

2024

**Sonoma County Secure Families Collaborative Proposal  
for the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors**



**Immigration Institute  
of the Bay Area**



**UNIVERSITY OF  
SAN FRANCISCO**

School of Law



**Catholic Charities**  
of the Diocese of Santa Rosa



**Sonoma  
Immigrant  
Services**



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## I. KEEPING SONOMA COUNTY IMMIGRANT FAMILIES TOGETHER

The Sonoma County Secure Families Collaborative (hereafter “The Collaborative”) remains committed to adapting and evolving to address the unprecedented challenges facing the County’s immigrant communities. By providing effective and innovative legal services, as well as other vital support services, The Collaborative strives to address these challenges and keep immigrant families together.

The past seven years have been especially difficult years for Sonoma County immigrants and, in particular, the Latine community. The global pandemic laid bare deep social inequities that continue to persist today, as evidenced in part by the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 virus in the Sonoma County Latine and Indigenous language-speaking communities. Additionally, a third year of devastating wildfires further disrupted the local economy and destroyed hundreds of homes, intensifying housing and economic stress. Amidst these challenges, unrelenting federal immigration policies aimed at family separation, withholding relief from those fleeing persecution, crushing the dreams of DACA recipients, and instilling pervasive deportation fears, continue unabated with no definitive end in sight.

In the face of these overwhelming obstacles, the Secure Families Collaborative, through a coordinated effort of The Collaborative’s non-profit legal and social service partners, continues to offer hope and a literal lifeline to Sonoma County immigrants. This includes immigrants who have lived and supported the economy in Sonoma County for years, as well as newer immigrants arriving from countries like Ukraine, Venezuela, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Palestine, who would face persecution or violence if returned to their countries of origin. The Collaborative’s partners come together to support our immigrant community members by providing pro bono legal support to those facing deportation or attempting to exercise their rights, offering other supportive social services, and reaching out to undocumented young adults to help them find a path forward into a more secure future.

The Collaborative’s provision of services to the immigrant population post pandemic has also been critical to support public health and safety, as well as to ensure these community members are able to access aid and other resources. Many undocumented immigrants are ineligible for federal benefit programs, and they need advice and counsel before applying for or accepting some forms of public benefits, as this could put their ability to become legal residents at risk. By providing a legal lens on questions of public assistance, The Collaborative can secure family health and safety in the immediate term and protect longer-term immigration options.

It seems unlikely that immigration reform legislation by Congress will occur in the near future. At the federal level, there are no indications of executive relief regarding immigration. This leaves little hope for most groups of immigrants to secure a path to legal immigration status. The Collaborative’s complex removal defense and affirmative immigration services continue to be essential to secure immigrant family safety in Sonoma County.

In 2024, The Collaborative is well positioned to continue to provide the critical legal and supportive assistance needed by Sonoma County’s immigrant community. Remaining responsive and building on what has been learned from clients and community partners ensures this. In response to such feedback and requests, The Collaborative will expand its social service navigation, extend its geographic diversity to better serve the Sonoma Valley and Petaluma communities, and streamline coordination among agencies and law firms offering immigration legal services. Such coordination and leadership are crucial to effectively responding to the current immigration landscape and promptly mobilizing limited legal resources to meet the needs of over 40,000 immigrant residents in Sonoma County, especially in light of potential changes in immigration policies.

## **II. A COMMUNITY LIFELINE**

The Secure Families Collaborative understands the importance of taking a holistic approach to meet both the legal and social service needs of the immigrant community. To ease their apprehension about seeking assistance, guidance and support is offered every step of the way.

### **A. Legal Support and Intervention to Prevent Family Separation**

Because federal immigration policies remain largely unchanged, The Collaborative continues to provide legal assistance to protect Sonoma County families. To date, The Collaborative has provided pro bono support to over 2100 Sonoma County residents (individuals and families) seeking legal services for affirmative and removal defense cases, but the need is far greater. And due to the lengthy processes of these cases and court backlogs, most cases are still pending and will require a lengthy legal commitment. According to Sonoma County Board of Supervisors Resolution #2021-0427, 120,000 Sonoma County residents have a family member without legal status who could potentially be separated from their families if they are deported and returned to their country of origin.

### **B. Meeting the Needs of the Whole Client – Social Services Support**

In 2020, The Collaborative recognized that while legal assistance was essential to keeping families together and, in many cases, to safeguard individuals from violence, many clients needed support to deal with the uncertainty and anxiety created by their immigration status. In response to these needs, The Collaborative has continued to partner with Catholic Charities. And due to unprecedented demand, in 2024, The Collaborative also hired an internal resource navigator to their backbone team to support Catholic Charities. The Collaborative's resource navigator assisted 58 clients (individuals and families), helping them enroll for benefits and services including healthcare, food, housing, transportation, education, and financial assistance.

### **III. PROPOSED 2024 KEY ACTIVITIES: A HOLISTIC APPROACH**

The cornerstone of The Collaborative's 2024 work is to meet the high demand for immigration legal support of undocumented Sonoma County families at risk of deportation. In addition, to promote a holistic approach to serving clients' needs, resource navigation will continue to be a focus as well. In order to remain viable, The Collaborative will also continue to build a sustainable organization and work with its collaborative partners.

#### **A. Addressing Critical Legal Needs**

Prior to The Collaborative's inception there were no *pro bono* deportation or removal defense legal services in the County. To address the sense of fear and defenselessness, removal defense and affirmative applications for immigration relief (e.g., asylum, DACA, U&V visas) continue to be a focus. This ensures that both families and legal protections remain intact.

To date, The Collaborative has been able to assist over 2100 undocumented immigrants with legal assistance. For 2024, The Collaborative plans to continue to build capacity and to provide quality Removal Defense Services for up to 50-70 clients and take on affirmative relief cases (e.g., asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status) for an additional 160 clients. Both removal defense legal teams are currently at capacity and there is a waitlist of approximately 50. As cases close, individuals on the waitlist will either be brought in as clients or invited to workshops to assist them with asylum applications.

The Collaborative will continue to provide education and application assistance and advice to individuals in Sonoma County that may be eligible for immigration relief. This has continued to be a tremendous undertaking with a potential limited time window. The Collaborative is well positioned to provide leadership to the community and other service providers through its expert legal resources and national, state, and local partnerships. The Collaborative will continue to tighten the relationships with other legal service providers (some of whom use certified immigration specialists who are not lawyers) to work closely together to meet emerging legal needs. These efforts will include an initial forum on potential forthcoming policy changes, cross training between agencies, and development of a coordinated response so that the different organizations can mobilize efficiently.

#### **B. Supporting Family Needs**

A key value of The Collaborative is learning from clients about how best to support their families. While the need for legal assistance is paramount, it is clear from clients that The Collaborative needs to continue to address their other critical needs to keep families stable (which also supports the success of their legal cases). The Collaborative was founded on its commitment to stand with the over 41,000 undocumented Sonoma County community members impacted by federal immigration policies. The majority of these individuals are part of mixed (legal) status families, who, together, are an integral part of the County's social and economic fabric. When one person in a family is undocumented, the whole family can experience fear, the lack of sufficient resources, and even exclusion from our community. The risk of deportation and immigration concerns can lead immigrant families to avoid accessing benefit programs that could greatly improve their health and safety.

Resource navigation services help mitigate this fear in a safe and supportive environment, where immigrants feel comfortable accessing the resources they need without fear of repercussions. This approach not only helps alleviate immediate concerns but also fosters trust and strengthens the community fabric by ensuring that all members, regardless of immigration status, have access to essential support services. The Collaborative's resource navigator is assisting 58 clients (individuals and families) to obtain benefit enrollment assistance, housing navigation assistance, and food and financial

assistance. In 2024, The Collaborative will build on these critical support services by continuing to streamline the referral process.

### **C. Building a Sustainable Organization**

The Collaborative formed quickly, in the midst of other disasters, to meet the acute immigration legal needs of the community. While it has been successful in serving over 2100 individuals/families with high quality services, there is an opportunity in 2024 to look more deeply into the community's needs and partner with existing organizations to fill any identified service gaps.

The Collaborative will continue to be guided by a comprehensive strategic plan and will further strengthen their partnerships by hosting gatherings geared toward solidifying its core structural framework.

To proactively ensure that the Secure Families Collaborative can effectively serve Sonoma County's immigrant community over the long term, key sustainability objectives in 2024 include: 1) strengthen project and case management systems, including an expanded use of metrics; 2) increase fundraising development capacity through engagement of a participatory fundraising team; 3) become more engaged in the community served; 4) work collaboratively with immigrant serving city and county agencies; and, 5) create a steering committee of stakeholders.

### **D. Collaborative Partnerships**

A key to The Collaborative's success has been building on the work of existing organizations and contracting for client services. Current Collaborative partners (as shown in Exhibit 2) are: the USF Immigration and Deportation Defense Clinic - Healdsburg (USF), The Immigration Institute of the Bay Area - Petaluma (IIBA), Sonoma Immigrant Services - Sonoma (SIS), Legal Aid of Sonoma County - Santa Rosa, Queer Asylum Accompaniment - Sebastopol (QAA), and Catholic Charities Diocese of Santa Rosa - Santa Rosa.

These strategic partnerships will help meet The Collaborative's long-standing goal to reach each geographic area of this diverse county. Supporting existing organizations and facilitating working as a broad-based coalition on behalf of and with the immigrant community, creates a collective impact that is much greater than that of any individual organization.

These current partners will build upon past successes.

**The USF Immigration and Deportation Defense Clinic (Healdsburg)** will continue to take a leadership role with immigrant legal services. The Clinic lead attorney, Jacqueline Brown, is a nationally renowned immigration and removal defense expert. As the Collaborative's Legal Director, she will continue to provide pro bono assistance with removal defense cases and supervise The Collaborative's partners' legal teams.

**Sonoma Immigrant Services (Sonoma)** will continue their mission of helping community members navigate the complex legal immigration system. Like USF Immigration and Deportation Clinic, they will continue to offer pro bono representation to families or individuals who are in removal proceedings.

**Legal Aid of Sonoma County (Santa Rosa)** through the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) program, will continue to provide an avenue for undocumented youth to obtain lawful permanent residency.

**The Immigration Institute of the Bay Area (Petaluma)** will continue to expand pro bono immigrant legal services including citizenship, DACA renewal, and family reunification.

**Queer Asylum Accompaniment (Sebastopol)** will continue to support LBTQIA asylum seekers. Their North Bay Rapid Response Network (NBRRN) assists the asylum seeker with essential needs such as housing, food, and social services.

**Catholic Charities (Santa Rosa)** will act in conjunction with The Collaborative's Resource Navigator to coordinate wraparound social services. This includes helping clients find and keep housing, achieve financial stability, or move their immigration journey forward.

## IV. CONCLUSION

While a change in federal policy is welcome, addressing the challenges facing our immigrant community cannot wait. The Secure Families Collaborative continues to serve as a legal and social service lifeline to Sonoma County's immigrant community. It has done so by bringing together existing organizations, adding legal resources, and listening to our clients regarding their other needs.

Through The Collaborative, local and tribal governments, foundations, businesses, and individuals have stood up on behalf of our immigrant community to say, "We see you; we recognize the critical role you play in the social, cultural and economic well-being of Sonoma County; and we stand with you."

In serving over 2100 clients (individuals and families) over the past seven years with legal and strategic supportive services, The Collaborative has created an equity driven model for collaborative community response. By focusing the resources of existing organizations on the specific needs of underserved immigrant populations, critical service gaps can continue to be identified and addressed. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors remains a key financial and strategic partner in this effort. Your continued financial assistance helps the immigrant community confront the legal threats of the immigration system and family separation, understand new rights and opportunities, access social services, and overcome the social inequalities that persist (as evidenced by the disproportionate impact of COVID-19).

The following resolution of The Board of Supervisors in 2021 reflects your true understanding of the contributions and obstacles faced by the local immigrant community, and their need for assistance.

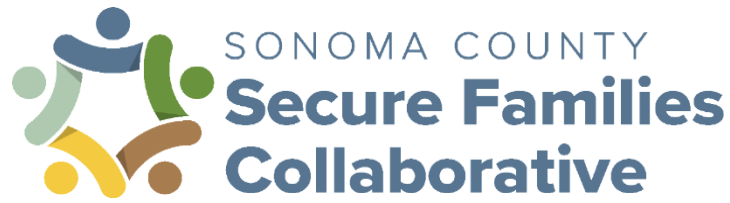
"The County recognizes that the diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences of undocumented immigrants contribute to the cultural richness and economic wellness of our nation and communities, and the legal status of undocumented immigrants currently restricts many aspects of their lives, including employment options and access to certain safety net programs. The County is supportive of all residents having the right to pursue a dignified life with meaningful employment opportunities and access to community safety nets including disaster relief aid."

"Current immigration law does not provide a clear pathway to citizenship for most undocumented immigrants in this county. Without a path to citizenship, community members continue to be faced with hardships including but not limited to barriers in securing safe and dignified housing and employment, increased vulnerability during times of disaster, lack of access to healthcare, and facing the constant threat of deportation and family separation."

Secure Families Collaborative appreciates the ongoing support of the County, as it enables the organization to maintain its strength and meet the expanding needs of the local immigrant community so clearly defined in the Board's Resolution above.



## Exhibit 1: Partner Deliverables Report



### **Partner Deliverables Report**

01/01/2023 – 12/31/2023

422 Larkfield Center, #227

Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Tel.: 707-856-4988

[www.sonomacountysecurefamilies.org](http://www.sonomacountysecurefamilies.org)

## Total cases served since inception (2018): 2171

### Legal Services: Affirmative

Total Cases Served Year to Date (YTD): 162

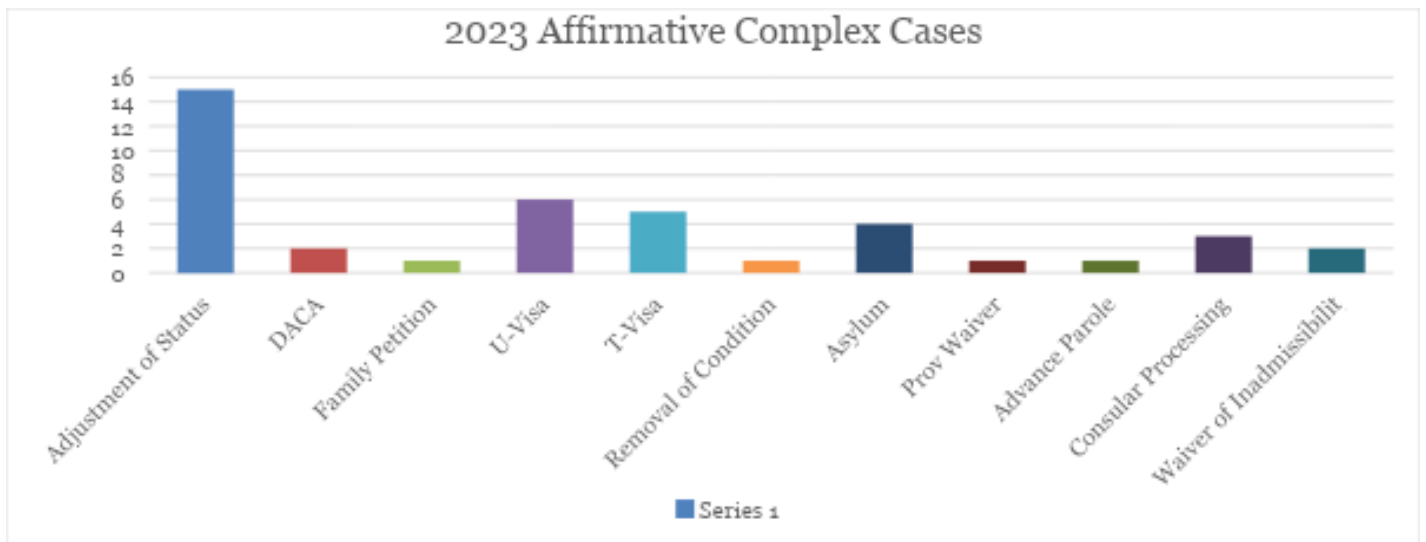
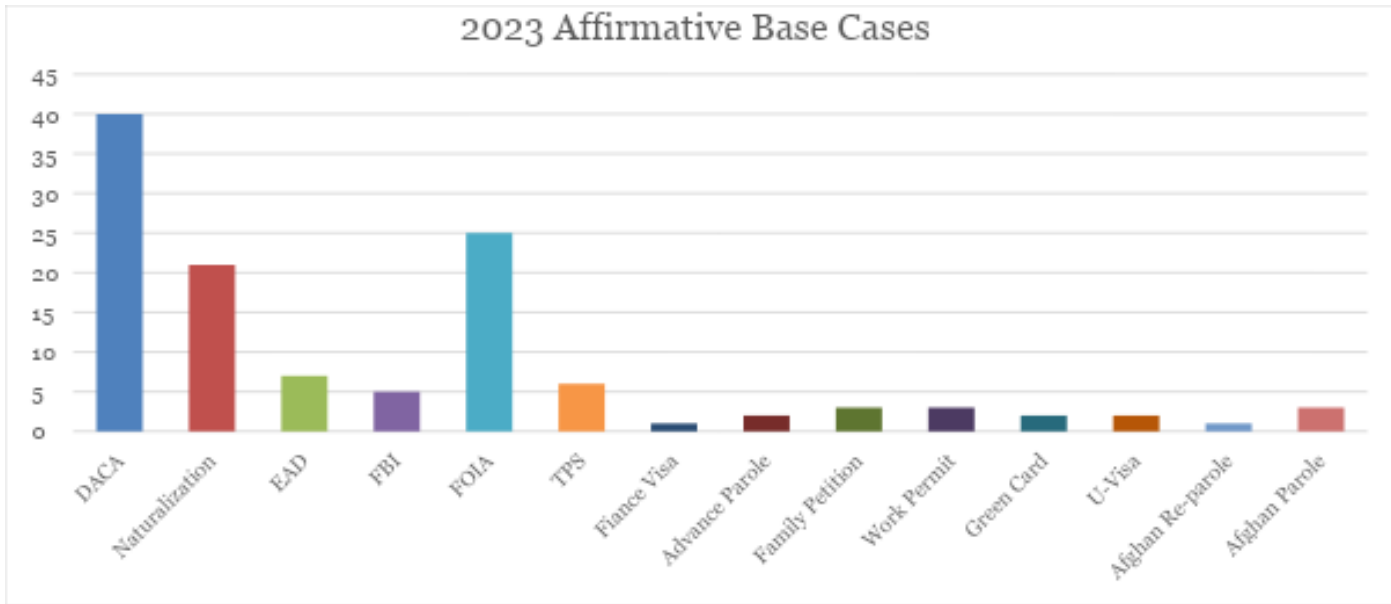
Consultations YTD: 329

- Base Cases:121
  - DACA: 40
  - Naturalization: 21
  - EAD (non-AOS):7
  - FBI Background Check:5
  - FOIA:25
  - TPS (Initial Application):6
  - Fiancé Visa:1
  - Advance Parole:2
  - Family Petition:3
  - Work Permit:3
  - U-Visa:2
  - Afghan Re-parole:1
  - Afghan Parole: 3
  - Green Card: 2

Complex Cases: 41

Status: 15	Adjustment of
	Daca:2
	Family Petition: 1
	U-Visa:6
Condition: 1	Removal of
	Asylum:4
Processing: 3	Consular
	Waiver of
Inadmissibility: 2	Advance Parole: 1
	T-Visa: 5
	Provisional Waiver:
1	

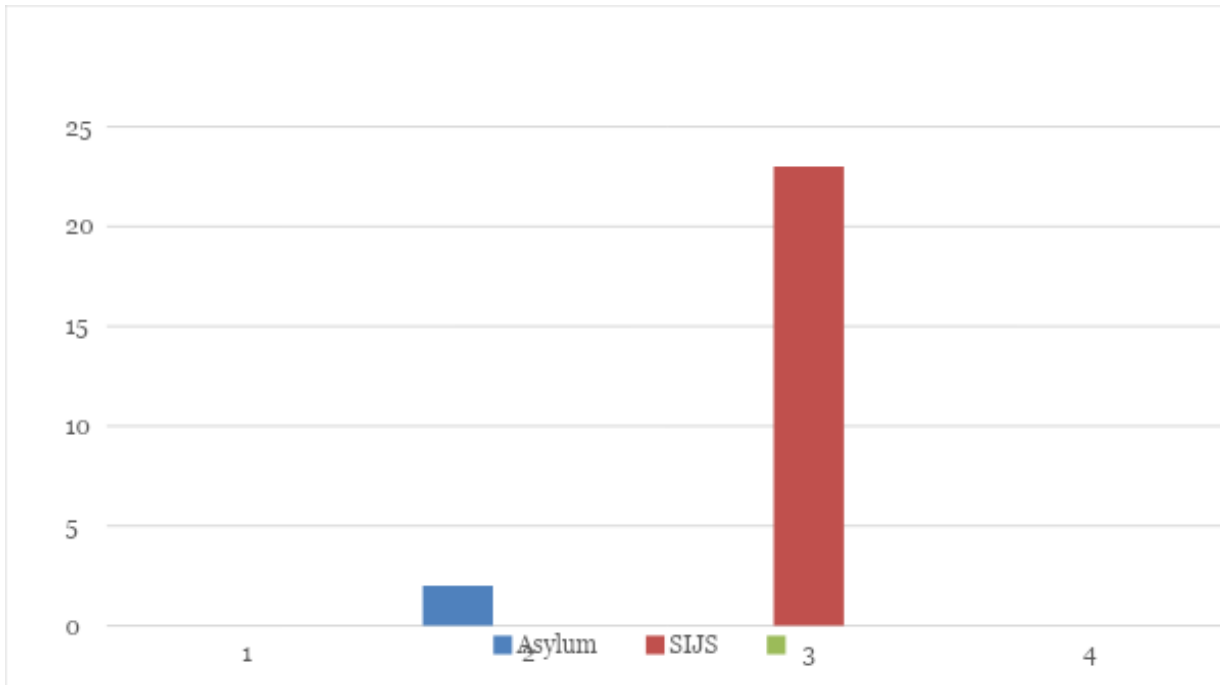
## Legal Services: Affirmative



## Legal Services: Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

Total Cases Served: 25 (9 carry-over and 16 new cases)

- Asylum:2
- SIJS:23



## Legal Services: Removal Defense

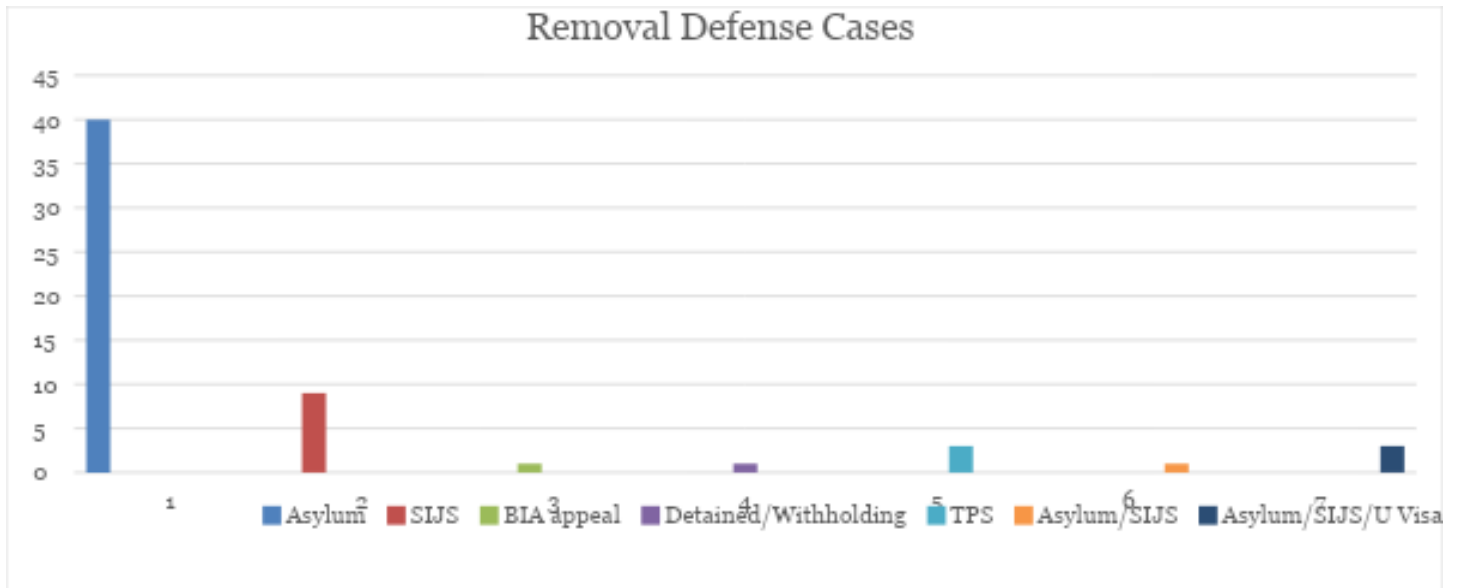
\*Removal Defense cases typically take an average of 3-5 years to close. It is our hope that with the opening of the new Concord Immigration Court, pending cases will be transferred from the San Francisco Court. This will allow our legal teams to expedite case closure.

New Case Type: 61

- Asylum: 40
- SIJS: 9
- BIA appeal: 1
- Detained/Withholding: 1
- TPS: 3
- Asylum/SIJS: 4
- Asylum/SIJS/U Visa: 3

Current Active Cases: 111

- On Waitlist: 50
- Closed Cases: 20
  - Granted: 19
  - Denied (deported): 1
  - No Decision: 33
  - Open Inactive: 9



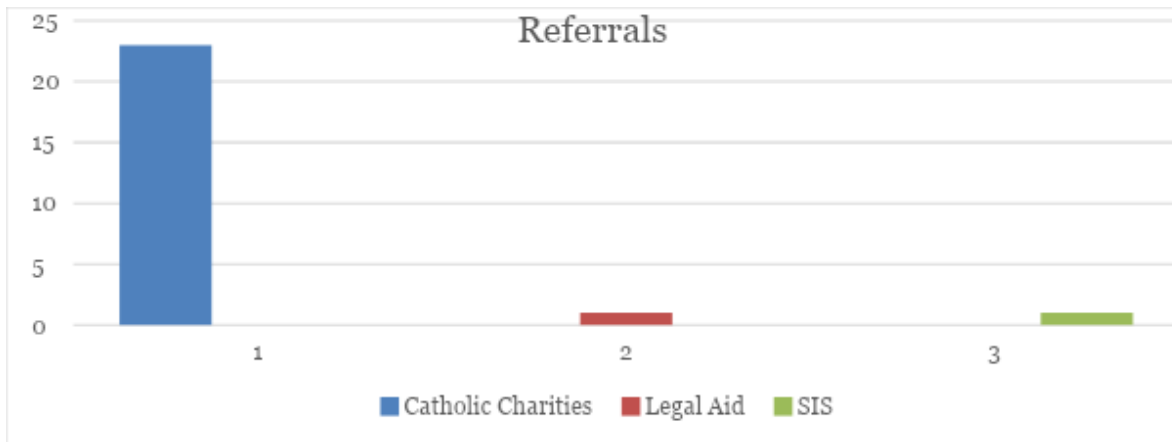
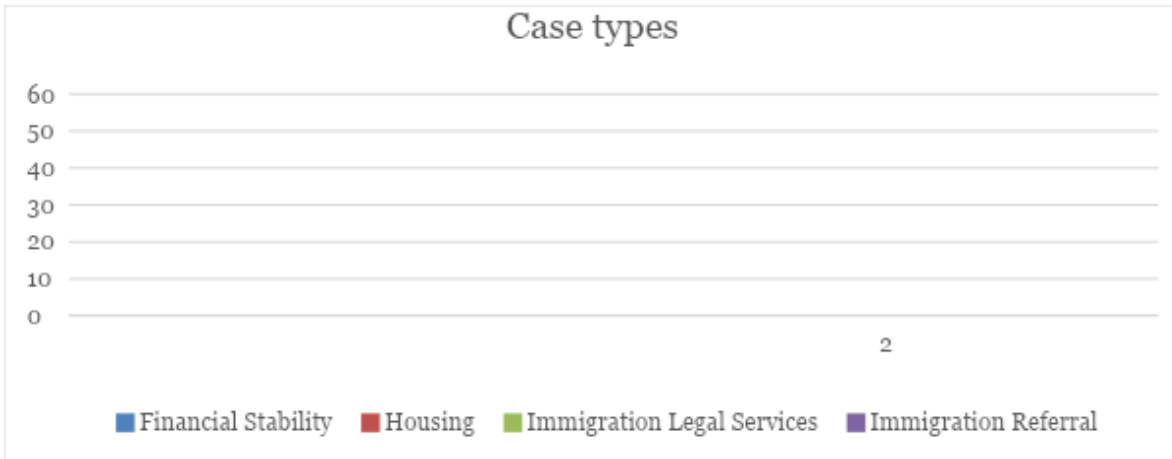
## Resource Navigation and Referral

Case Total: **71**

- Benefit Enrollment: 2
- Financial Stability: 53
- Housing: 5
- Immigration Legal Service: 1
- Immigration Referral: 1

Referrals: **34**

- Catholic Charities: 23
- Legal Aid: 1
- SIS: 1
- Misc: 9

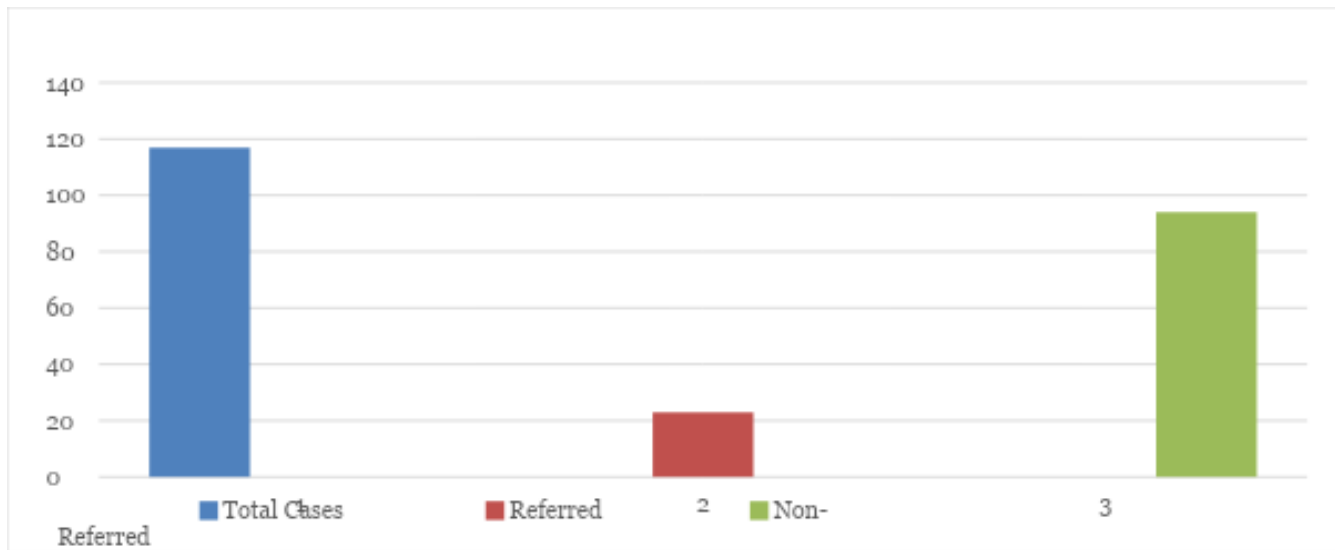


## Mental Health

Total Cases Served: **117**

- **Referred: 23**

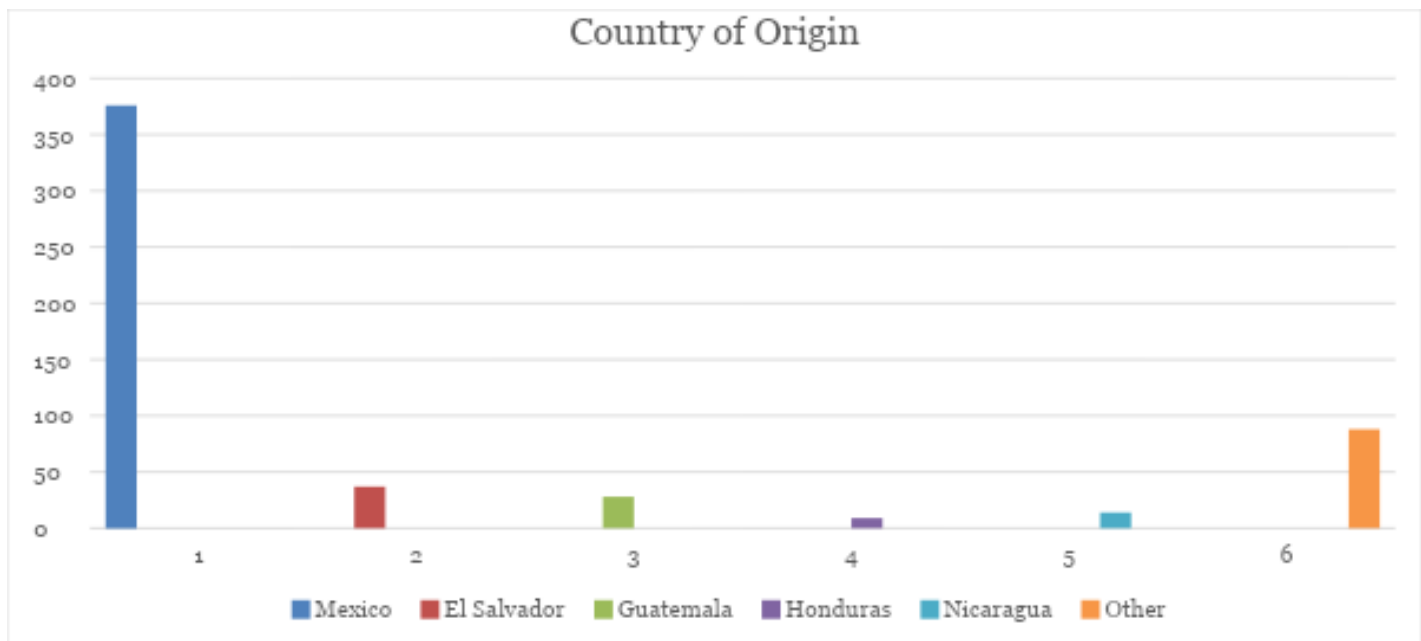
\*22 were individual private sessions, 1 family session.



## Client Demographics: Country of Origin

### Summary of Countries of Origin:

- Mexico: 376
- El Salvador: 37
- Guatemala: 28
- Honduras: 9
- Nicaragua: 14
- Other: 88
  - Colombia, Perú, United States, Russia, Venezuela, Haiti, Afghanistan, Cameroon, Germany, Samoa, Unknown, Spain, Philippines, Fiji, Dominican Republic, China, South Korea, Uganda, Costa Rica, Ireland, Brazil

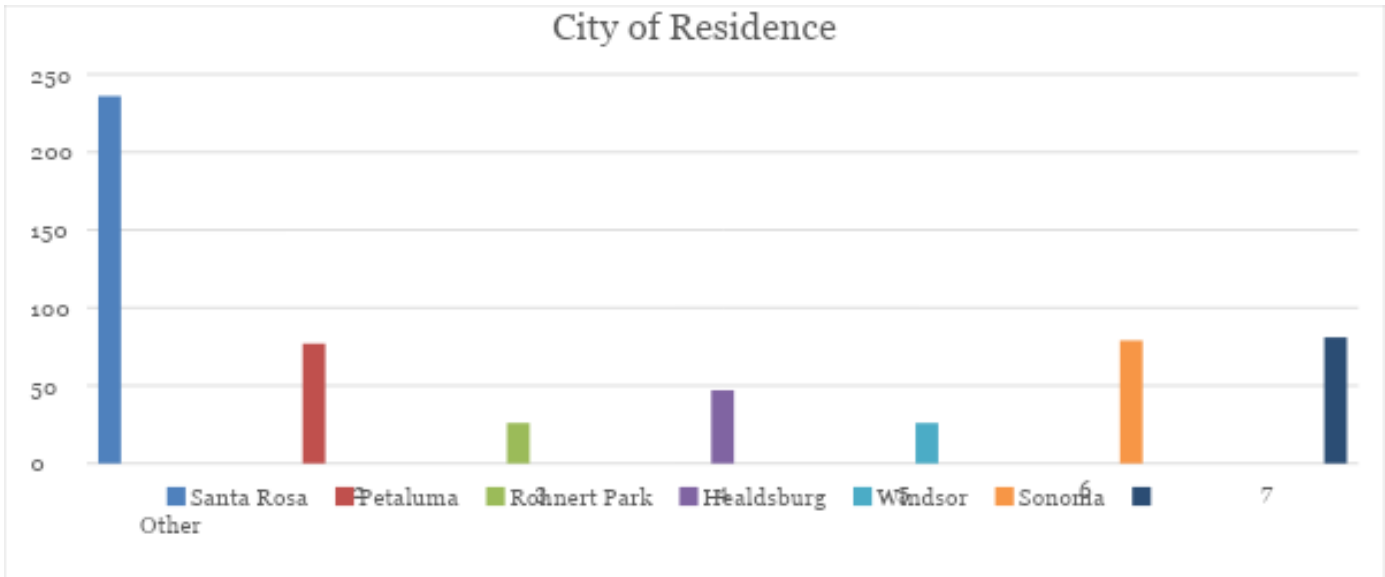




## Client Demographics: City of Residence

### Summary of City of Residence

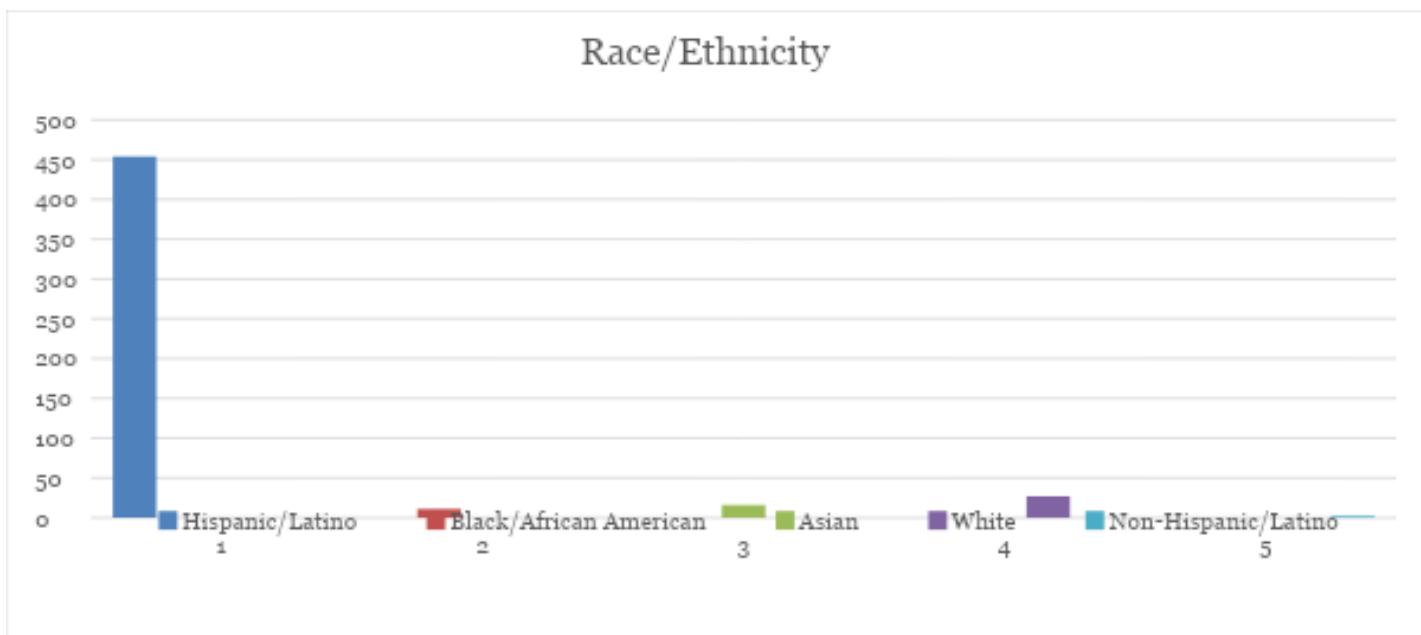
- Santa Rosa: 236
- Petaluma: 77
- Rohnert Park: 26
- Healdsburg: 47
- Windsor: 26
- Sonoma: 79
- Other: 81
  - o Cloverdale, San Rafael, Cotati, Sebastopol, Penngrove, Valley Ford, Napa County, Fairfield, N/A, Detained, Novato, Tacoma, Geyserville, Glen Ellen, Forestville, Kelseyville, Bodega, Guerneville, Boyes Hot Springs



## Client Demographics: Race/ Ethnicity

### Summary of Race

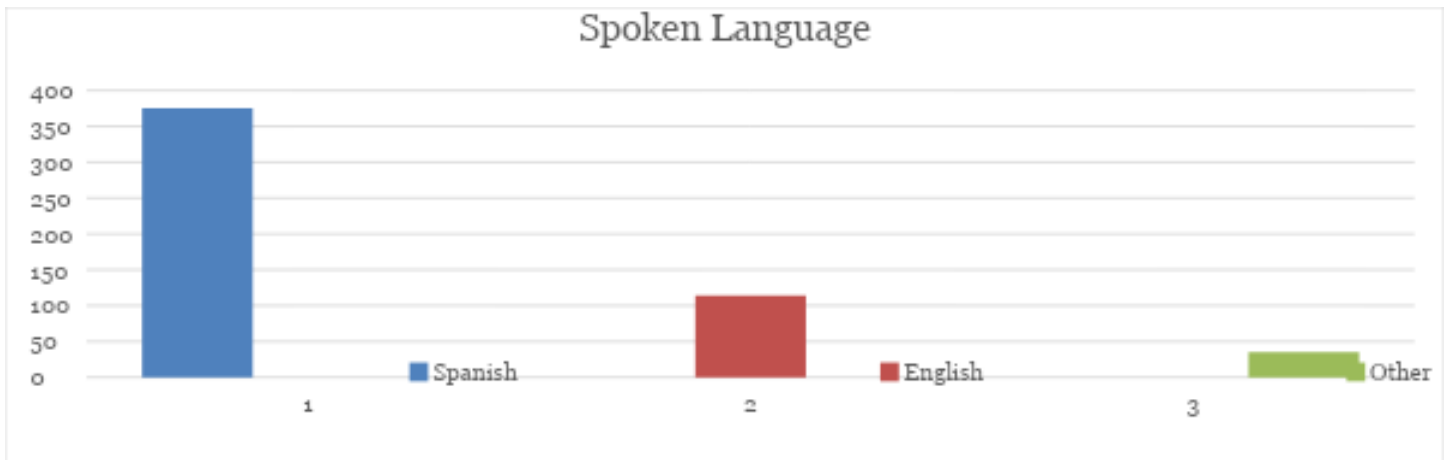
- Hispanic/Latino/Spanish origin: 454
- Black or African American: 11
- Asian: 16
- White: 27
- Non-Hispanic/Latino:2
- Other: 17
  - Indigenous Mayan Mam, Black & Latino (Mixed), Indigenous, Not specified, Other Asian (Middle Eastern), Samoan



## Client Demographics: Gender & Spoken Language

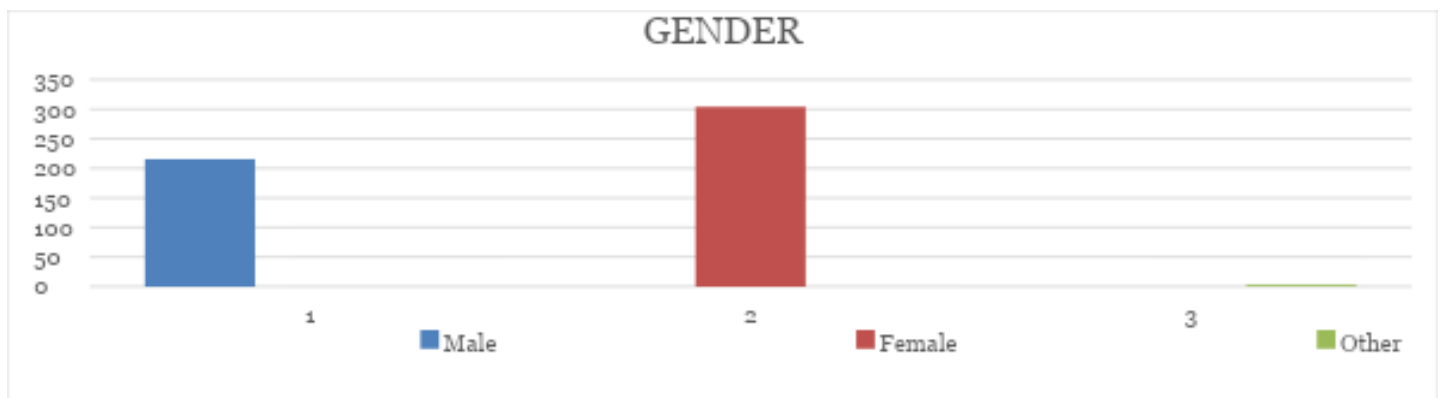
### Summary of Spoken Language

- Spanish: 375
- English: 114
- Other: 35
  - o Russian, Kazakh, Creole, Pashtu, 13 (error Jan report from IIBA), N/A, Creole (Spanish), Mam, Haitian Creole, Samoan,

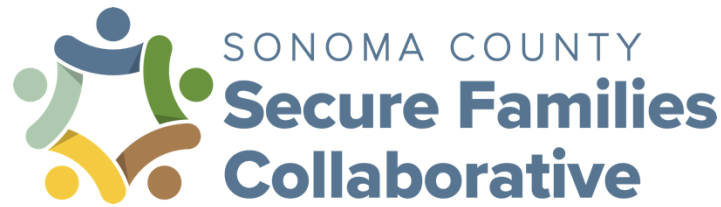


### Summary of Gender

- Male: 216
- Female: 304
- Other: 3
  - Non-binary, Trans F to M and Trans M to F



## Exhibit 2 – SFC Collaborative Partners



**USF Immigration and Deportation Defense Clinic (Healdsburg)** The Clinic lead attorney, Jacqueline Brown, is nationally renowned as an immigration and removal defense expert. As the Collaborative’s Legal Director, she provides assistance with removal defense cases (i.e. Asylum, SIJS) as well as supervise the SFC partners’ legal teams.



**Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa (Santa Rosa)** Catholic Charities of Santa Rosa houses the Collaborative Resource Navigator, whose role is to act as a guiding hand for internal/ external referrals and access to wraparound social services.



**IIBA (Petaluma)** The Immigration Institute of the Bay Area (IIBA), under the direction of North Bay Regional Director Madeline Hernandez, provides affirmative relief legal services such as DACA, family petitions, U and T Visas, etc.



**Sonoma Immigrant Services (Sonoma)** Sonoma Immigrant Services is developing an in-house immigration services department and through the Collaborative-funded “cimmigration” attorney Bernice Espinoza, they will be able to provide removal defense services such as Asylum, Cancellation of Removal, U-Visa, etc.



**Queer Asylum Accompaniment (Sebastopol)** Supports LBTQIA asylum seekers. Their North Bay Rapid Response Network (NBRRN) assists the asylum seeker with essential needs such as housing, food, legal support, and social services.



**Legal Aid of Sonoma County (Santa Rosa)** Legal Aid provides services to certain immigrant youth under 21 who are eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile status.

**Exhibit 3 – Proposed Funding Request: \$300,000**

**County of Sonoma Secure Families Collaborative Funding Request:**

<b>Category</b>	<b>County of Sonoma Contribution</b>
USF Removal Defense Team	\$100,000
Sonoma Immigrant Services Removal Defense Team	\$100,000
Secure Families Collaborative Backbone Team	<u>\$100,000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>