

A SEAT AT THE WELCOME TABLE

Arkansas Immigrant Defense
Annual Report, 2020 & 2021



ARKANSAS
IMMIGRANT
DEFENSE



DEFENSA DE
INMIGRANTES DE
ARKANSAS

ATTORNEYS AT LAW ABOGADOS



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Supporters of Arkansas Immigrant Defense,

A seat at the welcome table, this is what we offer to children who have fled terrible situations and turned themselves in to officials at the border. The Office of Refugee Resettlement works to vet hosts and then sends the child to Arkansas with our contact information. And, thanks to you, we are able to meet with them, meet their legal needs, and thus set them up for a eligibility for ARKids First (Medicaid for children in Arkansas), a path to citizenship, and a strong posture as we fight to end their deportation proceedings. This work has been extra taxing during the pandemic, for our clients and also our staff. Again and again I heard the words of a dear friend in my mind:

"Life seems burdensome because we only know how to relax in between action, and life is mostly action. The trick is to discover relaxation during action, then one is really free. This is the vision of Sri Krishna, and this is what I teach."

The late Swami Dayananda Saraswati told me this on my first trip to India in 2008. And, it is on point for AID's work in 2020 and as the pandemic continued through 2021. While I was raised in the Christian tradition, I have worked with Tibetan Buddhist refugees for years, here and in India. While in India, I also made time to study a sacred Hindu text known as the Bhagavad Gita with Swami ji. Relaxation during action is one of my most integral values now and has by extension become one of the major values that informs how we operate at AID. While our clients face incredible trauma and obstacles, we work to meet them where they are and with enough relaxation that we can be truly present with them and listen to what their needs are. And relaxation during action was key because there was a LOT of action and because we want to feel that these service jobs of ours are sustainable. We worked hard to keep going and it was not easy; nearly all of our services for survivors of trafficking and violence are free to the survivor, and we wanted to keep it that way.

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And, while we have a lot of generous grants and donors to help keep these services free, we also must depend on those clients who can pay; but, during the pandemic, people stopped seeking paid legal services. Simultaneously, there was a drastic rise in child abuse and other domestic violence. So, just as we most needed funding most for pro bono services, we were also facing a lack of client-generated revenue.

We started off the year, just ahead of the pandemic, with a Convening for our Northwest Arkansas community partners who also serve immigrants and refugees. We discussed immigration policy, how to be involved at the local and national levels, and we heard from a fantastic speaker about how we can best care for ourselves so that we can sustainably serve our immigrant and refugee neighbors. That day on Mount Sequoyah could not have been better timed as it gave us tools with which to navigate the coming pandemic, unaware though we were at the time of just how much we would need those new skills. A fabulous speaker/teacher, Beverly Kyer, had us reflecting on our work, our history, and helped us to add to our toolkit various ways of thinking and breathing that--if practiced with some regularity --could keep our respective organizations and their staff people resilient and strong, as relaxed during action as possible. Speaking of tools, one of my favorites is Gospel music, and one of my favorite songs is "I'm Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table." And this is apropos for lots of reasons, one being that a big challenge for AID was keeping immigrant children having food on the table, keeping them enrolled in SNAP and free lunches.

Even before COVID hit Arkansas, 2020 was expected to be a challenging year for immigrants and refugees. The then-presidential administration was working hard at implementing changes to the Public Charge Rule. The way that they were talking about these changes was horrid and they were intentionally using it to scare immigrants and refugees away from accessing vital services like healthcare, free lunches, and pregnancy Medicaid. We worked hard to combat misinformation and relied on resources from our partners at Protecting Immigrant Families to create accurate, convincing, and up-to-date fliers. We listened closely to our clients and our friends at the Community Clinic and Arkansas Children's Hospital to adapt our fliers to the needs of their concerned patients, most often parents and more specifically single mothers.



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Through all of this, we continued to stay focused on our primary mission: serving immigrants and refugees, especially minors and survivors of violence, so that they can gain access to healthcare, educational resources, work authorization and more. Another major attack against our client communities came in the form of evictions. A lot of our clients work in industries that were hit hard by the pandemic: restaurant workers, in particular. Many landlords took advantage of our clients and a generous gift from an anonymous family allowed us to hire an attorney, a law student, and a Marshallese community organizer to fight evictions with legal work and community education. As I write this, AID is celebrating our seven-year anniversary. We are excited to be here, serving immigrant and refugee survivors of trafficking and other violence. In fact, my very first child survivor from 2015 just became a citizen at the end of 2021. I went with him to his naturalization interview and he answered the civics questions without hesitation. (If you would like to see if you could pass the citizenship test, click [here!](#))

I hope that you will support immigrants and refugees by supporting AID. We are the only nonprofit law firm in the state that does NOT accept funding that restricts which immigrants and refugees we can serve. By becoming an AID Amigo (our monthly donor program), you help make sure that immigrant and refugee survivors get a path to the lawful status that takes them out of the cycles of exploitation and violence they have been trapped in. Your support ensures that survivor children get legal status that makes them eligible to receive federally funded ARKids First (Medicaid for kids), and sets them on a path to citizenship, work authorization and--if they'd like to study after high school--in-state tuition.

If you would like to contribute more complex assets, we can accept crops, land and more. Just reach out to Leilani Ocasio, our fabulous Development Director, at development@arkansaslaw.org

Thank you so much for caring and doing!

Stephen Coger

Executive Director





THEIR STORIES

NELSON'S STORY

After three long, difficult years applying for legal permanent residency, Nelson heard "Congratulations!" after answering only the second question of his 3-minute interview in the U.S. Consulate in El Salvador. Although the interviewer could see the overjoyed relief on Nelson's face, he did not know what Nelson had to endure to get there.



Back in 2017, Nelson married and began the long process of applying for a Lawful Permanent Resident status through the consular process. Always a hard worker, Nelson now owned a painting company, and he regularly came into the office in multi-colored, paint-stained white coveralls. Nelson and his wife were extremely determined and resilient in the face of this difficult process that takes years. First, the petition for a relative has to be applied for and approved (the adjudication by the government takes months and months), and then the couple must work hard with their attorney to win a Waiver of Unlawful Presence (the adjudication of this will also take months upon months). Only then can the immigrating spouse get a consular interview scheduled (and, you guessed it, this also takes months).

Throughout the process, Nelson and his wife were always asking great questions and preparing for the next step. On a 2-hour prep call for his interview, Mayra Esquivel and Nelson diligently went through all his evidence in a 5-inch binder.

Then, two weeks before he had to leave, Nelson was infected with COVID. Luckily, Nelson's negative test result came back right before he left for El Salvador. However, Nelson still had a lot of work to do before his interview: he needed an ID, he needed an attorney to get that ID, and he needed to get a medical exam now that he was COVID-free.

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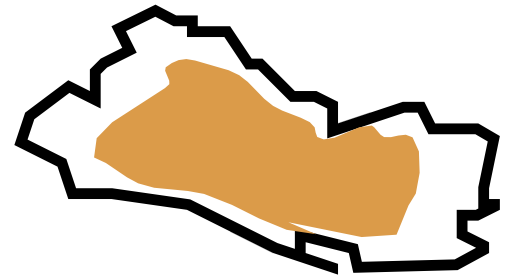
Thank you

He was successful in acquiring an ID and getting a medical exam, and ultimately, he was successful in the interview. During her husband's absence, Nelson's wife had to be strong for herself and the children knowing that there was a chance that Nelson would not be allowed to return if the consular interview found a reason to deny him. Finally and fortunately, Nelson secured safe passage home and returned to his family within a month. His wife and children greeted Nelson at the airport completing a three-year long journey. With AID's help they navigated the pandemic and a family-unfriendly immigration system to arrive at a place of stability and a sense of lasting security.

DANIELA'S STORY

As a child, Daniela first arrived into the U.S. in December 2013 and worked with another attorney outside AID to seek asylum with her mother, fleeing gang violence and threats in El Salvador.

When Daniela missed her biometrics appointment, she became disqualified for a work permit. Years later, in the fall of 2020, Daniela and her mother were in a car wreck where tragically Daniela's mother died.



Daniela was left in the hands of her mother's friend, Andrea, since her father had abandoned Daniela and her older brother did not want to take responsibility for Daniela. Still in the grieving process over her mother's death and abandoned by her father, Daniela at first refused mental health resources, but Andrea calmly explained that Daniela was eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) after securing guardianship.

Daniela trusts Andrea, and they are really good friends. And so, in January 2021, Daniela was finally willing to accept support and came to Arkansas Immigrant Defense. Mayra Esquivel, AID's lead paralegal, worked hard to prepare state court filings for attorney Nicole Schaum's review and filing. The state court judge signed the order and Nicole used that in support of the **I-360 Special Immigrant Juvenile Status application** and now Daniela is just waiting on her turn for a green card (also known as Lawful Permanent Resident status -- the first step toward citizenship)!

**The names of the clients listed above have been changed to protect their privacy.*



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In the last 2 years we have served immigrants and refugees from **29 countries**



Argentina / Canada / China / Colombia / Costa Rica / Cuba / Dominican Republic / Ecuador / El Salvador / Guatemala / Guinea / Haiti / Honduras / India / Iran / Iraq / Jordan / Lebanon / Mauritania / Mexico / Myanmar / Netherlands / Nicaragua / Nigeria / Philippines / Russia / Somalia / Spain / Thailand / Tibet / United Kingdom / Venezuela



OUR PILLARS

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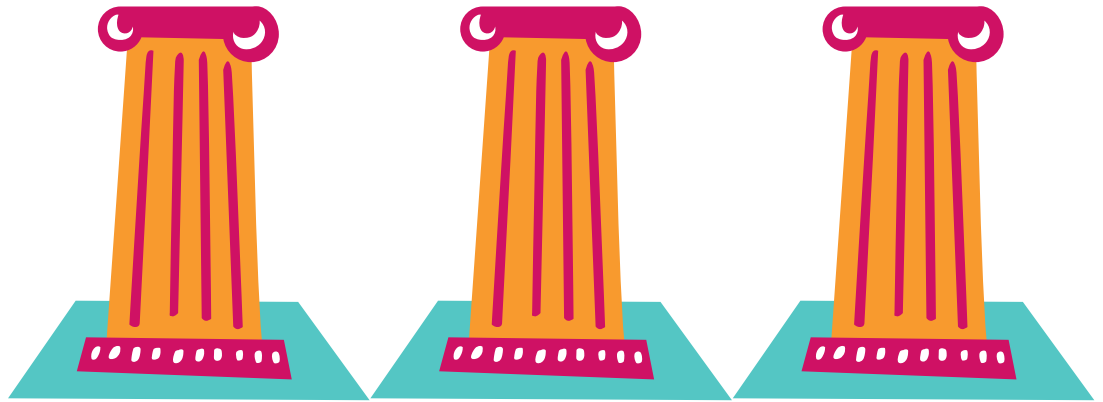
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Thank you

Keeping families together

Empowering survivors

Defending immigrant & refugee children



Because of these service our clients get access to:



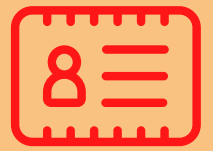
Medical care & Health resources



Education



Protection from cycles of abuse and exploitation



A driver's License



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- Represented **986** individuals in different processes, including those for work permits, legal residency and U.S. citizenship. 
- Facilitated **24** virtual education workshops reaching **25,563** people.
- Connected with **50** school counselors and social workers to share information about paths to citizenship for undocumented youth. 
- Filed **32** asylum applications.
- Prepared **54** U-Visas for survivors of domestic violence to have a chance at a safe, stable life in the USA.
- Provided **54** clients with citizenship through Naturalization.
- Filed **92** DACA initial and renewal applications
- Delivered **863** boxes of culturally appropriate food such as fresh vegetables, fruits, canned goods, meat, and dairy.
- Provided **133** therapy sessions to survivors of violence and abuse.
- Defended **133** Marshallese families and **64** LatinX and other immigrant families from eviction, approximately 1/3 of the non-Marshallese clients were single mothers. 



IMPACT OF COVID-19

Their Stories

When the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in Northwest Arkansas, AID adjusted to remote work and continued providing direct legal services. However, as the world suddenly changed so did the lives of immigrants and refugees in NWA. According to a CDC report, more than 45% of all adult cases in NWA were Latinx while around 19% were Pacific Islander, primarily Marshallese.

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45% of adult cases in AR were LatinX

19% were Marshallese

Latinx and Marshallese people comprise only 17% and 2.4% of the region's population, respectively

These numbers were striking given that Latinx and Marshallese people only account for 17% and 2.4% of the region's population, respectively. The disproportionate disparity in deaths from COVID-19 for these populations was also stark, especially for Marshallese community members.



HOLISTIC SERVICES DURING THE TIME OF COVID-19

While immigrants and refugees in NWA were dealing with lost family members, they were also navigating loss of income due to mandatory quarantines, reduced hours, or layoffs while utility bills and rents continued unabated. More and more, as the pandemic continued into fall 2020, clients and others in our community requested assistance with food and fighting eviction. In one case, a landlord was making threats against a single mother of 3, claiming she was going to get the mom deported if she didn't move out. When AID attorneys got involved, the landlord's tone changed drastically (and, as it turned out, the landlord was also an undocumented mother!)

In another, a Marshallese family that was already reeling from the death of a family member was not only being evicted but their landlord was trying to make them pay his attorneys fees! AID litigated aggressively to protect this family from even more unnecessary suffering.

It is important to note here that the other two nonprofit legal providers in the state accept funding that comes with "entity restrictions" which disallow them from serving most immigrants and refugees, including people with DACA, Temporary Protected Status and more. AID was truly the only possible nonprofit law firm available to serve many of our neighbors most in need of eviction defense during the pandemic.

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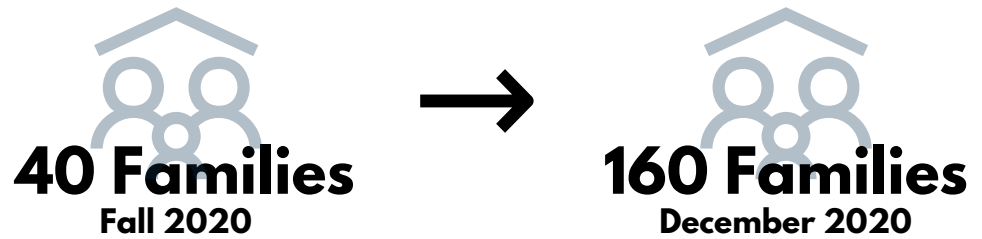
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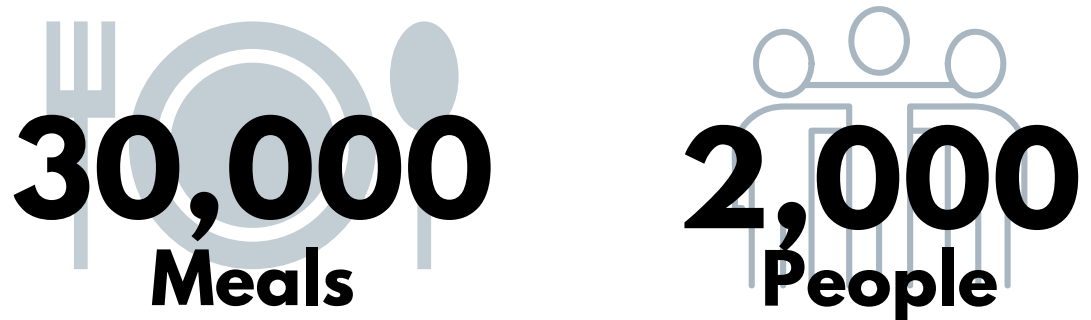
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AID started a food distribution program for 40 families in fall 2020, and by the end of December 2020, the need for food assistance numbered 160 families.



Thanks to the generous Walmart Foundation and funds from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and NWA Council as well as our partners at St. James Baptist Food Pantry, Bread of Life, and The Food Conservancy, AID was able to provide more than 30,000 meals to about 2,000 individuals. **We are often the only nonprofit that connects with these members of our community because they are new arrivals who often have almost no connection to the broader community.** When immigrant children make their way to the border from Central America, the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement gives them AID's contact information and so **AID is the often only realistic bridge for resources to reach these communities of children survivors and their families for vital resources like food and healthcare information and referrals.**



Whereas in the past, clients would simply visit the office to sign forms and applications, now case managers had to send items in the mail and wait for a response. Telephonic consults were equally difficult to the point that some clients thought the calls were scams and became anxious to answer sensitive questions over the phone. Also, many clients did not have access to a printer or computer and so we began to send things through the mail, which slows things down and--too often--things getting lost in the mail.



Our team worked hard to educate and fight for undocumented immigrants as they were being attacked on all sides. Our **eviction defense fliers** explained (in Spanish, English and Marshallese) how people could access our services.

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PROTECTION AGAINST EVICTION FOR IMMIGRANTS

DEFENSA = IMMIGRANTES = ARKANSAS

Free legal services for tenants, starting January 1st, 2021

- Contact our law firm at 479-925-9095 for free help against eviction. To start, we prefer text messages or WhatsApp messages
- We will work outside of the court to negotiate an agreement with the landlord, if it's possible
- We will fight for you in court to give you more time to look for a more permanent, safer place to live
- If you are an undocumented immigrant or living with TPS or DACA—please call us for services
- Please share this flyer on your social media. More info is at AIDArkansas.com and facebook.com/ARImmigrantDefense





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PROTECCIÓN CONTRA EL DESALOJO PARA INMIGRANTES

Servicios Legales Gratuitos para inquilin@s, empezando el 1° enero del 2021

-  **Contacte nuestro estudio jurídico al [479-925-9095](tel:479-925-9095) para ayuda gratuita contra desalojo. Para empezar preferimos mensajes de texto por cell o por WhatsApp**
-  **Trabajaremos fuera de la corte para negociar un acuerdo con el dueño, si resulta posible**
-  **Lucharemos por Ud. en las cortes para darle más tiempo a buscar una vivienda más permanente y segura**
-  **Si Ud. es inmigrante indocumentad@ o con TPS o con DACA-no importa, llámenos para servicios**
-  **Favor de compartir este volante por sus redes sociales. Más info está en DefensaDelInmigrantes.com y facebook.com/ARImmigrantDefense**





At the request of the Community Clinic, we created our **Pregnancy Medicaid flier** (available in Spanish and English); it explained that no one needed to be afraid of accepting pregnancy Medicaid, despite the misinformation coming into the community in light of the changes to the Public Charge Rule.

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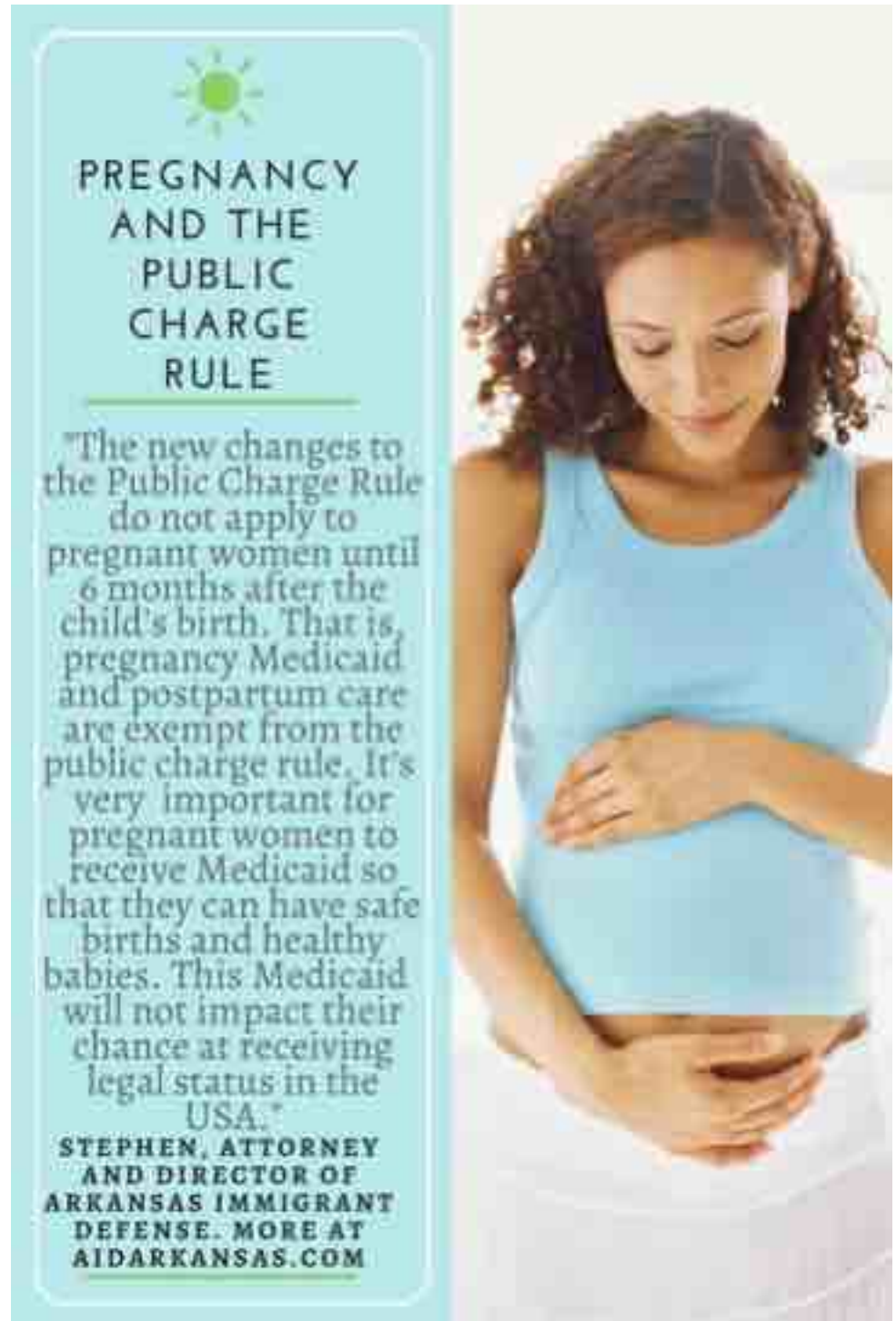
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EMBARAZO Y LA CARGA PÚBLICA

"Los cambios nuevos de la Carga Pública no aplican a mujeres embarazadas, hasta 6 meses después del parto. O sea, Medicaid para el embarazo y la atención posparto están exentos de la carga pública. Es sumamente importante que mujeres embarazadas reciban esta ayuda. Así pueden ser saludables y tener bebés saludables.

No va a impactar sus oportunidades de recibir estatus legal en los Estados Unidos."

**ABOGADO STEPHEN,
ENCARGADO DE
DEFENSA DE
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SERVING IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES

WHAT IS ARKANSAS IMMIGRANT DEFENSE?

We are a nonprofit law firm serving all of Arkansas and the region.



WHAT DOES AID DO?

We provide legal services to immigrants and refugees from around the world. Our services are free to minors and survivors of violence. Everyone else pays for our services.

WHAT SERVICES DOES AID OFFER?

We practice all types of immigration law, and also offer limited misdemeanor and family law services. For more information, visit our website or call us.



AIDArkansas.com

479-925-9095

and follow us on social media

@ARImmigrantDefense





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ARKANSAS IMMIGRANT DEFENSE

DEFENSA DE INMIGRANTES DE ARKANSAS

SIRVIENDO A INMIGRANTES Y REFUGIADOS

¿QUÉ ES DEFENSA DE INMIGRANTES DE ARKANSAS (DÍA)?

Somos un bufete de abogados sin fines lucrativos trabajando por todo Arkansas y la región.



¿QUÉ HACE DÍA?

Proporcionamos ayuda legal a inmigrantes y refugiados de todo el mundo. Nuestros servicios para menores y sobrevivientes de violencia doméstica son gratuitos. Otros inmigrantes y refugiados pagan por nuestros servicios.

¿CUÁLES SERVICIOS OFRECE DÍA?

Hacemos todos tipos de ley de inmigración, y también ofrecemos servicios de ley familiar y para delitos menores.



defensadeinmigrantes.com
479-925-9095
o síguenos en los redes sociales
@ARImmigrantDefense





ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY

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Assets	Dec. 31, 2020
Current Assets	
Checking & Savings	\$322,236.19
Accounts Receivable	\$29,152.97
Other Current Assets	\$40,558.67
Total Current Assets	\$391,947.83

Fixed Assets	
Fixed Assets	\$3,856.32
Total Fixed Assets	\$3,856.32
Total Assets	\$395,804.15

Liabilities & Equity	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Credit Cards	\$4,863.15
Other Current Liabilities	\$181,643.19
Total Current Liabilities	\$186,506.34
Total Liabilities	\$186,506.34
Equity	\$209,297.81
Total Liabilities & Equity	\$395,804.15



Arkansas Immigrant Defense Balance Sheet

As of December 31, 2020

Assets	Dec. 31. 2020
Current Assets	
Checking & Savings	\$322,236.19
Accounts Receivable	\$29,152.97
Other Current Assets	\$40,558.67
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Assets	Dec. 31, 2021
Current Assets	\$435,663.11
Fixed Assets	\$3,580.38
<hr/>	
Total Assets	\$439,243.49
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Liabilities & Equity	
Liabilities	\$160,112.85
Equity	\$279,130.64
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Total Liabilities & Equity	\$439,243.49





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Arkansas Immigrant Defense Profit & Loss January through December 2020

	Jan - Dec 20
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
Contributions, Gifts & Grants	
General Donations & Grants (U)	51,788.77
Gifts In-Kind	2,700.00
Government Grants	211,806.97
Private Grants (R)	316,124.18
Total Contributions, Gifts & Grants	582,419.92
Other Revenue	7,550.00
Program Revenue	
Food Program Service Revenue	40,775.00
Legal Program Service Revenue	60,508.66
Total Program Revenue	101,283.66
Total Income	691,253.58
Gross Profit	691,253.58
Expense	
Administrative Expenses	12,565.26
Occupancy Costs	49,168.11
Office Expenses	29,122.73
Other General Expenses	6,391.72
Payroll Expenses	342,483.12
Professional Services (Admin)	21,433.00
Program Direct Costs	
Food Program Direct Costs	18,577.37
Legal Program Direct Costs	60,628.67
Other Program Direct Costs	30,585.51
Therapy Program Direct Costs	41,290.00
Total Program Direct Costs	151,081.55
Total Expense	612,245.49
Net Ordinary Income	79,008.09



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	Jan - Dec 21
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	861,688.72
Gross Profit	861,688.72
Expense	
Administrative Expenses	11,114.51
Occupancy Costs	51,839.37
Office Expenses	41,043.74
Other General Expenses	3,618.72
Payroll Expenses	451,441.11
Professional Services (Admin)	36,563.57
Program Direct Costs	
COVID Program Direct Costs	7,049.50
Food Program Direct Costs	36,131.05
Legal Program Direct Costs	101,994.78
Other Program Direct Costs	8,218.87
Therapy Program Direct Costs	43,917.00
Total Program Direct Costs	197,311.20
Total Expense	792,932.22
Net Ordinary Income	68,756.50
Other Income/Expense	
Other Expense	-1,076.33
Net Other Income	1,076.33
Net Income	69,832.83



THANK YOU

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Thank you to clients, donors, supporters, and staff members for their work in advancing and defending the rights and dignity of immigrant and refugee survivors in Arkansas. It is thanks to you that AID serves survivors of violence and trafficking every single day.

