

# IMMIGRATION LEGAL AID CLINIC F.A.Q.

## 1. What is an Immigration Legal Aid Clinic?

An Immigration Legal Aid Clinic is a ministry assisting low-income immigrants to file government documents that enable a non-citizen to do one or more of the following: 1) to continue to remain in and/or to work lawfully in the United States, 2) allow their families to reunite and/or stay together, 3) and/or help qualified persons become legal permanent residents or U.S. citizens. The clinic also can represent clients as they may need legal representation during their application process. This center is accredited and receives legal authority through the U.S. Department of Justice, although the DOJ has little to none involvement in ongoing, daily matters of the clinic and abides by the laws of the United States.

## 2. Why a Church-Based Legal Aid Clinic?

Immigrants are valuable members of our community, but sometimes misunderstand the legal options available to them. In addition, *notarios*, i.e. unauthorized legal practitioners, often target immigrants, making grand promises about getting visas for immigrants and their families and charging exorbitant prices while producing few results, if any.

Churches like ours, and many other ACNA churches throughout the U.S., are rooted in neighborhoods and have a history of loving service for their neighbors, providing accountability and trust. Our clinic director will be trained in basic immigration law and certified by the U.S. government to offer immigrants low-cost assistance. As such we can provide desperately-needed legal assistance to our immigrant neighbors in an environment that is safe and accountable both to our community and the law. As a church, we also have the unique opportunity to provide spiritual and social guidance in addition to legal services. Many of our clients also seek counseling and prayer while they go through their immigration process. (courtesy of Tree of Life Anglican Church)

## 3. How does the ACNA fit into this?

The ACNA has previously set a goal to establish 30 of these clinics nationwide. They desire to help equip churches to minister to local immigrants in their own communities and one practical and needed way is to provide low cost legal aid service to those who qualify. By the end of 2018 there will be four ACNA churches that will have an immigration legal aid clinic.

More information here:

[http://www.anglicanchurch.net/index.php/main/anglican\\_immigrant\\_initiative/#About%20Us](http://www.anglicanchurch.net/index.php/main/anglican_immigrant_initiative/#About%20Us)

#### **4. What legal aid services will you provide?**

We will specifically be practicing family immigration law. Each client who comes through our clinic will be individually interviewed. We will help clients navigate immigration law and see if they can qualify for an immigration benefit which they may or may not know about. This usually will mean helping them take the first step in filing paperwork toward applying for a visa or an additional step, depending on their current status. It is also possible that there may not be a benefit that we can help them with at this time, either due to existing U.S. law or an extremely complicated situation. If that is the case, we will partner with an immigration law firm/Legal Aid Center in Memphis that can best help the individual take the next step.

#### **5. How can you practice law if you are not a lawyer?**

The Department of Justice has designed this program to qualify people to practice immigration law through a non-profit by becoming an Accredited Representative. There are requirements, trainings, and an application process that provide a person the opportunity to practice immigration law and represent immigrants as clients in an immigration court.

#### **6. How can the church be involved?**

Our current goal is to start slowly. Our desire will be to open our doors as a part-time clinic available by appointment only to serve clients locally in the Jackson and West-TN area. We expect our immediate needs will be funding, childcare during appointments, administrative help, translators/interpreters, volunteer coordinator, and greeters.

It is also worthy to note that as we take on a client's case, these cases can last anywhere from 1-20 years. These will be long-term relationships as we meet with and walk them through the immigration process, as they wait for visas to be available. As those relationships and opportunities develop, All Saints will have a unique opportunity to minister the love of Christ to these individuals and their families.

#### **7. How much will this cost and how will it be funded?**

The ACNA in coordination with the Immigration Alliance estimates that approximately \$50,000 is needed to start up a clinic. This number includes funding for a law library, furniture, computers, and office supplies. In addition, malpractice insurance (to mitigate any exposure of risk by providing legal advice), as well as professional development and two part-time salaries and a quarter time paid assistant.

We will rely on several different means to fund the Immigration Clinic. First of all, this will be a fee for service clinic. In addition to fees collected, we plan to raise funds through available grants through the ACNA, funding through the church budget, and private, outside fundraising.