



# Kitsap Immigrant Assistance Center Immigration Legal Services

PO Box 1276, Bremerton WA 98337 | (360) 616-0479 | (360) 616-2722 Español | [www.kitsapiac.org](http://www.kitsapiac.org)

## The State of KIAC Immigration Legal Services 2017

KIAC Immigration Legal Services began in November of 2014. Initially serving people in Kitsap county, we quickly realized that our sisters and brothers in Jefferson, Clallam, and North Mason counties were in need of these services. As a result we expanded our services to those areas in 2016. The following is a reflection on the past year and a look at our plans for 2018.

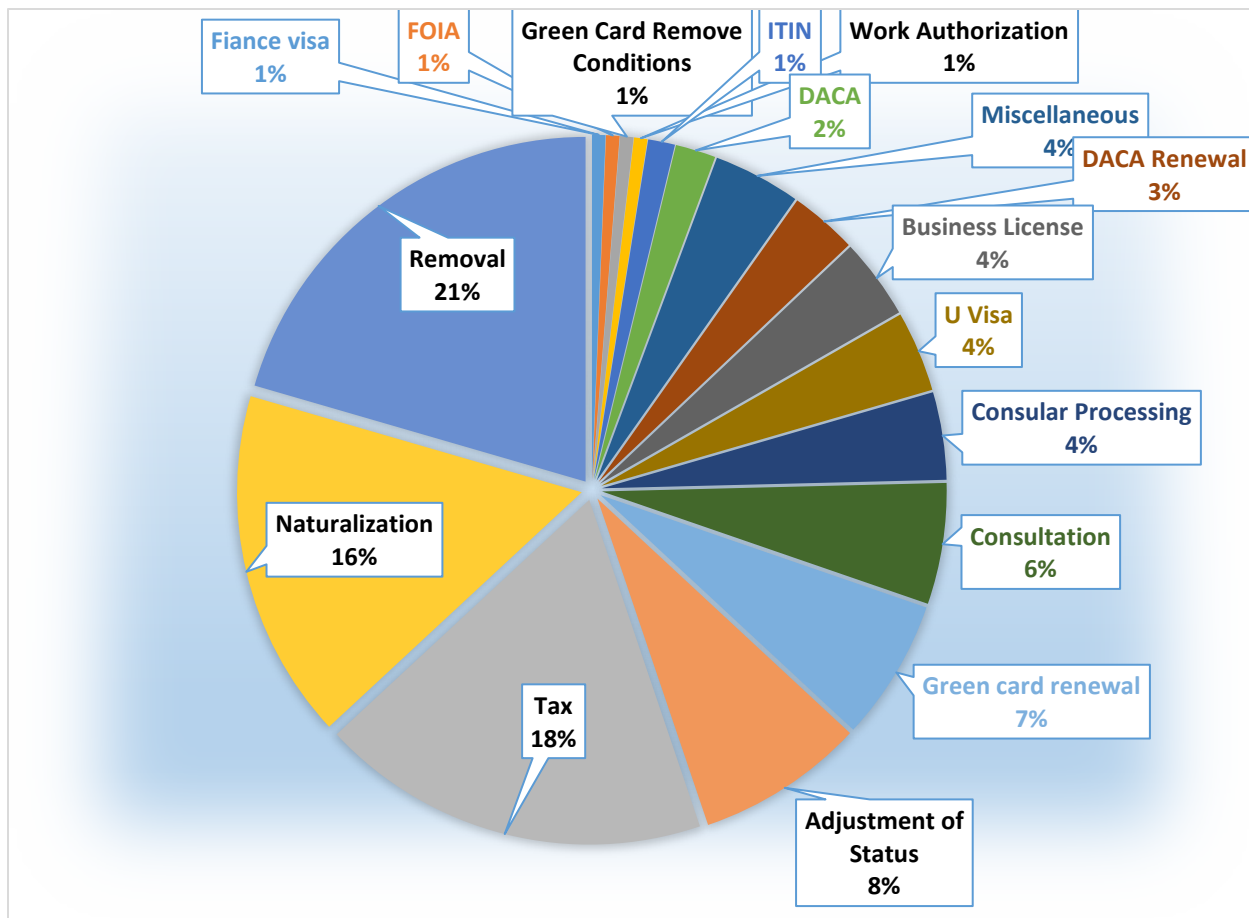
### A Look Back

#### The numbers

In 2017 we opened 328 new matters for clients from 39 different countries. We ended the year with 238 open matters.

55% of our clients had household income below the poverty level, and 76% were below 150% of poverty level. The average family size was 3.3 people.

Below is a breakdown of the kinds of matters we opened in 2017.



Late in 2016 we knew that 2017 was going to be a different kind of year. Anticipating the policies of the new administration, we developed a plan designed to help our immigrant sisters and brothers in the face of new anti-immigrant policies. The key elements of the plan were:

1. Increase outreach to enable all eligible immigrants to attain legal status

Along with speaking wherever we were invited we formed a partnership with the Jefferson County Immigrant Rights Advocates (JCIRA) to open a legal office extension in Port Townsend. Three JCIRA members will become accredited representatives to provide expanded service to the Olympic Peninsula.

With support from our partners at One America we helped 24 additional people become US citizens.

2. Educate vulnerable populations about their rights and resources

We spoke and gave workshops at numerous schools, churches, and community gatherings from Forks to Shelton to help people understand their rights and get resources to protect their families. Over 730 people attended these workshops.

3. Help vulnerable people develop readiness plans

On many occasions when ICE detains a parent, their kids can be left without someone who can act legally for them. With the help of a local family attorney we developed a package that people can use to designate someone to care for their child and have power of attorney for them.

4. Increase resources to defend immigrants, especially minors, in immigration court

As the policies of the new administration became more clear we took steps to expand our legal resources. We made a decision to begin providing defensive legal representation to people in deportation proceedings. In February we got approval for our first fully accredited representative. That person can defend people in immigration court and before the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). And we have an attorney who is learning immigration law to help us.

In our first trial on November 30<sup>th</sup> we represented a client in the Northwest Detention Center immigration court and secured his release. We receive support from the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project and the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies for many of our removal cases. We are currently representing 58 people in removal proceedings, 28 of them are children, the youngest is two years old. There are many more people, including kids, in removal proceedings than one person can represent so we will be adding at least two fully accredited representatives in the first half of 2017. It's still not enough but better than nothing.

5. Maintain or increase accredited representative resources to continue our high rate of affirmative applications

During the course of the year we added seven additional partially accredited representatives. These folks will help us serve all those who are striving to become citizens in our country. We have four additional people in training who we expect to become partially accredited by mid-year.

6. Encourage city and county law enforcement to limit their cooperation with ICE

We had conversations with several law enforcement agencies to find out what their policies were regarding detaining and turning people they had apprehended over to ICE. We are happy to report that all of the agencies in our area are aware to the legal restrictions on this and ensured us that they don't plan on changing that policy.

7. Develop and propose *Welcoming Community* ordinances to Kitsap city and county governments

We distributed a suggested Welcoming Communities proclamation to the four cities and county government in Kitsap County. Shortly after that we worked with Bainbridge Island city council

member Michael Scott to put a resolution before the city council. It was very quickly passed. Unfortunately, Bremerton, Poulsbo, and Kitsap County did not pass any resolution and the city of Port Orchard never responded. Local advocates have taken up this cause.

#### 8. Help immigrant business owners register their businesses, file/pay taxes, and improve their business skills

We continued providing tax and business registration services to families and business owners. We hope to do more in the area of helping business owners gain financial literacy and find ways to improve their businesses.

#### 9. Participate in encouraging immigrant friendly state legislation

As members of the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network we support immigrant friendly legislation. We have held discussions with our state and national representatives about the need for correcting the inequities in our current immigration laws.

#### 10. Work with other agencies to develop an *alert* network

We participated with the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project and the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network to develop a network that alerts advocates and others about ICE activity in their areas. We are also partnering with JCIRA to build an alert network in Jefferson County.

### **Looking Ahead**

2018 is going to be full of opportunities to make a difference for the people we serve. The administration is giving us all kinds of reasons to be strong and active.

DACA's fate will probably be decided early in the year. And when I say "DACA's fate" what I really mean is the fate of thousands of young people who have depended on that program.

Ice continues to arrest and detain more and more people who have tried to do nothing more than save their lives by coming to a country where they thought they would be safe.

The "justice" department continues to tighten its approach as to how it treats kids who are in removal proceedings.

The attorney general thinks that administratively closing people's removal proceedings so they can pursue a path to legal status is not a good idea and will probably issue new guidance greatly restricting it. In other words, continuing to attempt to deport them.

The possibilities can be dismaying yet we have created a program that gives hope and, I dare say, results to people who may not have any other resource. We've grown in numbers, expanded our services and learned a great deal this year. It wasn't always smooth but we've kept at it and helped a lot of people along the way. The outline of our 2016 plan is still relevant for 2018 with two added goals; to engage the immigrant community in actively guiding our program, and to strengthen our internal processes.

We look forward to continued and growing partnerships with the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP), One America, Jefferson County Immigrant Rights Advocates (JCIRA), the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC), and the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies (CGRS). I encourage you to support these organizations as much as you can.

I haven't been a big fan of some of Justice Antonin Scalia's positions but I'm reading a book about him that helped me remember that we all have our good points. Here's some wisdom from the Justice.

*"One of the strengths of this great country, one of the reasons we really are a symbol of light and of hope for the world, is the way in which people of different faiths, different races, different national origins, have come together and learned – not merely to tolerate one another, because I think that is too stingy a word for what we have achieved – but to respect and love one another."*

Antonin Scalia

Ray Garrido  
January 2018