“When I found out I’d won, I started to cry. I felt so very happy, and thankful for the Florence Project, not only for helping me but also so many others.”
With your support, the Florence Project provides free legal and social services to detained adults and unaccompanied children facing immigration removal proceedings in Arizona.

With your support, the Florence Project ensures that all immigrants facing removal have access to counsel, understand their rights under the law, and are treated fairly and humanely.

GIVE, VOLUNTEER, CONTACT:
www.firrp.org
520.868.0191 x105
P.O. Box 654
Florence, AZ 85132
2017 brings huge challenges for our work. Perhaps the challenges are not so new. After all, we have stood strong alongside immigrants and refugees since 1989, and weathered many changes in immigration law and detention policy and practice. What is new is the greater urgency we feel to redouble our efforts to defend children, women, and men in immigration detention in Arizona.

Reflecting on 2016, I am filled with immense pride about our staff and their accomplishments. Your donations help us support the lawyers, legal assistants, social workers, volunteers, and support personnel whose deep commitment to service, dogged perseverance, and broad expertise bring representation and hope to thousands.

As we turn to the year ahead, anti-immigrant sentiment is on the rise. We are deeply concerned about planned increases to detention, prolonged detention of immigrants including asylum seekers, and a threatened increase to expedited removal, fast track deportations without an opportunity to see a judge. We are also concerned about possible increases to internal enforcement, which will increase fear in our communities and bring devastating family separation.

The Florence Project has been serving children, women, and men in immigration detention in Arizona for over 25 years. We reflect on our accomplishments from the past year, and we are energized for the work ahead. We will continue to fervently advocate for our clients. With your support, we will increase our resources and be ready to respond to challenges ahead. Our hope and our work cannot be detained. Freedom and justice cannot be detained. We are here and the work continues.

Thank you for thinking of us and our clients during these challenging times for immigrants and refugees. Thank you for standing alongside us; we could not do our work without you.

With sincere gratitude,

Lauren Dasse
Executive Director

P.S. Please visit our website to see more stories, statistics, and profiles of our wonderful staff and clients.
In Honduras, Daniel* suffered serious domestic violence at the hands of his stepfather, who would lock him out of the house for nights at a time when he was as young as five years old. By the time Daniel migrated to the United States, he had been living on his own for years, trying to escape his stepfather’s abuse. Sadly, his stepfather repeatedly found him and abused him. Daniel finally fled north, seeking safety.

Like so many, Daniel endured a torturous journey to the U.S. He was kidnapped by a cartel in Mexico and held captive for days, until someone could pay the ransom for his release.

Because those in immigration proceedings are not guaranteed a lawyer, many, even children, are forced to brave going to court alone.

When the Florence Project received a referral for Daniel’s case, he’d already been to one court hearing by himself. “I was all alone,” recalled Daniel. “I could hardly bring myself to speak to the judge. When he gave me the asylum application, I couldn’t understand it.”

The Florence Project legal team got right to work. They met with Daniel for hours on end, to prepare his asylum application and prepare him for his asylum interview with the government. They even bought him pan dulce, his favorite, to give him a dose of extra energy and courage before his final interview.

Daniel’s asylum case was swiftly won and he received the good news right around his 19th birthday. “I felt great with the Florence Project. They were always there to help me. I felt so happy when I got my asylum granted. It was the happiest day of my life.”

“I was all alone,” recalled Daniel. “I could hardly bring myself to speak to the judge. When he gave me the asylum application, I couldn’t understand it.”

“He’s the sort of kid who has always been focused on what’s important to him,” Laura said of Daniel. “His family has always been the most important thing to him, and he’s never lost sight of that.”

When Daniel is able to apply for naturalization, five years after having won his asylum case, he’ll be able to petition for his mom to lawfully migrate to the U.S., so that she can be free from his abusive stepfather.

About the future, Daniel feels hopeful. “I’ve always liked to help others. I used to help the pastor at my church in Honduras. He would run programs for people with alcohol and drug problems. My dream is to be able to study theology and one day become a pastor here in the United States.”

*Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality
With Your Support

12,838 children received legal services in 2016, a 72% increase from last year.

Nearly 11,000 children received individual legal assessments in 2016, a 59% increase from last year.

Staff provided 383 legal orientation presentations to children, serving over 20% of the total amount of immigrant children detained in the United States in 2016.

The Florence Project serves abused, abandoned, and neglected children of all ages, even some as young as four years old. 73% of children who have an attorney are granted the right to remain in the United States, as compared to 15% of children who do not have an attorney.

The Florence Project Children’s Program opened over 500 cases for direct representation for children last year. With your support, we are able to continue our important work in serving the most vulnerable of populations. Thank you.
Sara* suffered severe violence and rapes in Central America, and fled seeking asylum in the U.S. Upon arrival, she was placed in immigration detention. Having been diagnosed with HIV, Sara worried that her condition would deteriorate while in detention. The Florence Project’s legal and social services teams pushed for Sara to be released from detention so that she could get the treatment so important to her health.

While in detention, Sara confronted a series of situations that negatively impacted her medical condition. A measles outbreak spread through the Eloy Detention Center. She contracted shingles and broke out in a painful rash. She could not receive the particular diet and amount of exercise so critical for someone with HIV. While constantly worrying about her declining health, she became despondent and withdrawn.

“I was so depressed, and I felt completely lost,” Sara says of her time in detention.

“We were especially worried about her during the measles outbreak,” remembers Florence Project social worker Liz Casey.

“It’s very dangerous for someone with a compromised immune system to be around a contagious viral outbreak.”

Florence Project legal team members worked closely with Sara on her asylum application, while our social workers reached out to organizations that offer HIV treatment, therapy, and nutritional classes, and put together an extensive release plan with the hope of requesting Sara’s parole.

“It was great that Sara was able to have a whole team of people working on her behalf,” says Liz. Staff at the Florence Project reached out to immigrant rights organizations in Tucson, and arranged for her to have weekly visits while in detention, which helped keep up her morale.

The Florence Project requested that Sara to be released on parole, citing the many services and community support that awaited her outside of detention. That same day, they received notice that her release had been granted.

“I think having a social-worker on board is key,” says Liz, “because social workers are able to focus on the humanitarian reasons, as opposed to the legal arguments, as to why someone should be released from detention. I researched Sara’s particular health needs, such as therapy, a balanced diet, daily exercise and consistent appointments with a general practitioner. And in a written memo, I gave an exhaustive explanation as to why those needs couldn’t possibly be met in detention.”

Shortly after her release, Sara moved to Utah and is now living with her 17-year-old son. Sara is also receiving the medical care she needs through the Ryan White Program, a pro bono program referred to her by our social work team.

*Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality
Empowering and Educating Youth Through Engagement

For our young clients, winning their immigration case is often just the beginning of getting settled in the U.S. In a greater effort to bring our clients together and give them the tools they need to succeed, last year we hosted client-centered events, including:

- A “Healthy Living” workshop that addressed boundaries and sexual education;
- An employment skills training with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission of Phoenix that focused on labor rights, interviewing skills, and tips to use on job applications and interviews; and
- A client appreciation picnic to encourage our clients to meet each other and form peer mentorship networks, and remind them that they are much more than their legal case.

With Your Support

134 men and women were provided social services in 2016.

Social workers connected 161 clients with local resources that provided mental health, housing, and education support.

130 children were provided with social services in 2016, an increase of nearly 30% from last year.

The Florence Project has always been a front-runner in creating new mechanisms to assist individuals facing removal proceedings. The social services program is no exception, as one of the first legal services programs to have social workers on staff.

The social services program provides high-quality direct services and case management, and expands resources available to our clients. Your support provides clients with the tools and resources they need after their case is won in immigration court. Thank you.
Jose* had a troubled childhood in El Salvador. He began working at the age of six, was abused by his father, and relentlessly targeted by gangs that, because of his family estrangement, saw him as easy prey. By the age of seventeen, Jose decided that joining the military was the only realistic option he had to protect himself against the gangs that had overtaken his city.

Jose's renewed sense of safety did not last long. When he witnessed a military officer sexually abuse another officer, he felt he had no choice but to speak out. “When you’re speaking the truth there should be no reason to be afraid,” Jose said of his embattled time in the military. He saw it as his duty to report the incident, and was dismayed to find himself discharged from the military shortly after.

The gangs began to target him with renewed viciousness. “The gangs wanted revenge,” Jose said. “Because I'd been in the military, they saw me as being a part of the laws working against them.”

Jose came to the U.S. to ask for asylum, and like many asylum seekers, was placed in immigration detention in Arizona.

Jose and the legal team at the Florence Project poured their hearts into winning his asylum case. We worked with Jose to fully develop the facts and collect the necessary documentation of his military status, past childhood abuse, and the gang threats he had received. We spent hours drafting his declaration, not an easy task as the trauma Jose had endured made it all the more difficult for him to open up about his past.

Our attorneys represented him in his final hearing, totaling nearly nine hours in court. “It was hard for him to communicate his story at first because of the trauma,” Shannon Johnson, Florence Project asylum attorney, remembered. “But as we built trust and worked with him extensively he was able to share more and become more involved in his legal process.”

Jose shares Shannon’s sentiment. “When I was first detained I became very depressed. It was hard for me to open up. But when I saw that I really did have a chance to be released from detention and legally remain in the U.S., that’s when everything changed for me.”

“Asylum is one of the main claims to immigration relief that people have,” Shannon says. “But it’s so nuanced. Though some people do win their cases without representation, the vast majority don’t. Many don’t make it to their final hearing. They give up after being in detention for so long, or they can’t afford a lawyer. It’s important to work hard with our asylum clients and strive to bring more detail and humanity to the stories they present before the judge.”

*Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality
Much of our work is on the ground, providing direct services in detention centers and trying to help our clients as much as possible within the confines of our current laws. At the same time, we see the need to be part of a nationwide conversation about our immigration system, and to actively push toward changing the laws that so deeply affect our clients. In this effort, the Florence Project has signed on to several “friend of the court” amicus briefs that have been filed in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). Working at the appellate level is critical because ultimately that’s where the laws affecting our clients can be changed.

Bringing our clients’ voices to the BIA, the Ninth Circuit, and even the Supreme Court gives us the opportunity not only to help the population we serve in Arizona, but also so many others who find themselves in similar situations. We recognize the importance in bridging the gap between direct services and the US immigration system, and will continue to work hard to create a united front between the two.

With Your Support

28 men and women with serious mental health issues were represented by a Florence Project staff attorney in 2016, a 30% increase from last year.

Staff attorneys provided 218 legal orientation presentations to 4,882 adults.

1,264 men and women were screened for asylum claims in 2016, 150 of which were victims of crime or trafficking.
Florence Project staff were quick to understand the urgency of Eduardo’s situation, and our staff promptly banded together to push for his release from detention. Our social workers quickly discovered that Eduardo’s DCS case worker had not been in contact with him, and they didn’t know that he was detained. Our pro bono team reached out to noted attorney Lilia Alvarez, who agreed to take on Eduardo’s case on a volunteer basis.

A year into Eduardo’s detention, our social workers successfully worked with his DCS case worker in order to secure weekly visitations with his kids.

Eduardo’s case was continued four times, with months-long waiting periods between each hearing. In the meantime, DCS continued to push for severance of his parental rights. Lilia went above and beyond to fight for both Eduardo’s immigration and DCS cases. She went as far as to attend one of Eduardo’s DCS hearings in juvenile court to explain why he couldn’t be there. Lilia, along with Florence Project social workers, also made continuous efforts to reach out to Eduardo’s DCS attorney and case-worker. When Lilia later moved to Washington D.C., she even flew back to Arizona twice to continue representing Eduardo in his hearings. A year into Eduardo’s detention, our social workers successfully worked with his DCS caseworker in order to secure weekly visitations with his kids. This was a huge step, as Eduardo had not seen his children in over a year.

A testament to Lilia’s work is how much Eduardo changed throughout the course of his case. Eduardo was despondent and reserved when he first started working with Lilia and the Florence Project. By the time Eduardo had his final hearing, he had thoroughly studied his case and calmly spoke to various technical legal issues that came up in court.

Lilia and Eduardo won his immigration case, and he is now living with his mother and two children. As Pro Bono Coordinator Charles Vernon said, “Lilia is among the inspiring group of dedicated attorneys who keep coming back for more and more of these tough cases.”

“The work of the Florence Project changes lives. It gives people the opportunity to reunite with their families and to experience a justice system that can work for them. It has also changed my life, making me a more fierce and compassionate advocate.”

- Honorable Lilia Alvarez, Pro Bono Attorney

Because many state child welfare agencies do not have established protocol for working with Immigration Customs Enforcement, parents in detention are often left without plans for family reunification, just like Eduardo.
In light of the increased demand for our work, your generosity spearheaded the expansion of our pro bono program, to mentor those who are interested in taking on immigration cases with the Florence Project.

The expansion of our Pro Bono Program is crucial for three reasons:

• By placing cases with pro bono attorneys we’re able to share the immensely meaningful experience of making a palpable difference in someone’s life.
• Pro bono attorneys help us extend our reach and serve a greater population than would otherwise be possible.

• Working with pro bono attorneys consistently helps build immigrant allies in Tucson, Phoenix, and beyond.

The vast majority of the pro bono attorneys we work with do not have a background in immigration law. Taking on a pro bono case with the Florence Project sheds light on the immense bravery and determination of our clients.

We are grateful to our talented, dedicated pro bono attorneys. Thank you for helping us expand our network and provide a greater chance of success for our clients.

With Your Support

34 unaccompanied minors were provided with pro bono representation, and

73 men and women were provided with pro bono representation in 2016.
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<th>REVENUE FOR 2016</th>
<th>REVENUE DISTRIBUTION FOR 2016</th>
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<td>Contracted Legal Services $2,903,458.29</td>
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<td>Adult Program $659,245.04</td>
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<td>General $364,544.89</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong> $3,459,214.81</td>
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In 2016, clients served were from 44 countries and spoke 66 languages.
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