



SANTA FE
DREAMERS
PROJECT



**PURSUING
JUSTICE,**



**ROOTED
IN LOVE**

2022

Santa Fe | Albuquerque | El Paso

Dear friends and colleagues,

I'm incredibly pleased to share with you our Annual Report for 2022! I could not be more proud of our team for all that we've managed to accomplish this year.

As an immigration attorney and a community advocate, I've come to appreciate that while the Presidential administration changes every four or eight years, racism and discrimination don't share the same constraints. Since the very founding of our country, our immigration laws have been inherently and intentionally racist - designed to limit and exclude individuals based solely on their race and nationality. Even though presidents or other politicians may claim to be friends or advocates for immigrants, the reality is that the whole system of immigration has always been unjust from top to bottom, from The Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 to Title 42 in 2022.

While many hoped for improvements under President Biden, we've been dismayed to see many of the most hateful policies of the Trump Administration have continued and even worsened in many cases. Asylum policies, border justice, and even programs like DACA are even worse than they were two years ago. Perhaps even more dismaying, anti-immigrant sentiment among the general public in the United States is also at an all-time high and continues to increase, and this trend seems to be worsening across the political spectrum.

In short, we continue to have our work cut out for us. But in spite of the ongoing turbulence, we're still here. Here at Santa Fe Dreamers Project, we have a truly remarkable team of legal advocates whom I am grateful to call colleagues and friends. Whether it's dealing with novel legal issues, working with clients in unique, stressful or vulnerable positions, or creatively partnering with other community members to meet the needs of our clients, our staff continues to reimagine and redefine community-based, client-centered immigration legal services every day. Thanks to the dedication of our staff, our faithful supporters and community partners, we have continued to provide truly excellent advocacy to hundreds of immigrant families across New Mexico and the El Paso/Ciudad Juarez border zone each year with an impressive array of legal services.

Inside this report, I hope you are as impressed as I am to see just how much good work can happen when brilliant minds and huge hearts get together. Our dedication to immigrant justice is rooted in our love for our neighbors, our family members, and our community. Whatever challenges arise, we're firmly planted and ready to tackle them head on, every day. Thanks for being here with us!

In solidarity,
Emma O'Sullivan, Esq.
Executive Director



MISSION STATEMENT

Santa Fe Dreamers Project provides free legal services to immigrants to promote economic empowerment, community development, family unity, and liberation from detention. Our work is centered around the belief that supporting immigrants makes our whole community stronger. We are committed to representing every qualified immigrant who walks through our doors, to using service strategies that expand vulnerable peoples' access to legal counsel, and helping to elevate the voices and narratives of immigrants in our community to support positive reform.

PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE, EXPERT LEGAL SERVICES FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Our Community Programs team serves undocumented New Mexicans throughout the state in the areas of work authorization, humanitarian protection, family unity, and citizenship. Our team includes four legal representatives who all carry diverse caseloads.

Our Community Programs team are experts at meeting our clients where they are, overcoming barriers to traditional legal services, and providing excellent legal advocacy. They work at churches, libraries, community centers, domestic violence resource centers, schools and social services providers, here in Santa Fe and throughout the state via rural partnership programs on-site in rural communities.

They provide walk-in legal clinics, phone consultations, legal advice and education, and most importantly, zealous, expert legal representation to our hundreds of clients. This team's work is supported in part by contracts with the City of Santa Fe and the City of Albuquerque, as well as other sources like the State Bar of New Mexico's Access to Justice Fund.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS BY THE NUMBERS

24

Humanitarian visas
for survivors of crime

U Visa, VAWA, T Visa, etc.

75

Applications
for permanent
residency

35

Naturalization
applications

479

DACA
applications

27

DACA Advance
Parole applications

51

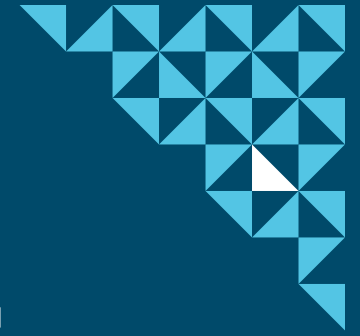
Legal clinics
offered

18

New clients for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

A protection for undocumented children who have been abandoned, abused or neglected by a parent.

CLIENT-CENTERED SERVICES MEANS PARTNERING WITH OUR CLIENTS, EXPLORING EVERY OPTION TOGETHER, AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO SERVICES.



“My family and I have not only received the most respectful and proficient service from Santa Fe Dreamers Project, but they have also managed to transform what can naturally be understood as a sensitive, stressful, and even scary process, into a dignified, clarifying, and above all, empowering experience. We could not be more thankful and indebted to this organization and its members for the care and transparency by which they have guided us in this journey.”

—DIEGO CARBAJAL, FAMILY BASED IMMIGRATION CLIENT

SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ ASYLUM SEEKERS AT THE BORDER & BEYOND

Santa Fe Dreamers Project also provides legal and additional supportive services to our clients on both sides of the border, as well as our clients inside and coming out of detention. We have developed particular expertise in working with LGBTQ+ individuals, who often face uniquely challenging and vulnerable situations, both legally and

“The work that we do at SFDP empowers me to harness my rage at these systems to provide a safe and secure pathway where our clients’ needs are always centered.”

—NORA GONZALEZ
BORDER COORDINATOR

logistically. The team working on this project includes staff based in El Paso, Texas, who regularly consults with our clients in Ciudad Juarez before they even cross into the United States. Our staff members work in coalition with other service providers throughout the border zone including shelters, human rights agencies, and other legal service providers to provide our clients with as much support as possible, including legal advocacy, housing, transportation, health and financial support as well.

Last year, Santa Fe Dreamers Project provided 80 LGBTQ+ asylum seekers with one or all of the following wraparound services: legal services, post-release, and sponsorship placement.

57

individuals received legal services related to requests for Title 42 exemptions, and were successfully granted entry to the U.S.

The same 57 individuals received coordination of border-related services, including shelter coordination, border accompaniment services, and transportation coordination.

5

clients received direct legal representation in complex asylum issues, including appeals and remand hearings.

2

formerly detained individuals received services coordinating with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for documentation after winning cases in immigration court.

3

individuals provided post release services.

LGBTQ+ BORDER PROJECT BY THE NUMBERS

12

clients were provided legal services for release from detention, including representation for bond, parole, and medical releases.

2

clients received *pro se* services to file notices of appeal to the Board of Immigration Appeals.

50

detained individuals received commissary funds.

5

trans asylum-seekers were successfully matched with sponsors.

Living on the border while working at SFDP is so important to this work as it allows me to be a firsthand witness at the flaws in the system that we're trying to dismantle.

Back in 2020 when COVID-19 first started, President Trump enacted Title 42 leaving thousands if not millions of migrants and asylum seekers stuck in Mexico with no relief. Being on the ground, my colleague and I were able to visit and support a transgender-led makeshift shelter in Ciudad Juarez called Casa de Colores. We provided legal support while other community organizers provided mutual aid to keep the shelter running. In May of 2021 what felt like a miracle happened and we were able to begin our Title 42 exemption program which allowed all of the residents of Casa de Colores to finally enter the U.S. and seek asylum.

It's been nearly 3 years since the implementation of Title 42, and not only is it still in place after promises of ending it, but it was just expanded by President Biden. While we work on Title 42 exemption requests for the trans and queer community in Ciudad Juarez, I'm able to see the bigger picture of how all migrants are stripped of their dignity upon entry. In September of this year, Venezuelan asylum seekers were allowed in but were then made to sleep on the streets of El Paso as the non-profit and religious shelters were at constant capacity. Other migrants were bussed to Chicago and New York where there was also no system set up by the government, which led to community members taking action and providing food, clothing, and shelter in these new cities. Community organizers and non-profits have always stepped up in times where government fails, but it's past due for this system to change so that people seeking safety can be welcomed and welcomed with dignity.



I'm grateful for the work that we do at SFDP because it empowers me to harness my rage at these systems to provide a safe and secure pathway where our client's needs are always centered. Above all, it allows our compes themselves to become empowered, as we've been able to witness with the women of Casa de Colores. They've now founded Casa de Colores as their own non-profit organization that we're proud to partner with, as we work together to assist LGBTQ+ migrants with legal and mutual aid from Ciudad Juarez to their destination in the U.S. It's been amazing to see them grow, and I'm grateful to collaborate with them to ensure everyone is met with quality dignity and care that they deserve.

—NORA GONZALEZ, STAFF MEMBER, BORDER COORDINATOR



Since 2019, the **El Paso Immigration Collaborative**, or EPIC, has provided representation for bond and parole for people detained in the New Mexico and West Texas area.

Using this collaboration, different organizations have been able to come together and increase the amount of people that are being represented for release from detention centers within the area.

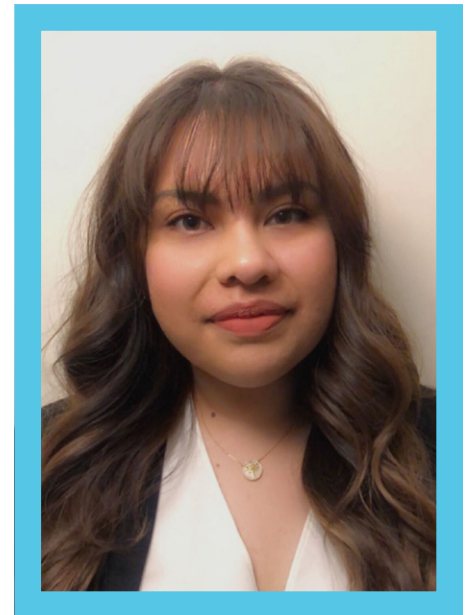
These releases were made possible with the help of our partner organizations including Innovation Law Lab, New Mexico Immigrant Law Center, Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center and Justice For Our Neighbors- El Paso, among others. While releases are our main priority, we have

also been able to compile an enormous amount of data to continue the advocacy against injustices in the immigration system.

In Fall 2020, EPIC began a Fear Interview Preparation Clinic, which provides a general overview and a preparation guide to the Fear Interview process. These one-on-one preparations between our dedicated volunteers and staff members with folks in the detention centers helped 113 individuals in the 2021 Fiscal Year. Out of those that completed a preparation with us, 58 people received a positive result in their fear interview or received a Notice to Appear which allows them to continue their asylum case in the United States.

“One of the things I love about working in this collaborative is the fact that we are in constant communication about individual cases and strategy conversations on how to advocate for release. There’s a comfort knowing that there is not just one organization advocating for an individual person but rather there’s multiple. I’m able to join in the excitement whenever I hear of a new release, because they, to me, feel very personal. We all know details about each other’s cases so knowing that a person was able to reunite someone with their loved ones after their release, feels amazing.”

—**LESLIE GOMEZ, FI CLINIC COORDINATOR**



COLLABORATING WITH PARTNERS FOR A STRONGER COMMUNITY



“As an immigrant youth-led organization we have experienced first hand the anti-immigrant attacks from the right that keep leaving immigrant youth in legal limbo. SFDP has provided reliable, innovative, and competent immigrations services to young people across the state during this urgent time. We are grateful for how SFDP has shown up for our members and we will keep referring them to their representatives.”

—FELIPE RODRIGUEZ ROMERO, CO-DIRECTOR, NEW MEXICO DREAM TEAM

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