Catholic Charities: Immigration and Naturalization Intern

Advocating for Justice
Hi, I am Daniela Cabrera!

I am a Social Justice Program participant at Loyola University Chicago. The Social Justice Internship is a year-long internship program in which students are paired with a Chicago non-profit organization and participate in meaningful community service for a minimum of 250-275 hours.
What is my role?

- Supporting Immigrant Survivors Project Specialists by assisting with advocacy on behalf of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, including writing and/or translating victims’ personal statements and civil documents such as marriage, death, divorce, and birth certificates; writing executive case summaries; reviewing and summarizing medical, court, and police records, helping maintain database records and making photocopies of legal cases.
- Learning extensively about immigrant visas such as U-Visa, VAWA, I-130, I-698, I-485, I-90, I-765.
About Catholic Charities: Immigration and Naturalization Office

- Helps immigrants from all over the world (Afghanistan, Guatemala, Venezuela, Ecuador, Mexico, Haiti, Colombia, Argentina, Nicaragua, etc) to obtain legal status in the United States.
- Has the vision that "All persons have the right to find in their own countries the opportunities to live in dignity and the right to seek work elsewhere in order to survive."
- Advocates for legislation that protects family unity and allows newcomers to fully engage in communities, in addition to providing crucial services to immigrants and refugees in the United States.
Supervisor: Melisa Arce

- Experienced DOJ Accredited Representative with more than 17 years of practicing immigration law, and providing legal representation to individuals and families before the U. S. Department of Homeland Security and U. S. embassies and consulates around the world.
- Extensive knowledge in Family Reunification cases, Cuban/Refugees/Asylee Adjustment of Status, Citizenship and Naturalization applications, U Non-immigrant Visas, Law Enforcement Certification VAWA applications, Waivers of Inadmissibility, Consent to Reapply for Admission applications, Non-immigrant Visa Waivers, FOIA requests, FBI electronic background check applications, Document translation, In-person representation Interpretation services.
- Actively participated in Know Your Rights presentations and provided informational sessions to the immigrant community.
Most common cases

U NON IMMIGRANT VISAS
Victims of certain crimes may obtain legal status in the United States if they have been mentally or physically abused by a US Resident or Citizen and want to help law enforcement prosecute criminal conduct.

ADJUSTMENT OF STATUS
Immigrants can use this process to apply for Permanent Residence status to receive their Green Card without having to return to their country to complete visa proceedings.

ASYLUM
For Refugees seeking to stop deportation and gain permanent legal status in the US due to fear of prosecution in their home country because of their religion, race, nationality, or public opinion.
Personal Projects

- To help clients write declarations and pardon letters for immigration
- To translate important legal documents from Spanish to English
- Keep track of data input and visa forms and files
- To gain extensive knowledge on immigration visas

(most personal projects cannot be used for demonstration because of confidentiality agreements)
APPLYING FOR A U VISA?

What is a U visa?
A U visa is an immigration benefit for victims of certain crimes who meet the requirements, it allows victims to remain and work temporarily in the United States generally for four years.

Eligibility
- is the direct or indirect victim of a qualifying crime
- Has suffered substantial and mental abuse as a result of the crime
- Has information on the crime
- Was helpful or will cooperate with law enforcement in an investigation, conviction, or sentencing of the criminal activity

Qualifying crimes
- Robbery, Kidnapping, Sexual Assault/Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, Extortion, False Impersonation, Tax Evasion, Fraud in Foreign Labor Contracting, Stalking, Fraud, Soliciting Services, Kidnapping, Kidnapping, Murder, Extortion, Attempted Murder, Stalking, Kidnapping, Kidnapping, Extortion, Sexual Assault, Sexual Exploitation, Slavery, Trafficking, Witness Tampering, Unlawful Criminal Harassment, and Related Criminal Activities

Application requirements checklist
- Form I-918
- Form I-918B certification
- Form I-616
- Victims affidavit
- Supporting evidence (police reports, medical records, photographs, court documents, witness affidavits)
- Passport
- Birth certificate
- Visa

Forms and Declarations
- Filled out on the USCIS website
- Form I-918B and notarized
- Completed and signed original signature within six months immediately after Form I-918B submission
- Form I-616 Notice of Intent to Apply
- Form I-616 Application for U Visa

Identity documents
- Passport
- Birth Certificate
- Votes
- Two photos, passport style

For derivative family members
- Form U-016a: Petition for Qualifying family members of U visa recipient

Domestic Violence Hotline
The National Domestic Violence Hotline offers phone and chat services for anyone affected by domestic violence. Support is available 24/7 by calling 1.800.799.SAFE (7233) or online at thehotline.org.

Information source:
https://www.uscis.gov

Student Researcher:
Daniela Cabrera
Faculty Member:
Jamin Trotter
Why is this work important?

Immigrants come to the United States every day from all over the world seeking better opportunities to be able to lead a better life. They leave the comfort of their home and their families behind to provide a better future for themselves and their families. The immigration process can not only be very costly but it can take a long time which is why many risk their lives coming here undocumented. Catholic Charities seeks to help those struggling with immigration issues find solutions so that they may find the great opportunities that they seek. Through the Immigration program at Catholic Charities, I have learned many ways in which we can support immigrant communities by providing them with the correct information regarding their circumstances and helping them to petition for legal status here in the United States.
Reflection on Class Topics

EXPL 390
During my internship, I was privileged enough to take client’s declarations and listen to their stories. Their trust in me to help them and listen to them allowed them in a way to unload for a few hours. It allowed me to understand on a deeper level the obstacles that these immigrants face daily to survive here in the United States. In addition, it allowed me to reflect on my own story as an immigrant and the struggles that my parents endured coming to the United States and having to start from zero with no job, family, or friends. Reflecting on my past and looking towards my future, this internship has allowed me to connect with my identity as an immigrant and how I can help those struggling around me who share the similar cultural backgrounds as me.
Reflection

My internship at Catholic Charities has not only taught me a lot of knowledge about immigrant visas but it has also taught me about global issues in countries today. I have spoken to clients from all over the world who have come to the United States seeking better opportunities at life. Many of these immigrants were running from violence, poverty, or were just seeking for better futures for their families that they knew were not available in their own countries. Listening to them has shown me how to be an active listener and how to be able to understand their needs in order to empower and strengthen communities of immigrants. This internship together with the Social Justice class has shown me what type of leader I want to be in my community and how to help Catholic Charities achieve their goal of assisting immigrants through their non profit organization.
Thank you to the team at Catholic Charities, my EXPL professor, and EXPL classmates.