, Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio, Washington, New Jersey, Nevada, Colorado, Oregon and Ohio. Three additional states are working towards the creation of similar offices. This collaboration between states was the subject of an initial report highlighting key takeaways by the Pew Research Center in 2015,¹ which demonstrated how the New York State Office for New Americans has set the example for future national platforms and local approaches.
- In 2021, the National ONA Network’s collaboration was facilitated by New American Economy (NAE) and World Education Services (WES). As follow up to the establishment of communication with the Biden Immigration Transition Team in late 2020, officials in 2021 became part of the President’s immigration staff to engage with the network regularly. The goals in doing so were to learn from the states’ expertise, to employ best

¹ <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2015/09/17/state-immigration-policy-offices-3-takeaways>

practices to help address the nation's immigration landscape from the previous administration, and how best to improve policies moving forward.

Binational Collaborations - U.S.-Canada Cross Border Network

- The North Country region's limited availability of immigrant-related resources and limited access to those services that do exist has long been of concern for ONA. As a result, ONA built on the experiences of its previous ONA North Country Navigator program and implemented the North Country Immigrant Resource Coordinator program in 2021. As mentioned above, through the ONA Immigrant Resource Coordinator program in 2021, ONA's footprint in the North Country region grew even more vis-a-vis previous years, increasing awareness of the need for national, inter-state and binational collaboration. This need was increased by the impact of COVID-19 that prompted the U.S.-Canada border closure. Through participation in monthly meetings with the Cross Border network, the North Country Immigrant Resource Coordinator has been able to raise awareness on local services provided through the ONA program in the region, establish connections and assist in the dissemination of appropriate messaging to those seeking asylum in Canada.
- Specifically, the border closure highlighted the need for ONA's Immigrant Resource Coordinator to lead a coordination of resources to families stranded in the North Country region without support. It also raised the need for the dissemination of timely and accurate information on Canada's immigration and border policies and procedures, leading to a binational focus on means to assist.
- In 2021, the members of this U.S.-Canada Cross-Border Network, included the ONA Immigrant Resource Coordinator, the LDP and Legal Counsel programs representatives, as well as nonprofit, advocacy, and legal groups representative of New York's border regions extending to Saratoga and Albany. The network also includes other U.S. states such as Maine, Michigan, and Ohio, and international cities, such as Toronto, Montreal, and the border town of Hemmingford in Canada.
- The opportunity to refer immigrants to Canadian attorneys through this network benefited New York's new Americans who did not otherwise have access to necessary services.

ONA-Ibero University in Mexico City Mental Health Collaboration

- Beginning in 2019, ONA’s network of service providers expressed feelings of secondary traumatic impacts while servicing their new American clients under the Trump Administration’s anti-immigrant policies. These concerns, documented in reports by the ONA Program Analysts, were amplified with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Feedback in 2020 from the ONA network and results from the ONA “COVID-19 Needs Assessment Survey” showed that service providers and their clients needed mental health support during a time of increased stress and uncertainty. This need highlighted a gap in services, as most mental health resources are not informed on the immigrant experience nor are they readily accessible to the immigrant community due to financial, linguistic, or cultural barriers.
- To continue to help fill the gap in mental health resources, ONA maintained its partnership in 2021 with Dr. Angelica Ojeda Garcia and Dr. Gabriela Gonzalez Ruiz, professors of psychology and researchers at Ibero University in Mexico City. The research done by both professors focuses on the migrant experience, the effects of migration on the self and family structures, and what tools could be offered to those individuals to foster a healthy sense of self against the backdrop of dramatic change. The collaboration with Ibero University produced a series of webinars offering participants – members of the ONA network and other immigrant service providers – with mental health and wellness tools based in art therapy practices. Aligning with ONA’s holistic approach to service provision, the goal of this work is to equip immigrant service providers with tools they can use and share with their clients to foster a self-care and wellness practice, ultimately improving the mental health of both groups.
- Building on work started in 2020, in 2021 ONA delivered a series of five webinars expanding on what was called the “mental health toolkit.” All webinars were delivered in Spanish, with English translation and closed captioning available when requested. The webinar series was met with overwhelmingly positive feedback, with members of the ONA network highlighting the webinars as beneficial in subsequent site visits. Attendees were appreciative that they were given the space and tools that would allow them to explore

these conversations related to mental health and second-hand trauma, and in some instances have taken the lead themselves of hosting trauma informed trainings/workshops. As feedback from the ONA network continues to show mental health as the number one concern of the new American community, ONA is exploring continuing this work beyond the current series which concluded May 2021.

Table 11: ONA Mental Health Art Therapy Webinars

Webinar Topic	Date	Description	Recording Link
The Burnout Process in those who Serve Migrants: Context, System and Symptoms / El proceso de Burnout en los Servidores de Migrantes: Contexto, el Sistema y Síntomas.	May 21, 2021	This webinar described all the possible routes of social influence and personal interpretation that generate Burnout. Tools were offered for agency staff; techniques were also offered to assist in the prevention of Burnout inside and outside the institution. <i>The strategy is first-aid techniques with art.</i> 15 minutes were dedicated to a breakout session where participants worked on their individual artwork.	https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=2b36feb3ff78df52ffd1da9f8944e7a9

<p>My Family and I walk hand-in-hand with Art as a Growth Strategy / Mi familia y yo caminamos de la mano del Arte como estrategia de crecimiento</p>	<p>4/23/2021</p>	<p>This webinar reflected on the project of individual and family life as a way to focus energy and generate synergies in readjustments in daily life as a result of how the pandemic has changed and impacted our lives. There was a 15-minute breakout session for participants to work on their individual piece of art. The art technique that was used was free drawing with pencil, crayons, markers, colored pencils, white sheets, tracing paper or transparent materials.</p>	<p>https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=88973986d2ddb4c42bf28afc37607cc5</p>
<p>El collage estructurado como estrategia para análisis de historias de vida y casos en la atención con población migrante</p>	<p>3/19/2021</p>	<p>This presentation aimed to provide another strategy both to facilitate the expression of the people providing services to new Americans and to make responsive art and generate self-care for participants. For this webinar you will need to bring clippings of various images from newspaper, magazines, (glue in your case) or have the possibility of attaching different photos or images taken from the internet to do 2 practice exercises.</p>	<p>https://meetny.webex.com/meetny/ldr.php?RCID=e4dd40d15d3640b4ab6105860206fele</p>

Conclusion

In 2021, the ONA network continued to face significant challenges due to the COVID-19

pandemic, while also remaining steadfast in providing critical services that were able to reach and support those most in need. Through strong, innovative programming and the dedication of its statewide network of community-based providers, ONA was able to assist new Americans across the State and serve communities through a comprehensive series of programs, including launching new programs, all while focusing on the various issue areas impacting immigrant integration, such as civic engagement, legal, ESOL, mental health, and work force development. In 2022, ONA looks to build on the successes from the past year to continue to make New York State a welcoming place for all new Americans.