

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

Date: January 7, 2021

Contact Information

Organization Name: Project Libertad
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Year Incorporated: 2015
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Organization Information:

Field of Interest: Human Services

Mission: Project Libertad empowers newcomer immigrant youth and their families by providing essential, youth-led and youth-centered legal and social services. We envision a world where all newcomer immigrant youth have access to the legal services, social services, academic support, and leadership opportunities needed to thrive.

Geographic Area Served: Chester County (Phoenixville), Montgomery County, Bucks County

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: PL serves newcomer immigrant children who arrived in the US within the past three years. While 95% of the youth served by PL are Central American refugees from the Northern Triangle Countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, PL welcomes newcomer youth from across the globe. PL serves youth from 15 countries, including Haiti, Brazil, Vietnam, China, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. PL served 1,328 individuals in 2020.

Annual Budget \$144,300.00 (2021 projection)

92.42	% of budget for program expenses	1	# of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
7.4%	% of budget for administrative expenses	10	# of Board Volunteers
0.18	% of budget for fundraising expenses	40	# of Active Non-Board Volunteers
100	% total	3,050 annually	# of Volunteer Hours

Top 3-5 funding sources for 2020:

In-Kind Revenue: \$51,438.00

Total Grant Revenue: \$43,346.80

Primary Grant Funding Sources:

Philadelphia Foundation (PA is Ready! Fund): \$18,000
Valentine Foundation: \$10,000.00 (first year of a three-year grant)
Douty Foundation: \$5,000.00 (first year of a three-year grant)
Montgomery County Foundation, Inc. COVID-19 Response Fund: \$5,000
Valentine Foundation Fund for Visionary Leadership: \$3,500.00

COVID-19 Related Donation & Grant Revenue: \$37,472.16

Donation Revenue: \$22,707.17

Corporate Donation Revenue: \$20,000.00

Donation Revenue: \$2,707.17

Program Services Revenue: \$6,210.00

Is this grant proposal for: Capacity Building ___ or General Operating X ?

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$7,500.00

Proposal Summary: Funding from the Foundation will support the following programs in Phoenixville:

- **Immigrant Children's Defense Project:** Provides free or low-cost legal services to immigrant children facing imminent deportation. 55 legal cases have been opened for immigrant youth since the program launched in February 2020.
- **Legal-Mental Health Partnership:** Since its launch in September 2020, this partnership with the Immigrant Psychology Network (www.immigrantpsychnetwork.com) has educated over 300 students in six schools about mental health wellness and provided them with the opportunity to receive free mental health screenings and referrals.
- **Know Your Rights Project:** Annual assemblies that educate over 300 students in six schools on their legal rights as immigrant youth.
- **RISE: Refugee and Immigrant Students Excelling:** A weekly girls' empowerment program that increases academic outcomes and community engagement for refugee and immigrant girls in the Phoenixville Area School District.
- **Newcomer After-School Programs and Summer School:** Weekly programs that provide 125 students in six schools with academic support, leadership training, ESL, and college preparation.
- **Educator Training:** Professional development program that trains over 400 educators annually on best practices for supporting immigrant youth on the path to higher education.
- **Adult ESL Classes:** Weekly conversational English classes that serve over 100 parents of newcomer youth in Norristown and Phoenixville annually.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Lia, a 12-year-old asylum seeker, was raped by her father in Honduras. She fled to the US seeking safety with her aunt in Phoenixville, only to find herself in deportation proceedings without a lawyer and without needed social services. Lia suffered from undiagnosed, untreated PTSD and was suspended from school due to trauma-related behavioral problems. In immigration court, Lia struggled to articulate her case to the judge, who determined she was not credible and looked negatively at her school disciplinary record. Lia was deported back to her abuser. Without a lawyer and without access to critical social services, Lia's voice went unheard.

Lia's story is typical for immigrant children in Chester County. In 2019, the federal government released over 100 newcomer children to relatives in Chester County. The Phoenixville Area School District reported a drastic increase in newcomer enrollment for the 2019-2020 academic year. With the increased volume of newcomer youth, the need for accessible legal and social services in Chester County is even more critical.

An estimated 8,000 children have deportation proceedings pending against them before the Philadelphia Immigration Court, whose jurisdiction includes Chester County. 75% of those children have no lawyer and must represent themselves in an arcane system in a language they do not speak. Representation matters: 75% of represented kids win the right to stay in the US legally while 90% of unrepresented children like Lia are deported to dangerous situations.

Despite the clear need, there are no legal services for immigrant youth in Chester County other than Project Libertad, leaving children like Lia to fend for themselves in immigration court, with the vast majority of those cases ending in needless deportation.

Migrant children like Lia arrive in the United States with extensive prior trauma before facing additional stressors in the US, like the threat of deportation, a lack of legal counsel, difficult family dynamics, and more. These challenges exacerbate existing mental health problems. As a result, newcomer youth are more likely to struggle in isolation with symptoms of PTSD, Anxiety, and Depression, and struggle academically and behaviorally at school. Yet, these children cannot access needed social services due to multiple barriers, including financial barriers, cultural and linguistic barriers, the primacy of resettlement needs, and the stigma attached to mental illness. The Phoenixville Area School District laments that social service and mental health resources for newcomers are extremely limited in the region. Newcomer youth without access to social services and mental health care are more likely to experience behavioral challenges and academic difficulties. Such youth can be viewed negatively in the eyes of the immigration courts. A lack of social services and mental health services negatively impacts the child's immigration case, which can have dire consequences, as in Lia's case.

Recognizing these challenges and the dire gap in services for newcomer youth, PL empowers newcomer immigrant youth like Lia and their families in Chester County by providing essential, youth-led and youth-centered legal and social services -- the only such services available in the Greater Philadelphia Area. By filling this gap in needed services, PL furthers its vision of a world where all newcomer immigrant youth have access to the legal services, social services, academic support, and leadership opportunities needed to thrive.