

Change of Venue Motion Project for Recent Arrivals

The Legal Aid Society is working with **recent arrivals** to New York City who seek various forms of legal assistance and is starting a limited scope project in January 2024 to address another area of need.

The Change of Venue Motion Project seeks volunteers to help individuals and families file pro se motions to the Immigration Court to change the venue (i.e., location) of their immigration proceedings. Many recent arrivals need to change the location of their matters because immigration authorities may have chosen a location for them during their initial processing at the US/Mexico border, or recent arrivals may have intended to stay in another municipality but have since moved to New York City. As a result, many recent arrivals cannot easily travel to their Immigration Court proceedings and are unable to proceed with their asylum claims or other immigration legal relief applications.

The ideal volunteer is interested in helping immigrants, sensitive to the needs of recent arrivals who lack legal information about their Immigration Court proceedings and is detailed-oriented. Fluent Spanish, French, Arabic, and Wolof speakers are preferred, but language ability is not required. All volunteers will be required to complete a required training on how to file a pro se change of venue motion and other related topics.

With this project, volunteers will:

- Work under the supervision of an experienced immigration attorney
- Gain experience working with a live or telephonic interpreter, if the volunteer does not speak with recent arrival's preferred language
- Interview an individual or family unit to assess their need to change venue to New York City
- Investigate and review immigration legal paperwork and other publicly available resources to identify the appropriate Immigration Court to which the motion must be addressed, as well as the Department of Homeland Security Office of Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA) in that other venue. While the motion itself must be filed with the Immigration Court, a copy of the motion must be served to OPLA as it is the opposing party in the court proceedings.
- Prepare a pro se motion to change venue for the individual and/or family unit
- Prepare an immigration court change of address form, as an exhibit to the motion
- Review the prepared motion with the individual and/or family unit
- Mail the motion to the Immigration Court and to OPLA
- Provide the individual and/or family unit copy of the motion, confirmation of mailing, and resources on how to check the status of the motion with the Immigration Court.

The project involves only pro se documentary submissions, with no court appearances and no ongoing representation. Please consider volunteering to help a recent arrival to New York City with this limited scope legal assistance project.