



Colorado Afghan Legal Project

Project Overview

The Colorado Afghan Legal Project (CALP) is based at Catholic Charities of Denver (CCD). Thanks to a grant from the Colorado Afghan Evacuee Fund from the State of Colorado and its fiscal sponsor, the Rose Community Foundation, CCD, in collaboration with our partner, Colorado Lawyers Committee (CLC), will provide crucial immigration legal services and support to Afghan humanitarian parolees who have been resettled in Colorado. Because the overwhelming need for affirmative asylum legal services easily outpaces the availability of immigration attorneys in Colorado, this Project utilizes an asylum workshop model to assist most asylum applicants through this process unrepresented. Workshops are staffed by trained volunteers, who will be assigned to families to prepare applications for asylum and compile evidence in support of those applications. Every application for asylum will be reviewed by a volunteer immigration attorney before filing.

In collaboration with CLC and the University of Colorado Law School, an all-day training took place on March 11, at Wolf Law Building in Boulder. Between live attendance and recorded viewing of the training, we have engaged over 400 attorney and non-attorney volunteers for this Project. Over the coming months, there will be many workshops, to be held in a variety of locations in the Denver Metro and Colorado Springs areas.

Project Elements

Legal Pre-Screenings

We are working directly with Colorado's resettlement agencies to screen and refer resettled Afghans to our asylum workshops or other immigration legal services providers, where appropriate and possible. We have specific contacts identified at each agency who will schedule resettlement clients to meet with the CCD Asylum Workshop Coordinator for screening. **All potential workshop participants must be screened first. We are not accepting direct referrals for pre-screenings or workshop participation.** If you are working with a client who you believe is eligible for this Project, please get in touch with the client's agency contact (included below) first to verify that the client has been screened or referred or in line to be screened or referred by our Project. Please note that we are not working with clients of International Rescue Committee (IRC) because they have a legal program funded to work with this population. If you are working with one of their clients, please reach out to them directly.

Referrals

After a potential workshop participant is screened, the Asylum Workshop Coordinator will advise the individual of the best next steps in order to stabilize the individual's immigration legal status from humanitarian parole to a path to lawful permanent residence (green card) in the U.S. and make a referral accordingly. For most, asylum will be the best next step. For the majority of those, we will refer individuals to an asylum workshop. For each workshop, we have a certain number of slots available. We will reach out to workshop participants directly or through their resettlement agency to schedule them for an upcoming workshop. We will prioritize those who arrived in the U.S. earliest for workshop scheduling (for example, we will schedule someone who arrived in August 2021 before we schedule someone who arrived in October 2021).

There are some for whom the asylum workshop is not an appropriate venue for applying for asylum. Unaccompanied children, adults with certain kinds of criminal history, and adults who have had certain kinds of contacts or interactions

with the Taliban or other armed groups in Afghanistan will need direct representation for their applications for asylum. In these instances, we will attempt to pair these individuals with direct representation through our referral network. In the event representation cannot be found, we will share a list of local immigration attorneys so that these individuals can find legal representation on their own.

For those who qualify for another path to a green card – such as SIV status or a family-based petition - we will make a referral to another non-profit legal program or to a private immigration attorney. Please note that we will use our networks to the greatest extent possible to connect everyone directly to the appropriate legal services provider for their needs. However, we cannot promise that we will be able to connect everyone to legal services.

Asylum Workshops

We will schedule participants for the workshop according to arrival date, prioritizing earliest arrivals. We may reach out directly to participants to schedule, or we may work with our resettlement agency contacts to schedule participants.

Before the Workshop

Workshop participants will be given a minimum of three documents before the workshop:

- (1) Intake form or questionnaire. The intake form must be completed by the asylum applicant before the workshop. This is a vital step that helps us facilitate a time-efficient workshop. Individuals who do not fill out their intake form will be rescheduled for a later workshop to give them time to complete the intake form. Currently, we are using a PDF intake form, but we hope to have an electronic portal set up soon so that participants can view and submit this information to us electronically.
- (2) List of documents and other items to bring to the workshop. This list includes various identity documents, marriage and birth certificates, and any other evidence that may help support a claim of asylum. We are aware that not everyone has everything on this list. We ask that participants bring everything they have, and workshop volunteers will advise whether additional evidence should be obtained to submit at the interview.
- (3) List of links to resources for Afghan asylum in English, Dari, and Pashto. This list includes self-help toolkits by the American Bar Association, videos about the asylum process, and other resources that we believe may be useful.

At the Workshop

At the workshop, each participant will be paired with a team of trained volunteers to help prepare the application for asylum. Workshop volunteers will help fill out the Form I-589, Application for Asylum; gather, print, and copy supporting documentation; and compile, copy, and package the completed application packet. It is our intention that every participant will leave the workshop with a completed application packet ready to submit via mail.

After the Workshop

At the end of the workshop, participants will receive a paper copy of their completed application, as well as a packet of next steps information and resources for further assistance.

Project Benefits and Limitations

Workshop Benefits

- CCD will scan and retain an electronic copy of every asylum application completed at one of the workshops. Workshop participants will be given CCD case management portal credentials so that they can access this electronic copy at any time in the future.
- Participants will leave the workshop with a completed, packaged, and addressed application for asylum. All they need to do is go to the post office and pay for shipping.

- Participants will be given many resources to help them through the remainder of the asylum application process, including links to toolkits and videos in Dari and Pashto, as well as quick reference guides about mailing their application and next steps about which they need to be aware.

Workshop Limitations

- The scope of this workshop model does not include applications for children or adults with certain complicating factors (such as criminal issues or interactions with the Taliban or other armed groups in Afghanistan). We will make every effort to connect these individuals with legal services through our network, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so for everyone.
- We are unable to mail participants' applications for asylum. Although a completed, ready-to-mail application will be produced for participants, they must mail their own applications. The completed package will be completely addressed and ready to send at any local U.S. Post Office.
- We are unable to offer any follow-up legal services after the workshop, including interview preparation. This is currently out of the scope of our workshop model, but if we can include assistance in the future, we will reach out to participants and our networks to make those services available.

****A note on the one-year deadline***

Typically, an applicant for asylum must submit their application within one year of their arrival in the U.S. However, there is an exception for those in lawful immigration status, including humanitarian parole. For those individuals, they are given a reasonable amount of time beyond the one-year deadline (usually no more than six additional months) to submit their applications. To the greatest extent possible, we will try to schedule and complete applications according to participants' arrival dates (as indicated on their I-94), and within one year of that date. However, given the extension available to this population by U.S. immigration law, the sheer number of Afghans needing to apply for asylum in Colorado, and the capacity afforded by our workshop model, some applicants may not be scheduled for the workshop before the one-year anniversary of their arrival. ***We ask that you please understand and share this information with Afghan community members to help alleviate the anxiety that may accompany this situation.***

****A note on legal services fees***

The services provided through the Colorado Afghan Legal Project are 100% free. The funding for this project covers screening and referrals, as well as participation in the asylum workshops. However, in the event that we make a referral for individuals whose immigration legal needs do not fall within the scope of this Project, there may be costs associated with obtaining legal services from a non-profit legal program or a private attorney, and we make no promises as to what these costs are or whether attorneys associated with these organizations or firms will make exceptions to their typical fees for Afghans seeking to stabilize their legal status. Individuals seeking legal services and those acting on their behalf should obtain information about potential fees at the earliest opportunity in the process.

****A note of thanks***

CCD could not have planned and executed this project without the unparalleled support of the Colorado Lawyers Committee and its Volunteer Steering Committee. CLC has been an instrumental partner in developing the workshop model, problem-solving logistical hurdles, and recruiting, training, and coordinating our many attorney and non-attorney volunteers, who have generously donated their time, hearts, and expertise to this worthwhile Project.

Resources

Resettlement Agency Contact Information

These are our direct contacts who are assisting us with scheduling Afghan parolees for legal pre-screenings and asylum workshops. Each has given us permission to include them here to help facilitate the sharing of this information with our Afghan community. If you are working with a client who is receiving resettlement services from one of these organizations, and you would like to check that they are being referred to our Project, please reach out to the appropriate contact. Please keep in mind that, because of confidentiality obligations, there may be limits to what information can be shared by the agencies and our Project.

Project Worthmore

Fayaz Amiri: fayaz@projectworthmore.org

Jewish Family Services

Gabe Moe-Lobeda: gmoe-lobeda@jewishfamilyservice.org

Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains

Mary Feeney Francis: mary.francis@lfsrm.org

African Community Center

Farah Arayana: farah@acc-den.org

Contact For More Information About the Colorado Afghan Legal Project

- ***For questions*** on any of this information, please email the Asylum Workshop Coordinator, Tracy Harper at tharper@ccdenver.org
- ***To make a tax-deductible monetary donation*** to the Colorado Afghan Legal Project, click [here](#) or visit <https://ccdenver.org/afghanhelp/>.
- ***To make a tax-deductible in-kind donation*** to the Colorado Afghan Legal Project, email the Asylum Workshop Coordinator, Tracy Harper at tharper@ccdenver.org.
- ***To sign up to volunteer*** at one of our workshops, click [here](#) or visit <https://coloradolawyerscommittee.org/resettled-afghans-asylum-training-1>