



Improving the Quality of Mandated Representation Throughout the State of New York

July 6, 2015

ILS Awards Grants for Regional Immigration Assistance Centers

The New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services (ILS) is pleased to announce grants it has awarded to New York City and the counties of Erie, Oneida, Albany, Westchester and Suffolk for their participation in the development of a statewide network of Regional Immigration Assistance Centers. These Centers are intended to ensure that every client who receives legally mandated representation in the state of New York receives accurate and comprehensive advice with respect to the immigration consequences of his or her case. The awards provide \$8.1 million over a three-year period (\$2.7 million annually). Each Regional Center will provide immigration legal support, assistance, training and education that will improve the overall quality of mandated representation afforded to immigrant clients in criminal and family court proceedings.

The removal of immigrants from the United States due to criminal convictions has risen significantly in recent years due to changes in immigration law and a substantial increase in immigration enforcement. Under current laws, an immigrant may be subject to deportation and removal for a wide array of crimes, including many minor offenses and violations. Consequently, criminal defense attorneys are now required to advise immigrant clients as to the potential immigration consequences of a criminal conviction under the Supreme Court ruling in *Padilla v. Kentucky*, 559 U.S. 356 (2010). Similarly, defense attorneys should also advise immigrant clients in family court proceedings, whose immigrant status may directly impact such life-altering decisions as child custody, visitation, adoption, and termination of parental rights.

These regional centers will be guided by the ILS Director of Regional Initiatives, Joanne Macri, whose knowledge of and ability to communicate the intricacies of immigration law and its consequences is well known throughout the state and beyond. In announcing these awards, Attorney Macri observed that:

“Changes to our immigration laws have dramatically altered the legal landscape for immigrants accused of a crime or facing the termination of their parental rights. Accurate legal advice concerning immigration consequences is needed now more than ever before. These Centers represent a creative and systematic approach to addressing these unforeseen consequences that so often dramatically impact the lives of immigrant clients.”

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By the creation and effective operation of these Regional Immigration Assistance Centers, ILS intends to ensure that every attorney who provides mandated representation will have the resources, knowledge and ability to deliver fully effective representation that is in constitutional compliance with the Supreme Court's mandate for criminal cases in *Padilla*, and as is recommended in family court proceedings.

For additional information concerning this and other ILS initiatives to improve the quality of mandated representation, please visit www.ils.ny.gov.