



**New Jersey Consortium
for Immigrant Children**

Annual Report

Oct 1, 2022 - Sept 30, 2023



***Working Toward a Better New Jersey
for Immigrant Children***

www.njcic.org



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A Word from the Board Chair

Dear NJCIC Supporters,

With a mission to work with New Jersey's young immigrants and their allies to advance their full, fearless participation in our society, I write as the proud Board Chair of the New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children to introduce our inaugural Annual Report. Many are not aware that nearly one-quarter of New Jersey's population was born in another country.^[1] New Jersey is home to thousands of recently arrived immigrant children, some fleeing here with a parent, but many escaping dangerous which force them to make the treacherous journey on their own. In fact, from October 2022 through September 2023, over 5,000 unaccompanied minors were placed with family members or close friends in New Jersey. This is on top of the nearly 20,000 that were placed in New Jersey in the preceding five years.^[2]

The Consortium was founded in 2015, initially as an informal coalition of attorneys for children to strategize and collectively engage in advocacy efforts with and on behalf of our clients. Priscilla Monico Marin took over the helm in March 2022 and under her leadership, along with the inspirational and powerful work of the team she leads, the organization has grown to be one of the premier organizations representing children in New Jersey and a force with which to be reckoned.

There is much work to do. The need for attorneys to represent immigrant children is tremendous, despite the program that the State of New Jersey has launched to provide representation to unaccompanied children and similarly situated youth. And although New Jersey has taken some steps to be a more welcoming and inclusive state, many children are still shut out of necessary services and at times even school, making our policy advocacy, where we push for ever more inclusive policies and laws, so critical.

Please read on to learn about our important programs, our accomplishments to date, and how it has all been financed.

All the Best,

Randi Mendelbaum
Randi Mandelbaum, Esq.
NJCIC Board Chair

[1] https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants_in_new_jersey.pdf

[2] <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-state>

Our Mission & Vision for New Jersey

Our **mission and vision** at the New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children (NJCIC) is to work with New Jersey's young immigrants and their allies to advance their full, fearless participation in our society. We seek lawful status for immigrant youth and advocate for system-wide change in the areas of education, access to justice, and health equity—including increasing accessibility to mental health resources.

Our **ultimate goal** is a New Jersey where every young immigrant has lawful status and the opportunity to advance, and where families can stay together and thrive. We want New Jersey to be a welcoming and inclusive state for all children—a place where every young immigrant has the opportunity to feel secure, advance, and achieve success in their lives.

**Subscribe to
our newsletter!**

OUR TEAM



Priscilla Monico Marin, Esq. – Executive Director

Sarah Nolan, Esq. – Legal Director

Lady Jimenez-Torres, M.P.A. – Policy Director

Dr. Omar Mayyasi – Director of Finance & Administration

Josephine Herman, Esq. – Staff Attorney

Mark Lauterbach, M.S. – Development & Communications Manager

Erio Rosario-Perales, M.L.E.R. – Senior Paralegal

Jacob Naimark – Paralegal

Alysia Colon – Program Associate

Board of Trustees

Randi Mandelbaum, Esq. – Board Chair

Catherine Weiss, Esq. – Board Secretary

Saul Martinez – Board Treasurer

Douglas Bishop, MD

Sergio Crespo-Flores

Vanessa Lucas, Esq.

Mohamed Sidibay, Esq.

About Our Work

NJCIC seeks to overcome barriers to young immigrants' ability to thrive by combining direct legal representation, policy advocacy, community outreach and education, and provider training.

The **Legal Program** seeks lawful status for immigrant youth by representing children and youth under 21 in removal defense, and in petitions for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), asylum, U/T visas, and other humanitarian relief. NJCIC also serves as the central intake and referral coordinator for a network of legal service providers funded by the New Jersey Office of New Americans (ONA).



The **Policy Program** fights for systemic change in health care, education, and access to justice by engaging lawmakers, creating and disseminating policy reports, and conducting community outreach and education across the state.



The **Immigrant Youth Advocates** produce a podcast, [Migrants with Migraines](#), where they discuss their immigrant experience and its impact on their mental well-being. Advocates also attend workshops and events to learn how to make an impact on state policy.

The Consortium

NJCIC convenes a state-wide coalition of legal service providers and allied professionals that has steadily grown to over 145 members. NJCIC supports its members and builds capacity for legal services by hosting provider meetings and trainings on current legal and policy issues.

Overview of Finances

NJCIC Revenue & Expenses

(Inception - June 30, 2023)

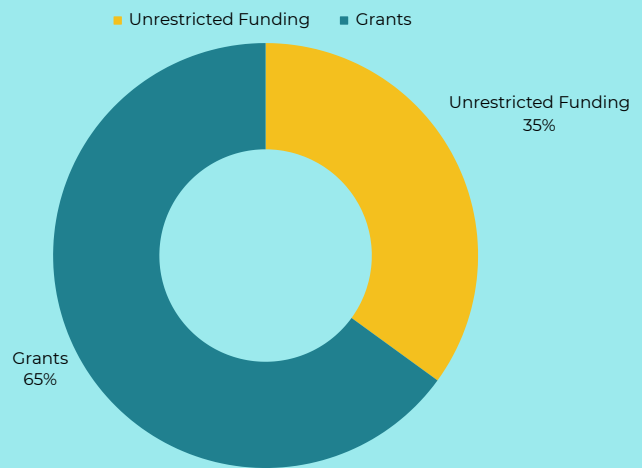
Revenue

Grants : \$834,000

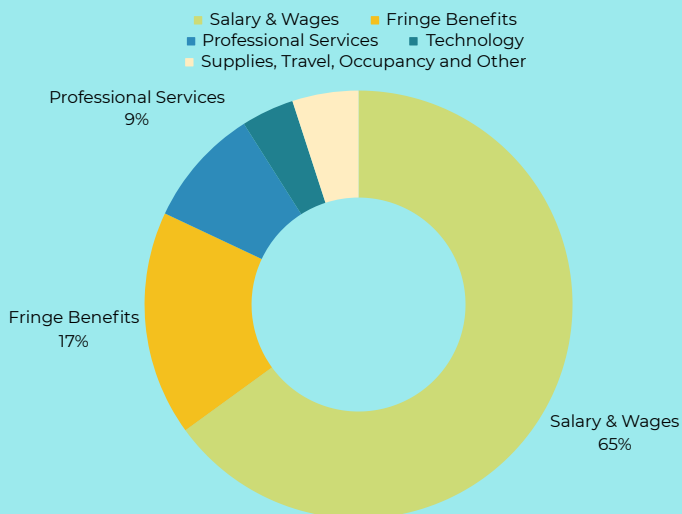
Unrestricted Fundraising: \$441, 000

Total Revenue: \$1,275,000

Revenue



Expenses



Expenses

Salaries & Wages: \$830, 000

Fringe Benefits: \$214,000

Professional Services: \$120,000

Technology: \$48,000

Supplies, Travel, Occupancy: \$63,000

Total Expenses: \$1,275,000

A Year of Growth

NJCIC grew significantly over the past year. We expanded our programs and welcomed four new staff members—Staff Attorney Josephine Herman and Paralegal Jacob Naimark both joined NJCIC in October 2022, followed by Development & Communications Manager Mark Lauterbach in April 2023, and Program Associate Alysia Colon in August 2023. We also launched a new Legal and Policy Summer Internship Program and welcomed Hunter Marrero, a rising 2L from Georgetown Law School, who gained valuable experience working with clients and engaging in policy advocacy.

This summer, we achieved a major milestone by becoming our own independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization! We are grateful to the Community Foundation of New Jersey for their support in serving as our fiscal sponsor prior to the spinoff and to Lowenstein Sandler, LLP for providing invaluable pro bono guidance throughout the process.

NJCIC held its second Immigrant Children & Youth Walk on October 1, 2023 at the South Mountain Recreation Complex in West Orange, NJ. A joyful celebration of our clients and work, the walk brought together local families, community members, clients, and allies in a show of support for immigrant youth in New Jersey. Participants enjoyed a scenic 1.7-mile walk and helped raise awareness and crucial funds for our programs.



Legal Program



1,880
**Calls to the Intake
Line/Web Referrals**



461
**Screenings for
Program
Eligibility**



289
**Referrals to Legal
Service Providers**



39
**Clients
retained**

Julio's Story

Julio* is a 19-year-old boy from Central America. He was abused, neglected, and abandoned by his father and neglected by his mother. When Julio was about 17, he fled to the United States to escape his family's abuse. He now lives with a relative in New Jersey, Ronaldo.* NJCIC's Senior Paralegal worked closely with our Staff Attorney to gather facts and build trust with Julio. NJCIC enlisted the support of the Young Center, who appointed a child advocate to help Julio. Thanks to NJCIC's advocacy, the family court appointed Ronaldo as Julio's legal guardian, which allowed Julio to apply for a Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) visa. Now, Julio is studying English and is on his way to achieving stability in the United States. In the future, Julio hopes to become a police officer and protect children in New Jersey who, like him, have been victims of abuse.

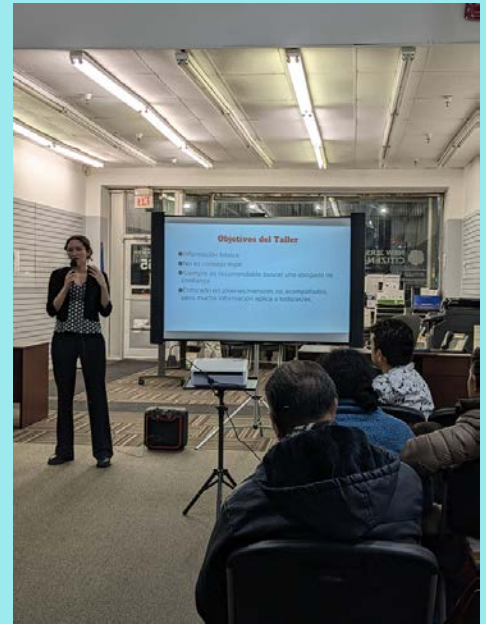
*Names have been changed for confidentiality

Securing Legal Status for Children and Youth

In Fall 2022, the Legal Team launched a new direct immigration legal services program for unaccompanied children and similarly-situated youth, with support from ONA. In less than a year, the team built a caseload of 39 youth clients and has already achieved many successes, setting these clients on the path to lawful status and a brighter future in New Jersey.

Our recent work includes:

- Filing applications for asylum on behalf of seven clients who fled persecution in their home countries based on their religion, political opinion, Indigenous identity, sexual orientation, or gender identity
- Obtaining findings in family court for nine clients, allowing them to apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status based on abuse, abandonment, or neglect by a parent
- Terminating immigration court proceedings for two clients, removing the risk of their deportation
- Obtaining access for child survivors of human trafficking to federal benefits, including financial and nutrition support
- Connecting children and caregivers to resources they need to live safely and securely, including support with health insurance enrollment, school enrollment, housing, and gender-affirming care



Staff Attorney Josephine Herman

Connecting Youth to Free Legal Assistance

In the past year, the Legal Team received 1,880 referral requests for immigration legal assistance for youth, screened 461 children, and referred 289 children for representation to our partner legal service providers through the ONA program. The team implemented improvements to our intake process by introducing live intake line hours and developing a web-based intake form, making it easier for children and caregivers to access our services and allowing us to identify and triage urgent cases.

Sharing Best Practices and Tools for Advocacy

NJCIC hosted six meetings where Consortium members shared updates and best practices in legal representation and advocacy for immigrant youth. The Team also coordinated a training by the Vance Center on international pro bono resources, a training by Edge NJ on LGBTQIA+ cultural humility and resources, and a training on educational resources for youth.

Empowering Communities Through Education and Outreach

We held five Know Your Rights (KYR) presentations across the state, empowering immigrant youth and families by providing them with valuable information on the immigration court process, types of immigration status, and local resources.

The series included presentations in Newark, New Brunswick, Lakewood, Dover, and Asbury Park, and reached over 360 people. NJCIC partnered in the series with New Jersey Citizen Action, New Jersey Natural Gas, the Camden Center for Law and Social Justice, Morris County Organization for Hispanic Affairs, Redshaw Elementary School, Dover High School, and the Oceans Family Support Center.

The Legal Team also created a great new resource for clients and community members—the *Guide to Immigration Court in NJ for Immigrant Youth and Their Families*. The *Guide*, available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), details a young person's rights as an immigrant, what to expect in immigration court, how to find a qualified attorney, and more. By making this information more accessible, NJCIC assists immigrant youth and their families in navigating a complex legal system and helps preserve their ability to live safely in New Jersey.

NJCIC's 2023 KYR's



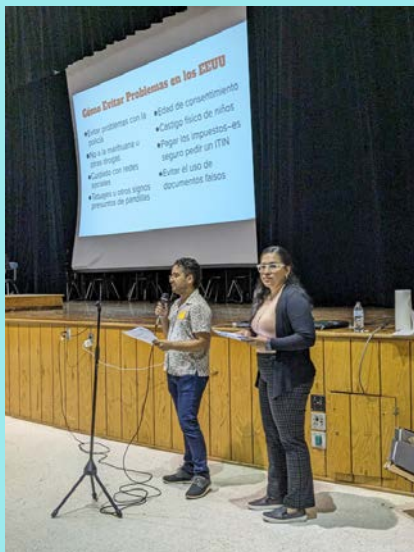
**“Before I reached out to NJCIC, I felt very lonely and was worried about my safety and possible deportation. I felt hopeless. I thought about all of the sacrifices I had made and I wondered whether my journey was in vain... [Now,] I feel very safe with NJCIC Staff and I feel ready to move forward with legal assistance.” —
Client Testimony**



Policy Program

Expanding Access to Justice

NJCIC led advocacy efforts to renew the state-funded Legal Representation Program for Unaccompanied Children. NJCIC's Policy Director delivered compelling testimony during public budget hearings, actively engaged with the NJ Department of Human Services' budget listening sessions, and secured support from legislators. We were extremely pleased that the funding for the program was not only renewed but was substantially increased, from \$4.5 million to \$7.5 million.



Senior Paralegal Erio Rosario-Perales
Policy Director Lady Jimenez-Torres

We also brought critical attention to ICE's new Family Expedited Removal Management (FERM) program, which increases surveillance of newlyarrived families and undermines their rights to due process in seeking asylum. Executive Director Priscilla Monico Marin authored a compelling op-ed on the program's impact in New Jersey, which was published in NJ Spotlight. As a result, NJCIC has engaged with state and federal legislators in conversations highlighting concerns with the program.

Pushing for Education Equity

In January, NJCIC co-hosted a roundtable on educational equity with the Latino Action Network Foundation. The roundtable led to several recommendations, which include:

- Creating an Office of Educational Equity to directly receive complaints
- Making resources available in more languages to better serve our diverse state
- Encouraging schools to partner with community organizations, including mental health care providers



In March, NJCIC presented at the Guilford Dialogues, an annual gathering at Guilford College in North Carolina exploring social problems and values-based solutions. This year's theme was Educational Equity and over 100 experts in the field attended. NJCIC's Policy Director presented on the challenges that language barriers pose to achieving educational equity for newly arrived immigrant families.



NJCIC is also active in a coalition focused on language justice. We testified before the New Jersey Legislature in support of a bill that would require all public-facing state government agencies to provide vital documents in the top 15 languages spoken in New Jersey.

Together with NJTESOL/NJBE and Education Law Center, we submitted recommendations for greater clarity and accountability in New Jersey's Bilingual Education Code. The recommendations were adopted and will lead to improved communication between schools and parents.

Affirming Access to Health Care

NJCIC serves as a public member of the state's workgroup on expanding Medicaid to all income-eligible children in New Jersey, irrespective of their immigration status. Following collaborative advocacy efforts, DHS removed the requirement that a child must (continued)



provide a social security number on an application to enroll, lifting a significant barrier for immigrant children. Our advocacy also resulted in updates to the enrollment website so that critical information on the Medicaid expansion is now available in over 15 languages.

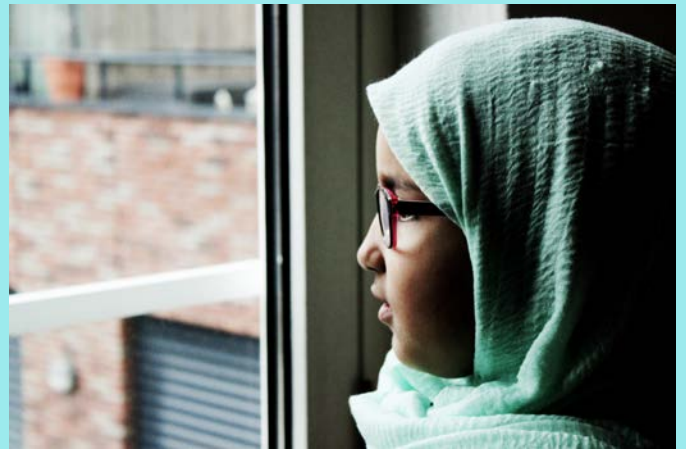
Partnering with other local advocacy groups yielded outstanding results, as nearly 30,000 previously ineligible children are now enrolled in NJ FamilyCare, giving them access to crucial healthcare services.

In Fall 2023, NJCIC's Program Associate launched a public awareness campaign to help spread the word about the Medicaid expansion to immigrant families by creating and distributing educational flyers in five languages. The flyers highlight why health coverage matters, explain that it will not harm immigration status, and provide clear guidance on where to seek assistance with enrollment.

Cultivating Future Leaders

Our Immigrant Youth Advocates planned and produced seven podcast episodes over the last 12 months! These episodes amplify the diverse voices and experiences of first- and second-generation immigrants. In episode 19, for example, the Advocates led an

exploration into the financial challenges encountered by immigrant communities. The episode shed light on the transformative power of financial education and its impact on the creation of generational wealth.



“Growing up under the DACA program, it was difficult to relate to what I saw on TV, and I often felt alone. Our team is sharing relatable stories that are important and necessary for others to feel seen.” —Sergio Crespo-Flores, Former Immigrant Youth Advocate, Current NJCIC Trustee

Thank You Donors!

NJCIC is incredibly grateful for all of the support we receive from our generous donors

FM Kirby Foundation, Inc
Funder Collaborative for Immigrant Families
Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation
HealthierJC
Juvenile Justice Fund
Kind, Inc
Lowenstein Sandler LLP
New Jersey Citizen Action Education Fund
New Jersey State Bar Association
New Jersey State Bar Foundation (IOLTA)

Notaboat Fund - Catherine Weiss, Esq.
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Schumann Fund for New Jersey
Stone Foundation of New Jersey
Svetlana Stalin Fund
The Barberry Foundation
The Celia Lipton Farris & Victor W.
Farris Foundation
Victoria Foundation

Thank you to everyone that supported, sponsored, and participated in our inaugural Immigrant Children & Youth Walk in 2022 and this year's event in October.

Become a supporter today and donate to NJCIC!



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