

# NEW AMERICANS LEGAL CLINIC MAY 2022 PARTNER UPDATE

# WITH DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO ALL OF OUR DEDICATED PROJECT PARTNERS



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Asylum and Immigration Clinic



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# TO THE LIGHTKEEPERS

We are grateful for the partnership of leading local organizations in serving Afghan evacuees with welcome and dignity alongside of Lighthouse Immigrant Advocates. These efforts build a pathway of stability, safety, and future hope for each of these new neighbors and their families.

"Refugee" is an immigration status that only exists because the safety and stability of families are threatened, from destructive acts of nature to government collapse to literal wars of invasion. These people did not stop being people - being moms, dads, daughters and sons, grandparents and grandchildren because they evacuated from a dangerous situation.

West Michigan has the opportunity to welcome Afghan evacuees. We expend our prosperity and welcome, our empathy and capacity for dignity. In return, their powerful stories will impact our shared future, these stories that have been carried through multiple continents and over the Atlantic. We have seen an unfathomable desire for each of the clients to achieve safety and peace, not just for themselves but the family and loved ones they left behind in Kabul. We are honored to share in these acts that will serve as an unstoppable driver of positive change in our world.

We know that the young people experiencing this displacement will graduate high school, enroll in higher education, and pursue careers after weighing the burden of a life dependent and so strongly infused with some of the worst, most dramatic turns of international intergenerational geopolitics and colonialism. We invest in the community's future with this program and into narratives centered sharply on justice and peace.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions or comments. We welcome collaboration and hope to continue to be of service.

Gratefully,

**Eva S. Alexander**  
Executive Director

# OAR CLINIC TIMELINE

- AUGUST 2021** After 20 years of involvement, **Afghanistan falls to Taliban forces.** US Military evacuates over 100,000 people from Kabul
- FALL/WINTER 2021/2022** Tens of thousands of Afghan evacuees are moved between military bases in the Middle East, Europe, and eventually stateside  
  
~1,300 resettle in Michigan, ~360 in West Michigan. They are granted humanitarian parole, a temporary immigration status
- OCTOBER 2021** LIA develops plans alongside immigrant and refugee serving organizations and offices to serve the influx of refugees. Volunteers are recruited and trained, and case materials and processes are developed
- NOVEMBER 2021** The Operation Afghan Refuge (OAR) Clinic launches to begin providing all Afghan evacuees with enhanced legal intake, forging a single point of access for all legal services
- DECEMBER 2021** LIA launches the #WelcomeChallenge to raise awareness and funding for significant translation service fees for this project



# NEW AMERICANS LEGAL CLINIC TIMELINE

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- MARCH 2022**      **The OAR Clinic Completes, having served more than 330 clients**
- APRIL 2022**      The US Government extends Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to all Afghan residents in the US. While this is a welcome update, it is only a half-measure - TPS is not stable residency. LIA works with partners to move into the next phase of efforts, preparing asylum clinic project materials. LIA increases team capacity with a new Asylum Attorney.
- MAY 2022**      **The New Americans Legal Clinic (NALC) Launches. Pro bono attorneys join LIA's clinics assisting families with their asylum applications**
- AUGUST 2022**      August 2022 is the first month of deadlines set by the US Government for these clients to apply for asylum - within 1 year of their arrival in the US
- OCTOBER 2022**      An anticipated milestone when the vast majority of asylum applications will have been filed by our clients



# THREE CORE GOALS

1 To provide legal services to establish long-term stability in immigration status regardless of financial means, language or cultural barriers

2 To reduce the risk of any family and client from “falling through the cracks” - the results of which would be disastrous, and preventable

3 To partner with immigrant and refugee rights organizations, as well as legal professionals, maximizing collaboration and innovation to deliver results at scale, without compromise in quality, and making best use of the limited available resources of time and funding

## IMPACT, MAY 2022

Through the OAR Clinic, 347 clients participated in legal intake screening interviews from November 2021 through March 2022. Documents were collected, files created, and each client’s case was reviewed by an attorney to determine the most likely pathway to stable immigration status. Our office expended, on average, 8 hours of legal time per case at this stage. Approximately one-third of the clients we served are children.

130 < 18 130 of the clients we saw were minors and children under the age of 18.

The vast majority of these clients will be attending a longer interview to prepare their application for asylum. This stage - the New Americans Legal Clinic, is designed to serve 300 clients. Our office is prepared to spend 20 hours of additional legal time for each of these cases, in addition to time spent in representation at asylum court hearings if necessary.

The remaining clients (approximately 30) are continuing with other processes, and being served through referrals with partner agencies and offices. This includes adjustment of status and special immigrant visas.



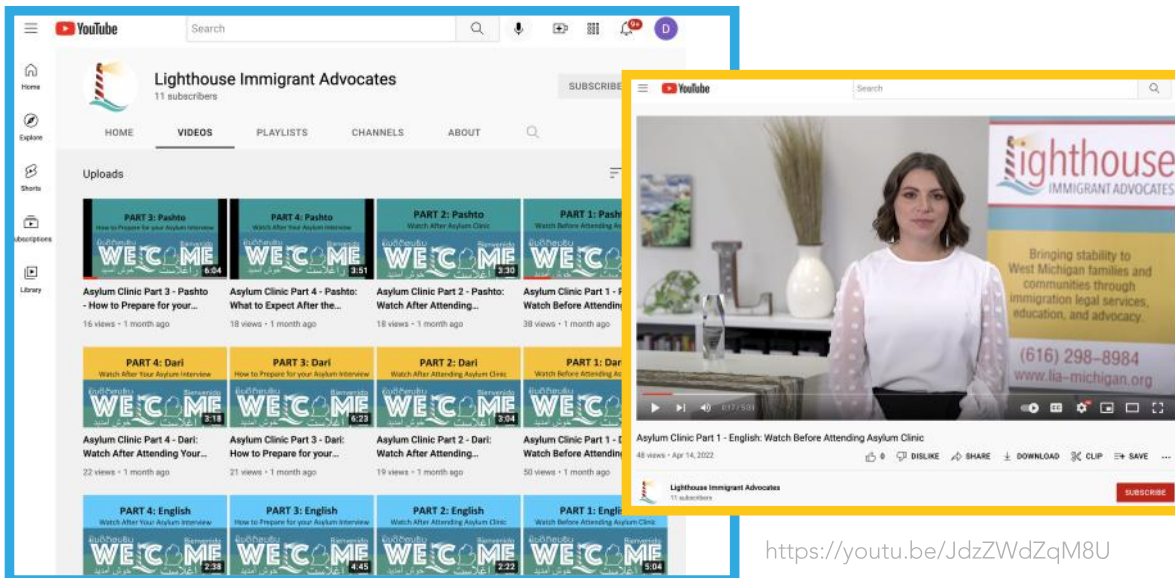
# MILESTONES

A series of videos have been produced to prepare clients for every stage of the asylum process.

These are high quality videos available in English, as well as Pashto and Dari, presented by a native speaker.

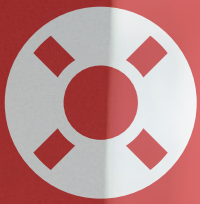
This addresses the needs of a significant number of clients who are not literate (~10-25%).

These resources are shared across all refugee legal services engaged in serving Afghan asylum seekers in Michigan.



In May 2022, LIA increased its legal team to add a Specialized Attorney focused on Asylum cases - a significant benefit to clients, and an essential resource for our community.

To date, more than \$300,000 in grant funding has been generously provided for these efforts by local foundations. For context, the market-rate value of the legal services provided by the LIA clinics will conservatively exceed \$2.8M.



Bringing stability to West Michigan families and communities through legal services, advocacy, and education.



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