

JOHS Provider Conference

May 29, 2024

Notes from Session: Working with Asylum Seeking Households

Presenters: Jordan Cunnings (Innovation Law Lab); TK Kapurura (Multnomah County Idea Lab); Marco Maja; Raquel Barajas (Multnomah County Idea Lab); Samantha Ratcliffe and Isaac Alley Member, Immigration Organizer

Moderators: Freja Lyons

Notetaker: Kristina Goodman

-Key Points from Session Overview/Presentation (info not captured in presentation slide deck):

- Important topic right now with what is happening in our community
- South America, Asia, Central America, and other communities are here and seeking support (food and housing are the main needs)
- Roughly 5 families coming into Portland per week (# believed to be low as they are not currently on the systems radar)
- For folks who are entering through Texas, they are being routed to other communities. Portland is a city that folks are directed to, specifically from Colorado. Folks are arriving at the airport with nowhere to go
- Many of the seekers are newer and do not necessarily have family ties to this area so they find themselves experiencing homelessness
- Migrants come from a communal culture and typically rely on each other for support
- Migrant voices are not always in a position to be heard and they need to be included
- The way the system has decided to work with migrant communities has created divide and barriers
- 300 families came through the program at the Ramada and became housed in a 6 month period. Many are still adjusting to life in the US and need more than 6 months to achieve stability. There is not currently a long term plan for these families especially considering that they need to find supportive services (that speaks the same language and understands the culture) and then file for asylum (1year)
- “What community are you from in your country?” is a good question to ask folks to really understand what language support they may need (different languages, dialects)

- Asylee is someone who has had Asylum status for 1 year and can then apply for a different citizen status
- DACA - Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals - not seeing as many DACA kids as we used to due to some changes
- SIJS - Big backlog for this one - for kids who have been abused and are undocumented
- Temporary Protected Status - Venezuela and Haiti have dates that if you arrived from those countries before that date you have temporary protected status and have to be renewed every 18 months. This is not a status that allows you to get a green card
- U/T Visas - protections for victims of human trafficking
- Some of the challenges come from there not being a clear pathway to becoming a resident
- Fees are very expensive and going up
- Oregon is one of the most deprived of immigration attorneys (less than 30% of folks needing an immigration attorney have one)
- You may not be eligible for work until after 6 months after applying for asylum status
- Public Charge does not apply to asylum seekers
- Available services -
 - Oregon Worker Relief
 - Prioritizes those who are at the highest risk of removal

-Questions/Answers (summarization):

- Question about how to get friends who need immigration legal assistance some help.
 - Someone who is not an immigration attorney should not be filling out immigration forms. Refer them to one of the legal resources
- What is the best way to help someone connect with benefits?
 - Call the benefits hotline or refer them back to their immigration attorney
- What is a parolee?
 - A 2 year authorization to be in the US
 - Biggest difference is work eligibility
- What is civic exclusion?
 - Means that because of immigration status a person is limited in some way (work, benefits, etc)
- Ramada program - Is there a plan for folks that are being housed through that program?

- Resources are still limited, still looking for additional resources to sustain those who only have a 6 month lease, currently no promises
- Right now it is not clear whose responsibility this is. Is it the state? The City? The County?
- There are 2 program offers in Multnomah County that are currently up for consideration to support the Ramada program
 - Right now the funding is only secured through the end of June and without a plan these households will be houseless
 - Submit your written testimony if you are in favor of securing funding for these families
- What determines where the master interview takes place?
 - The hearing is set for where people state they are going. If someone moves locations the hearing will continue to be held in that original city or folks can file to have the hearing location changed to their current city
- If folks need translation support, is it ok for a Case Manager/Case Worker to translate for the seeker, including translation of documentation?
 - Yes
- What is someone is working with a fee for service attorney and has ran out of money to pay fees?
 - Refer them to our program. Oregon has a fund that can pay for fees. There is also a fee waiver that can be completed.