

**2018 ANNUAL REPORT:  
NEW YORK STATE OFFICE FOR NEW AMERICANS**

*PURSUANT TO SECTION 94-b(5)(n) OF THE EXECUTIVE LAW*

**FOR SUBMISSION TO:**

**TEMPORARY PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE  
SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY**

**Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor**

**Rossana Rosado  
Secretary of State**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In compliance with section 94-b(5)(n) of the Executive Law, the Department of State (the “Department”) respectfully submits the following report on the activities of the Office for New Americans (“ONA”). This report covers the period from January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018.

## **BACKGROUND**

New York State has historically served as a leader among the states on immigrant issues and is an internationally recognized port of entry symbolizing the struggles and opportunities that constitute the immigrant experience. Today, 4.4 million immigrants live in New York State, and one in four New Yorkers of working age is foreign born. Like past waves of immigrants, today’s New Americans come seeking opportunity. Our country and State have historically lent a hand in their achieving this goal.

In 2012, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo established the Office for New Americans. “We are the gateway for immigrants worldwide and we are proud of it,” said Governor Cuomo at the 2012 State of the State Address. “Other states build walls to keep people out and we open our arms and invite people in because we are the state of immigrants.” In 2014, the Legislature enacted, and the Governor signed into law, Chapter 206 of the Laws of 2014, which laid out the powers and duties of ONA. ONA has the proud distinction as the first state-level immigrant assistance office created by statute in the United States.

Through partnerships with highly qualified immigrant service providers across the state, ONA’s mission is to strengthen New York State’s welcoming environment for new Americans, marshalling State resources to better serve new Americans and facilitating their success by providing economic, social, and civic support. ONA is unique in accomplishing its mission. States with the largest immigrant communities have historically maintained offices, initiatives, or committees to address immigrant issues. Many of these efforts focus on increased access to existing social services through targeted constituent outreach and implementing language translation services, while others serve as constituent services or coordinating offices. ONA is the first office of its kind to create infrastructure for direct service provision by creating a network of centers focused on inclusiveness and integration.

In 2018, ONA expanded efforts to offer all immigrants residing in New York State the tools to participate in the economic and overall wellbeing of their community, irrespective of federal immigration policy, and continued to set the national standard that each state in our nation should follow. It was highlighted both nationally and internationally in various reports and events, which are detailed in this report.

ONA provided services to new Americans across New York State through various programming including:

- Opportunity Center Network (Opportunity Centers and Legal Counsels)
- ONA Hotline
- Cell-Ed
- Immigrant Community Navigators
- Naturalize NY
- Parent Support Programs
- Resource Coordination
- Liberty Defense Project

## **OPPORTUNITY CENTER NETWORK**

The cornerstone of ONA’s effort is a network of neighborhood-based Opportunity Centers located throughout the State. Opportunity Centers are hosted within existing culturally competent, language-accessible, community-based organizations.

During 2018, the Opportunity Centers provided services to 20,018 new Americans, bringing the total number of individuals served at Opportunity Centers since ONA’s inception to 102,966. Each Opportunity Center provided new Americans with English-for-Speakers-of-Other-Languages (ESOL) training, prepared them for the United States citizenship exam, provided instruction on how to start a new, or grow an existing, business, and offered community workshops on a variety of topics that meet the needs of the clients they serve.

The network of ONA Opportunity Centers was supported by legal counsels, each of whom is an expert in immigration law. Each legal counsel was assigned to specific Opportunity Centers in a region of the State, allowing the program to maximize its outreach to new Americans. The ONA Legal Counsels reviewed U.S. naturalization applications, oversaw citizenship drives at ONA Opportunity Centers, held immigration law consultation days, and supported the State’s effort to respond to changes in Federal immigration policy, through other initiatives and presentations that required their expertise in immigration law.

*Table 1*

<b>New Americans Served at ONA Opportunity Centers</b>	<b>Reporting Period – January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018</b>	<b>Launch through December 31, 2018</b>
Clients Registered in ESOL Classes	6,499	41,482
Naturalization/DACA application Assistance	4,888	24,461
Clients Attending Entrepreneurial Seminars	1,242	6,228
Clients Attending Community Workshops	5,223	14,969
Clients Receiving Immigration Law Consultations	2,166	15,826
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,018</b>	<b>102,966</b>

### *ESOL Classes*

In CY18, ONA Opportunity Centers provided ESOL classes to 6,499 individuals. ONA Opportunity Centers provided ESOL instruction at a variety of levels with classes scheduled to best accommodate the diverse work schedules of the new American communities by offering day, night, and weekend classes. Each ONA Opportunity Center offered, beginner, intermediate, and advanced level courses. The curriculum focused on instruction in language necessary in the workplace and U.S civics. ESOL students were also offered one-on-one tutoring, computer labs, and conversation hours.

ONA ESOL programming allowed for learners of any background to receive and engage in the instruction most effective for them. As one ESOL student at the ONA Utica Opportunity Center wrote:

*“I learned to speak English upon my arrival to the United States. However, my English skills started to decline as I was aging. I got opportunity in this class to improve my speaking skills. It is very helpful that this class is in the morning and that gives me opportunity to attend the class since I work at night. I also improved my writing and spelling skills. This is what I was lacking but now I make minimal mistakes when I write. At one point I had difficult time understanding different dialects in English but now I overcame that problem.”*

Most important to any successful ESOL program are qualified and dedicated instructors, who work with learners on an ongoing basis. ONA’s Opportunity Centers provided instructors who not were not only invested in the success of their students, but also learned from new Americans themselves. An instructor from our Utica Opportunity Center shared:

*“Like many people, I took my American Citizenship for granted. As a child, I saluted the flag and recited the pledge of allegiance. The words were rote memorization, that I really did not really think about or comprehend. When I retired, I decided to look for volunteer opportunities. Teaching Citizenship Classes at the Refugee Center has given me the opportunity to really think about that pledge. Being a citizen of this country is something that I truly appreciate now. Helping people learn to read and write in English for their exam has been a privilege. To observe the tenacity, hard-work and determination of people from a variety of countries is humbling. Helping people develop the confidence to converse in an unfamiliar language, using unfamiliar sounds, brings me joy. People who pass this exam truly want to be the best this country has to offer. They will become members of our representative democracy. They will contribute to the beauty of the fabric of this nation. I can only hope that I am the kind of citizen that our refugees become when they take the oath.”*

#### *Naturalization/DACA Application Assistance*

In CY18, ONA Opportunity Centers provided Naturalization/DACA application assistance to 4,888 individuals. Each Opportunity Center was provided with access to an immigration attorney to review each application.

One of these individuals was “Maria,” a 59-year-old woman originally from the Dominican Republic, who resides in the Bronx. She entered the United States on an immigrant visa, sponsored by her mother in 1988, and eventually settled down for a period of time in Puerto Rico. For as long as she has resided in the United States, Maria has been a model citizen, engaged community member, and has not traveled out of the country in over 5 years.

Maria is also a mother to two children who were born in Puerto Rico, where she had lived until the devastation of Hurricane Irma in 2017. In October of that year, she moved to New York City to escape the devastation of the hurricane, where she planned to recover from her experience, and establish herself by finding a job and a home. At the time, she left her daughters behind in Puerto Rico to live with their father until she was better prepared to take care of them in New York City.

Upon her arrival, Maria sought assistance with her citizenship application, and heard about the free direct support services offered by ONA. She entered an Opportunity Center in Manhattan in January 2018, and was assigned to a Senior Immigration Paralegal who assisted her with filing the N-400 Application, and provided additional resources for ancillary services such as tax preparation and benefits screening. Maria filed her application in February 2018, and received USCIS access and a Biometrics notification later that month. In January 2019, Maria received notification that she was to be interviewed for her N-400 application, and later passed her Civics Exam the same month. Maria is currently awaiting notice for her Oath Ceremony and is excited to finally become a United States citizen.

### *Entrepreneurial Workshops*

In 2018, ONA partnered with Empire State Development (ESD) and Small Business Development Council (SBDC) to host courses on how to start and how to grow businesses. During this time, 1,242 clients attended these entrepreneurship classes across New York.

After completing ESOL classes and entrepreneurship training at an ONA Opportunity Center in Long Island, a client started her own company, which specializes in connecting big companies with job candidates who are bilingual. They accomplish this by testing their English proficiency level and vetting job applicants for positions that require being bilingual. She credits the ONA Opportunity Center with giving her the confidence to improve her own English skills, and courses on entrepreneurship, so that she could achieve her dream of starting and growing her own business.

### *Community Workshops*

Through community workshops, ONA Opportunity Centers assisted new Americans to obtain information they needed to fully participate in their communities, and to address the chronic lack of information in immigrant communities regarding access to, and navigation of, existing government services. ONA Opportunity Centers provided new Americans with information about civic and community engagement opportunities through immigrant assistance workshops on topics including, but not limited to, parent engagement with schools, financial literacy, disaster preparedness, consumer fraud protection, and educational opportunities for immigrants and their children.

In 2017, with more restrictive and aggressive immigration policies coming from the Federal Government, the need for information on immigrant rights, and how to prepare in the eventual case of deportation, led to numerous Know Your Rights (KYR) workshops. These workshops continued in 2018, and informed new Americans about their immigration rights, and their options if/when they are confronted by immigration officers. These workshops were, and continue to be, held across the state, and are led by expert immigration attorneys.

In CY18, ONA Opportunity Centers assisted 5,223 clients at community workshops on topics including but not limited to, Know Your Rights, information on public charge, health/wellness, worker's rights, and mental health.

These workshops enable ONA to be more than just a service provider – they make ONA a valuable part of the community, as well as a safe haven, particularly for those who feel alienated and helpless. As the Program Coordinator at the Utica Opportunity Center describes,

*“Every day waking up for work is easy. There is a great deal of time and effort that goes into working for the Office for New Americans, but the work is so meaningful to the community it makes the hard work so rewarding. I am privileged with the opportunity to observe and support immigrants and refugees as they learn to call America their home. There are many obstacles to adjusting to life in America, many of which, as a refugee myself, I have experienced firsthand. However, witnessing someone overcome those obstacles through the support of our program makes me feel that my work is meaningful. I understand the struggle of trying to learn English and American customs and ONA provides a space where immigrants and refugees are given resources to overcome their obstacles as a community.”*

*Immigration Law Consultations*

Partnering with ONA Legal Counsels, Opportunity Centers provided 2,166 individuals with free consultations. Consultations were provided to individual clients and provided them with opportunities to discuss their individual questions with highly-qualified and experienced immigration attorneys free of charge.

**HOTLINE AND WEBSITE**

As noted above, the Opportunity Center network is supported by a toll-free, multi-lingual telephone hotline, which provides live assistance in more than 200 languages and operates from 9AM to 8PM (ET), Monday through Friday (excluding Federal holidays). The hotline responds to general immigration and naturalization questions and provides referrals to the caller’s local Opportunity Center, as well as to other public and private immigrant-related programs. It also acts as a resource to coordinate immigration assistance fraud complaints. The New York State New Americans Hotline number is **1-800-566-7636**.

During CY18, the hotline rendered general assistance to 22,392 New Americans, which brings the total number served by the hotline since ONA’s inception in 2013 to 153,372. The hotline is operated by Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York.

**Table 2**

New Americans Served by the ONA Hotline	Reporting Period – January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018	Launch through December 31, 2018
Number of New Americans Served Through the New York State New Americans Hotline	22,392	153,372

ONA is also supported by a dedicated website, [www.newamericans.ny.gov](http://www.newamericans.ny.gov). Through the website, new Americans can locate their nearest Opportunity Center, and gather additional information about the immigrant integration services available in their community.

## **CELL-ED: FREE ESOL TRAINING VIA MOBILE PHONES**

Since Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced Cell-Ed in 2015 to ensure that all New Yorkers who want to learn English can do so regardless of their geographic location, proximity to resources, childcare issues, and work schedule, ONA has successfully managed to increase the program's reach and impact.

In 2018, ONA's continued success with Cell-Ed was marked by 961 new learners; an increase from 546 learners in 2017. Additionally, we graduated over 200 learners and currently have over 2,500 active users engaging in the program, learning at their own pace and schedule throughout the State.

Over the past year, ONA has continued to serve as the national model for mobile-English learning. In fact, Michigan's Office for New Americans will soon begin their own pilot program later in 2019. Reports from the Migration Policy Institute, New American Economy, and other immigration advocate organizations have reported positively on our program and the inclusion of Cell-Ed. These efforts are outlined in the National and International Collaboration section of this report.

## **NATURALIZENY CAMPAIGN**

The summer of 2018 marked the third and final round of NaturalizeNY, the first and only public-private partnership of its kind in the country to encourage and support eligible immigrants in becoming U.S. citizens. Through NaturalizeNY, immigrants can determine their eligibility for citizenship, eligibility for federal fee waiver (the application fee is currently \$725), and receive assistance in applying and preparing for the citizenship process.

NaturalizeNY also features a financial assistance component for individuals ineligible for a federal application fee waiver, but for whom the cost of the naturalization application presents a significant financial burden. This assistance is made possible through a partnership with several private, charitable and philanthropic foundations. Following the NaturalizeNY program's launch, the free and secure NaturalizeNY website (available at: [www.naturalizeny.org](http://www.naturalizeny.org)) served 6,100 New Yorkers throughout the State – 4,700 individuals discovered their eligibility for the federal fee waiver, while an additional 1,400 entered the NaturalizeNY lottery. Of the 1,400 entrants, 700 individuals won a fee voucher to cover the cost of the full or partial fee waiver, all of whom had their applications submitted through ONA's Opportunity Centers and ONA Legal Counsels. Everyone who connected to ONA through NaturalizeNY received the support and services they needed.

One such entrant was Kemi from the Bronx, who shared her experience with us:

*"I first heard about ONA when I met Kyle Athayde, the State Outreach Coordinator, at an immigration conference held at Lehman College in 2017. As the International Student Adviser, and immigrant from Lagos, Nigeria, I helped organize the conference to provide students with information on the drastic changes in immigration policy. Kyle shared about the efforts of Governor Cuomo and the State legislature to support immigrants, and informed us of the opportunity to participate in NaturalizeNY. This boosted my confidence!*

*"I am currently enrolled in Master of Public Health Epidemiology and Advanced Certificate in Global Health programs. To be eligible to work in this area, most employment opportunities require you to be a U.S. citizen. Since the cost of*

*naturalization was too much for me, I decided to participate in NaturalizeNY. When I received the phone call from my local Opportunity Center informing me that I won the NaturalizeNY lottery, and was awarded a \$725 fee voucher to pay for my citizenship application, I was flabbergasted! It was indeed an answered prayer!*

*“It was a dramatic process, but I felt supported because my ONA Opportunity Center helped me with the paperwork, civics test preparation, and interview. My oath ceremony was scheduled for August 2018, and in attendance were my parents, and Kyle, who became a good friend and supporter throughout my journey. Thanks to the Office for New Americans and Governor Cuomo! You helped add another citizen to this great nation.”*

Because of NaturalizeNY, thousands of immigrants who otherwise would have been unable to do so, have been able to naturalize and become citizens. In 2017, the academic partners of NaturalizeNY, SUNY Albany, George Mason University and Stanford University, published their first report on some of our program’s initial findings. Based on follow-up surveys with NaturalizeNY participants, our academic partners found that receiving a voucher to pay for their citizenship application doubled the chances that someone would apply for citizenship. These results provided evidence that there are many low-income immigrants who are interested in naturalizing, but are unable to because of financial barriers. A second report based on the lotteries conducted, including 2018’s last round, will be released by the academic partners later in 2019.

The benefits of providing financial support for naturalization has made NaturalizeNY a national model that can be replicated in communities around the country and has been discussed in a policy brief by the *Proceedings for the National Academy of Science*<sup>1</sup> (one of the world’s most cited multidisciplinary scientific journals). It is ONA’s hope that this evidence will inform future policy discussions, and strategies to assist immigrants in their efforts to integrate.

## **PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAM**

Parents and sponsors of the unaccompanied and undocumented minors residing in New York are among the most vulnerable and marginalized residents in the State due to economic, social, and linguistic barriers. Their situation is made worse by a lack of access to basic information and a fear of engaging with public agencies because of their legal status. Their lack of understanding of the issues they face and lack of access to mental health services, not only hinders the adjustment/integration process of the child, but also of the family unit as a whole.

In 2018, the parent support program worked through a partnership between ONA, Central American Refugee Center (CARECEN), Neighbors Link Corp, and the Children’s Village, and connected immigrant families to under-utilized supportive public and private organizations, and existing resources and services, including mental health counseling. This generated real benefits for these families. The parent support program provided a cost-efficient support system and equipped these caregivers with the confidence to protect their children, prevent their isolation, improve their own lives, and in turn, enrich New York’s communities by providing the necessary tools for these children to integrate into their new communities.

This program is unique in that no other State or organization offers this type of service specifically tailored to meet the needs of the caretakers of unaccompanied children. After participating in the program, group members

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2018/01/09/1714254115>



also took advantage of outside services, and were more likely to come in to the office for check-ins, deepening their connection with the ONA Opportunity Center, reflecting the high level of trust being developed through the group process. Perhaps most importantly, parents understood that they are not alone in this journey – that others are going through the same fears and challenges, and are welcomed members of our New York community.

The impact of this program is best illustrated through an anecdote provided by the group facilitator in Long Island,

*“One of our faithful attendees, who has been a consistent member of the support group in CARECEN always shares with us the support and benefit she receives from attending. This attendee has experienced some troubling times due to harassment at work and even an assault in her own neighborhood, but because of the group, she has found a safe space to share her experiences and feel triumphant as opposed to a victim. This attendee has also felt empowered to seek counseling, confront her employer, speak with police in her neighborhood and seeking legal counsel. She truly identifies the group as a safe space where she can ‘breathe’ and get things off her chest!”*

In 2019, this pilot will expand as the “Golden Door” program, adding ten additional groups for a total of twelve.

### **IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR**

In the Fall 2017, nine organizations were selected to host ONA’s “Workforce Community Education, Community Navigator and Welcoming Communities Program.” Each ONA Immigrant Community Navigator addresses the chronic lack of accessible information about publicly available services and programs in low-income immigrant and refugee communities throughout New York State. Through this program, ONA Immigrant Community Navigators create programming, coordinate services, and conduct outreach in support of available services by working with grassroots organizations, community leaders, and community-based organizations (including ONA Opportunity Centers, Community Action Agencies, Regional Economic Development Council’s Opportunity Agenda workgroups, faith-based organizations, and local governments).

The ONA Community Navigator in Western NY, Michelle, says,

*“The work of the ONA Immigrant Community Navigators is so important because we are serving and advocating for our communities – the low-income refugee and immigrant communities, the community-based organizations, employers, and the welcoming community. There are so many barriers and gaps that prevent the low-income New American community from accessing information and services, and it is up to us to confront those barriers and bridge those gaps.”*

The ONA Navigators have participated in monthly meetings to be trained to conduct outreach for various programming and available State services, and to connect with each other and various other stakeholders to better serve their communities. In the first year of the program, through their workforce development workshops, trainings, community conversations, impact days, roundtable discussions, and local tours, ONA Immigrant Community Navigators have brought services to more than 5,000 low-income immigrants and refugees, and have engaged over 600 volunteers to support them in their work. Already, ONA’s Immigrant Community Navigator

has been mentioned nationally by the National Skills Coalition as an effective example of how a state can support immigrants and refugees in workforce development.<sup>2</sup>

In 2019, ONA will onboard additional Immigrant Community Navigators to serve low-income immigrants and refugees in the North Country, where there is a scarcity of services. The North Country Immigrant Community Navigator will be crucial in building coalitions, and an ecosystem of support in one of the most vulnerable areas of the State.

## **RESOURCE COORDINATOR**

### *The ONA Webinar Series*

ONA has linked its statewide network of ONA Opportunity Centers and Legal Counsels with resources from New York State on pressing topics affecting New York’s immigrant community, ranging from representation in the 2020 Census, to the public charge rule through a series of webinars.

**Table 3: ONA Webinars Held in 2018**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Presenter</b>
1/16/2018	Financial Education for the Latino Community	Qualitas Foundation
2/11/2018	Termination of Temporary Protected Status for El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras & Nicaragua	Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights
3/13/2018	New Record Sealing Law	Governor Cuomo’s Council on Community Re-entry and Reintegration
5/23/2018	Preparing for the 2020 Census – Getting a Full & Fair Count	U.S. Census, New York Regional Census Center & New York State
6/13/2018	Developmental Disabilities and the needs of New Americans	New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities & the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
9/25/2018	Labor Rights	New York State Department of Labor
10/17/2018	Updates on Public Charge	New York Immigration Coalition
11/08/2018	Consumer Protection	New York State Division of Consumer Protection
12/13/2018	New Tool to Help Advocates Assess the Public Charge Rule’s Impact on Individuals	Empire Justice Center, Legal Aid Society, Make the Road New York

### *Other Collaborations with State Agencies*

In 2017, ONA expanded and institutionalized its collaboration with other state agencies through the implementation of a series of information workshops and webinars. This collaboration began between New York State’s Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP).

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/At-the-intersection-of-immigration-and-skills-policy\\_web.pdf](https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/At-the-intersection-of-immigration-and-skills-policy_web.pdf)

*New York State’s Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP)*

In June 2018 ONA co-facilitated a seminar, Changing Federal Immigration Policies and Access to Nutrition Assistance, for organizations in the ONA network in Albany and New York City with the NYS Council on Hunger and Food Policy.

*New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council*

A survey was conducted by the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC) to evaluate the primary needs expressed by people with developmental disabilities and their families who participate in programs or services at ONA Centers. The results showed that current programming should take into account immigrants with developmental disabilities and the specific ways to reach this particular group for effective service delivery. DDPC and ONA are exploring a collaboration to address this identified need.

**LIBERTY DEFENSE PROJECT**

In 2018, the Liberty Defense Project (LDP), the first-in-the nation, state-led, public-private legal defense project launched by Governor Cuomo in 2017, continued to ensure that all immigrants, regardless of their status, had access to free, confidential, and expert legal assistance including direct representation for those facing deportation. The LDP is administered by ONA and provided over 29,700 free services to immigrants in need in 2018 through the state-wide network of 47 LDP partners.

<b>Table 3: LDP services provided in 2018</b>	<b>Total services</b>
Legal consultations, screenings & intakes	14,676
Direct representation in removal proceedings	1210
Other types of direct representation	1654
Application assistance and other legal services	4395
Know Your Rights trainings for immigrants	6,172 individuals trained
Trainings for attorneys and legal volunteers	1,611 individuals trained
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,718</b>

*Servicing hard-to-reach communities and complex cases*

In recognition of the scarcity of immigration attorneys and legal services in areas outside of New York City, in 2018 the LDP continued to build capacity for legal service providers in Upstate and Western New York. LDP funding allowed legal services to be made available to immigrants most in need, as well as in areas where free and expert legal resources are often difficult to obtain, particularly for complex cases. In 2018, 70% of the LDP partners provided services outside of the five boroughs, including in hard-to-reach communities.

“Diana” is an immigrant from Honduras who suffered significant traumas at a young age. She was abandoned by her biological parents as a young child and was raised by her grandfather in a small village. When she was 16 years old, she witnessed gang members murder her grandfather, and was a victim of sexual assault. She fled to the United States and was taken in by friends of her sister, who have provided her with a stable and loving home. The LDP enabled Diana to obtain representation for her removal proceedings, asylum and Special Immigrant

Juvenile Status. A family court has signed the requisite orders for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, and her case is now pending with USCIS. Diana is currently enrolled in high school full-time, taking care of her young daughter, and practicing to pass her road test for her New York State driver's license.

### *Deportation defense*

In partnership with the Vera Institute of Justice, the LDP assisted the most vulnerable immigrants - those held in detention in upstate New York. Around 25% of those assisted with deportation defense under the LDP in 2018 were released from detention. Once these individuals were reunited with their families and back home in their communities, they were better placed to receive continued legal assistance to prepare their cases in the hopes of finding long-term relief.

In June 2018, Vera's partner in Batavia won cancellation of removal for "Jean," a legal permanent resident of Haitian origin who has lived in the United States for 25 years. Jean, a resident of Rochester, and a chef by profession, is the father, with his fiancée, of a two-year-old and a four-year-old, and is the father figure to his fiancée's special needs 14-year-old son. His detention was triggered by an arrest on a charge that was dismissed – a decade-old drug possession conviction – but was still brought to ICE's attention. The granting of cancellation came after Jean spent 10 long months in detention. He is now reunited with his family in Rochester, and is eligible to apply for naturalization to become a U.S. citizen.

### *Building a pro bono volunteer network*

The LDP, through its Pro Bono project, administered by Catholic Charities Community Services, Archdiocese of New York (CCCS), continued to actively recruit volunteer attorneys and law students to provide pro bono legal services to immigrants in need. In 2018, the LDP Pro Bono program placed more than 100 pro bono cases with volunteer attorneys throughout New York State, and the Pro Bono Volunteer Advocate network included more than 250 dedicated volunteer attorneys.

"Anna" is a 12-year-old girl from Mexico. Both of her parents are undocumented. In 2017, she was sexually assaulted by her parent's landlord. She was terrified to report the crime because he led her to believe that her family would be evicted if she told anyone. She gathered the courage and told a school counselor, who informed the police, who then arrested her assailant and brought criminal charges against him. Anna bravely testified against her attacker, and the man was convicted. The District Attorney certified the young girl's cooperation with their case, and CCCS placed her U-visa case with a solo practitioner, and former prosecutor, in Rockland County. The U-visa also allows the parents of a crime victim under 18 to obtain derivative status. Because of Anna's bravery, an abuser is behind bars, and a community is safer; and now, because of a CCCS trained pro bono volunteer attorney's dedication, an entire family is now on track to gain lawful status.

## **NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS**

Since 2015, ONA has been part of a small and unique network of state government offices for immigrants and refugees, intent on sharing information, resources and tools, and learning from each other on how to best serve New American communities. Although each state office has a unique administrative and program structure (some are part of Governor's Cabinets, others are housed in state agencies), all share the same mission of welcoming new Americans into our communities. As of 2018, the ONA State Network member states are: New York, Michigan, California, Maryland, Massachusetts and most recently, Ohio.

This collaboration between states was the subject of an initial report highlighting key takeaways by Pew Research in 2015, which demonstrated how the New York State Office for New Americans is setting the example for future national platforms and local approaches. For example, ONA’s successful Opportunity Center model was highlighted in 2017 at the *United Nations’ Fourth Mayoral Forum on Human Mobility, Migration and Development* in Berlin, Germany, marking the first time a state-led integration effort had a policy brief shared at a United Nations event.

The above recognition and collaboration efforts contributed to the uptick in 2018 of immigration-related foundations and think tanks expressing their interest in ONA’s service delivery methods. The result of this interest has been expressed with the following reports and collaborations:

*Reports on NaturalizeNY:*

**“Lifting Barriers to Citizenship for Low-Income Immigrants,” January 15, 2018, Stanford University Proceedings of the National Academy of Science**

The academic partners of NaturalizeNY, SUNY Albany, George Mason University and Stanford University, published their first report on some of our program’s initial findings. Based on follow-up surveys with NaturalizeNY participants, our academic partners found that receiving a voucher to pay for their citizenship application doubled the chances that someone would apply for citizenship. These results provided evidence that there are many low-income immigrants who are interested in naturalizing, but are unable to because of financial barriers.

The benefits of providing financial support for naturalization has made NaturalizeNY a national model that can be replicated in communities around the country and has even been discussed in a policy brief by the *Proceedings for the National Academy of Science*<sup>3</sup> (one of the world’s most cited multidisciplinary scientific journals). It is our hope that this evidence will inform future policy discussions, and strategies to assist immigrants in their efforts to integrate.

A second report by the NaturalizeNY team is scheduled to be published and released in 2019.

**“The Next Frontier in Immigrant Integration Policy? Using behavioral insights to foster social cohesion” webinar and report, Migration Policy Institute Europe**

Explored untapped potential behavioral insights, what they may hold for integration policy and how policymakers can start fitting this approach into their work. Dr. Laura V. Gonzalez-Murphy presented on NaturalizeNY as a key example of applying behavioral insights to foster immigrant social cohesion in New York State.

*Reports on NY’s blended instructional ESOL model:*

**Immigration Policy Laboratory “NEW AMERICANS SURVEY(NAS)” Stanford University Immigration Policy Lab and the Office for New Americans, January 2018**

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2018/01/09/1714254115>

The NAS measured immigrant integration, defined as the degree to which immigrants have the knowledge and capacity to achieve success in New York. The NAS was designed to measure six components of integration: psychological, economic, political, social, linguistic, and navigational. The findings for each of the participating were shared with them. The survey tool was also shared with each center for them to use as they see fit.

**Migration Policy Institute, “Surviving vs. Thriving: The Need for a Paradigm Shift in Adult Education for Immigrants and Refugee,” Webinar, 2018**

Draws on research from the integration, adult education, and postsecondary success fields in arguing for the adoption of a new “English Plus Integration” (EPI) adult education program model. Seeking to make more effective use of immigrant adult learners’ time in a formal program, the report recommends maintaining a central focus on English language acquisition while also building skills and critical systems knowledge across diverse platform – ONA’s being one such example.

*Research on ONA’s ESOL model:*

In 2018, three internationally recognized organizations interested in NY’s immigration policies and ONA’s ESOL program. Separately but coincidentally, the three are in general researching the impact of ESOL and use of technology and hoping to identify best practices.

- New American Economy - Its research team is looking at the benefits of ESL courses on adults in general, but in particular how the various course levels can impact their economic and social integration.
- The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), is looking at the benefits of incorporating technology as a component of ESOL. As ISTE develops their organizational framework, NYs-Cell-Ed collaboration is highlighted an exemplar in the field of organizations seeking to leverage technology to serve adult learners, job seekers, and workers in blended (classroom and technology) and/or stand-alone instructional models.
- Emerson Collective, Laurene Powell Jobs’ initiative, is also looking at programs that provide “accelerated solutions to immigrant integration and assist in the area of service availability.” Their initiative may result in a selection of innovative individuals or teams who will receive financial support, trainings, relevant learning opportunities, and access to their networks to help implement their ideas. Cell-Ed’s CEO, Jessica Rothenberg is submitting information on our partnership and even though it is not new, there are many components - courses specific to type of employment, courses in partnership with employers, etc. - that caught their interest.

*Reports Highlighting NY’s Navigator Program:*

**“New Navigator Programs Help Foreign-Trained Immigrants Overcome Barriers to Employment” published January 10, 2018, IMPRINT**

According to this report, a growing number of states and community colleges across the country have taken new measures to help foreign-trained immigrants and refugees qualify for and find professional level work in the United States. New York’s Navigator program which works with low-income immigrant communities across the state, was highlighted.

**“At the Intersection of Immigration and Skills Policy: A Roadmap to Smart Policies for State and Local Leaders,” Amanda Bergson-Shilock, National Skills Coalition, September 2018**

The report examines promising initiatives undertaken by the growing network of state and local offices devoted to the integration of immigrants. Today, there are nearly 30 municipal offices of immigrant affairs, 6 state offices, and more than 90 welcoming community initiatives. The report provides examples of how local and state agencies have implemented immigrant skill policies. One strategy highlighted was ONA’s funding of “navigator” positions to help immigrant jobseekers access appropriate training opportunities.

*Reports based on the ONA Community Seminars:*

**Qualitias of Life Foundation (QoLF) “Financial Education in Upstate New York: Actions, Interventions and Opportunities”**

Highlights that transportation costs and options, as well as availability of information on financial rights and how protect their own money regardless of immigration status, are problems in upstate communities.

**CONCLUSION**

In 2018, ONA fulfilled its mandate to assist immigrants and refugees across the State. In 2019, ONA will continue to assist any new American eager to contribute to the State’s economy, and to become a vibrant part of our society. Working vigilantly, ONA will continue to work to protect new Americans as they transition to full participation in New York’s communities, especially by addressing immigrant services fraud. In addition, as New York’s new Americans continue to face fear because of current federal policies, ONA will continue to provide the tools, resources, and information necessary to protect our immigrant and refugee communities.