

STAND TOGETHER CONTRA COSTA
A Project Status Report Submitted to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
July 21, 2020

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Since March 2018, Stand Together Contra Costa continues an innovative partnership between Contra Costa County, philanthropy, and community-based organizations to ensure that all people in Contra Costa County, regardless of citizenship or immigration status, are afforded the rights established by the United States Constitution and are protected from actions or policies that result in disparate, discriminatory, or unlawful treatment. In the face of continuous threats posed by the federal government's discriminatory and anti-immigrant policies and actions, Stand Together Contra Costa represents the commitment of Contra Costa County's elected officials, nonprofit organizations, faith leaders, funding partners, and community leaders to collectively demonstrate extraordinary support to the immigrant community. The members of this community are our neighbors, teachers, students, friends, family, coworkers, supervisors, leaders, health professionals, first responders, dreamers, and hard-working people who make our Contra Costa County unique, diverse, and vibrant. They are not a separate community, but they are us! We are pleased to submit this report to highlight the accomplishments of this important project.

As you know, Stand Together Contra Costa provides no-cost rapid-response support, civil deportation defense legal services and clinics, immigrant rights education and training, and direct-service support for immigrant individuals and families in Contra Costa County. As a public-private initiative managed by the Office of the Public Defender in partnership with nonprofit organizations and community members, this year completes its pilot period and third year of operation, ending on June 30, 2020. We now enter our fourth year starting July 1, 2020, and significant changes have impacted how the project will function and be funded going forward.

Catholic Charities of the East Bay continues as lead agency of the coalition of five nonprofit agencies and is the project's primary community-based partner. The remaining coalition agencies include Monument Impact, Bay Area Community Resources, Jewish Family and Community Services East Bay, and the Immigration Institute of the Bay Area (formerly International Institute of the Bay Area).

After receiving the approved proposal on September 19, 2017, the Board of Supervisors voted to accept the recommendation of the Finance Committee and to commit \$500,000 in County funds for FY 17/18, with continuing commitments in FY 18/19 and FY 19/20, contingent on ongoing contributions by external funders. These contributions have been received and/or committed and the project continues with philanthropic and County AB109 funding into its fourth year, FY 20/21.

II. KEY COMPONENTS

A. COMMUNITY VERIFICATION AND RESPONSE

The backbone of Stand Together Contra Costa is the Rapid Response Hotline, which is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide a single point of contact for people who witness or are targeted by federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions undertaken in our community.

Hotline staff verify ICE activity or dispel rumors, dispatch legal observers, provide accompaniment to family members to gather information to support legal defense for a person detained by ICE, and coordinate with the project's deportation-defense attorneys for individuals in bond and removal proceedings.

However, Hotline usage has gone down significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Early in the pandemic, U.S. immigration authorities announced that they would temporarily halt enforcement across the United States, except for efforts to deport foreign nationals who have committed crimes or who pose a threat to public safety. As a result, enforcement in the community has decreased, and it is reflected in the low numbers of Hotline calls.

Nevertheless, one of the community members of the Stand Together Contra Costa Steering Committee reminded all of us that despite low numbers, having the Hotline available provides reassurance to a community that is constantly living in the shadows and in fear. This is only exacerbated by the pandemic. Thus, integrating our legal services with a hotline will remain an integral mechanism to ensure utilization of our immigration rapid response and legal removal defense services.

"Thanks for connecting my husband and I to an attorney close to us in El Sobrante, CA. After paying a Notary Public in San Francisco so much money to help with our case, she only made it worse, and we're out of a lot of money we had to borrow to pay her. The attorneys you referred us too were knowledgeable and patient with our financial situation. I feel more comfortable knowing that they have a good reputation in town and have been working with us. Thank you". – Hotline Caller *(Translated to English from Spanish)*

B. LEGAL SERVICES (CLINICS, CONSULTATIONS, AND REMOVAL-DEFENSE REPRESENTATION)

Stand Together Contra Costa conducts no-cost legal clinics in safe and familiar community settings to provide immigrants and their families with individualized legal consultations and structured and customized referrals.

"My wife and I have no words to express our gratitude to STCC for saving our and our children's lives. I was attacked and threatened with death if I returned to Mexico. We thank God that Helio was placed in our path to help my family and I live safely in the United States!" -STCC Client

Individuals detained by ICE are eligible to receive no-cost legal representation in pursuing bond or release, and to receive legal representation in removal defense and applications for relief before the Executive Office of Immigration Review (immigration court).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic began and Contra Costa County Health Officials declared a shelter-in-place there were many community events scheduled that would have afforded access to immigration legal consultations. Because of the shelter-in-place, these events moved to an online format, which proved to be challenging.

It is important to be mindful of the fact that there were zero free immigration removal defense services available in Contra Costa county three years ago. Because of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors' clear commitment to immigrant families in our community by funding these crucial services, there is now capacity in the county for ongoing free removal defense services provided by the Office of the Public Defender as well as through three of the leading non-profit agencies in the County – Catholic Charities East Bay, Jewish Family Community Services East Bay, and the Immigration Institute of the East Bay. We are very proud of this accomplishment and will continue to provide excellent no-cost immigration representation to current and future clients in need of immigration removal defense legal services.

C. CAPACITY-BUILDING, EDUCATION, AND OUTREACH

Stand Together Contra Costa continued to provide a wide array of no-cost informational presentations, public forums, direct-service workshops (such as Clean Slate and Public Charge), and leadership development opportunities, along with public communications about immigration-related issues to expand knowledge, dispel myths, and enhance both individual and collective capacity. We continue our efforts to promote and execute our county's Census Complete Count 2020 strategy and strongly feel that our community engagement efforts during the past three years have paid off in successful census education and engagement with immigrant families in Contra Costa County. We are proud to have built improved trust with immigrant families on behalf of the County through our responsive and flexible community education and outreach efforts.

The fourth year of Stand Together Contra Costa will focus heavily on sustaining and improving the immigration removal defense services of the project with an emphasis on creating and fostering new relationships with community-based organizations given the loss of our funded Community Engagement Specialists. Despite the many challenges of the pandemic, our legal team will continue to provide excellent legal representation to immigrant families in Contra Costa who are facing deportation and separation from their families.

D. SERVICES IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

In March 2020, when the County Health Officer issued an Order directing all individuals to shelter in place, this included our project suspending all upcoming community immigration forums

"Thank you for helping me find resources for myself and my family. I'm a day worker and couldn't find work after the shelter in place. I didn't know how I was going to feed my family or if we even had options. I spoke to you guys and you helped us apply for food stamps. You even gave us a list to pick up food from the Food Bank so our benefits would stretch. 1000 Thank yous." - Hotline Caller (Translated to English from Spanish)

and consultation events to comply with the prohibition of all public and private gatherings of any number of people occurring outside a single household or living unit. However, Stand Together Contra Costa remained committed to serving the community during this pandemic. To do this, we had to be innovative and pivot the way we provide the services to using social media, online tools, and other creative solutions.

Some of the activities we provided included: outreach to the immigrant community using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. We shared information on Census as well as information and resources regarding COVID-19. The Community Engagement Team continued to offer virtual workshops for topics including Cal-Fresh, Census 2020, Family Preparedness Plan, Know Your Rights, Public Charge and Unemployment. The community was also reminded that they could call the Hotline at any time for information and assistance with any of these topics.

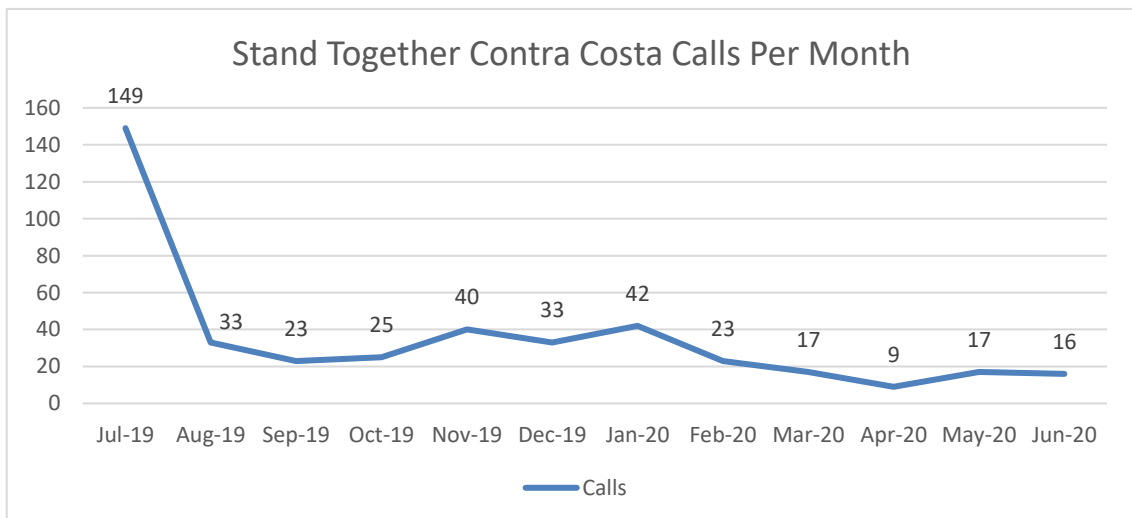
Additionally, we planned and held a telephone consultation day where callers could speak to an immigration specialist regarding their issue and discuss options for resolution. We had five clients released from custody due to COVID-19 concerns (as ordered by a Federal District Judge after a lawsuit was filed). Our partner agencies (Bay Area Community Resources, Jewish Family & Community Services and Monument Impact) assisted families that were struggling with finances, food and finding work.

III. PROGRESS IN YEAR 3 (JULY 1, 2019 – JUNE 30, 2020)

Over the past year, Stand Together Contra Costa has achieved all the following deliverables:

i. Information and Dispatch

- Maintained the 24/7 Hotline (phone and data system): 925-900-5151
- Fielded 427 calls. The chart below shows the call volume per month:



- The numbers reflect a decrease in the volume of calls, especially since enforcement activities have lessened as a result of the pandemic. Nevertheless, the Hotline remains a critical lifeline for members of our community, reassuring them that the help is there when needed.
- For Year 4, we have plans to reduce costs and improve efficiency by exploring collaboration with other networks to ensure that the Rapid Response hotline services remain available to Contra Costa residents. We plan to phase out the direct staffing of dispatch shifts and are awaiting news

about whether an emerging east bay immigrant hotline (proposed by Centro Legal de la Raza and the Alameda County Immigrant Legal and Education Partnership) could potentially provide consolidated services to Contra Costa County immigrant families without being staffed by STCC-funded partners.

ii. Governance and Communications

- Maintained website: <https://standtogethercontracosta.org>, with a repository of videos, downloadable documents in multiple languages, along with a calendar of upcoming events
- Maintained social media pages including:
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/StandTogetherContraCosta>
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/standtogethercontracosta/>
 - Twitter: <https://twitter.com/StandTogetherCC>
- Designed, printed, and distributed thousands of bilingual Know Your Rights “green” cards
- Produced Know Your Rights documents in Arabic, English, Persian, Punjabi, Spanish, traditional Chinese, Vietnamese, and Urdu
- Convened regular Steering Committee governance meetings to steward program through pilot phase, including three members of the community as leader from the Local Leadership Councils representing West, Central and East
- Concluded Steering Committee governance meetings through pilot phase

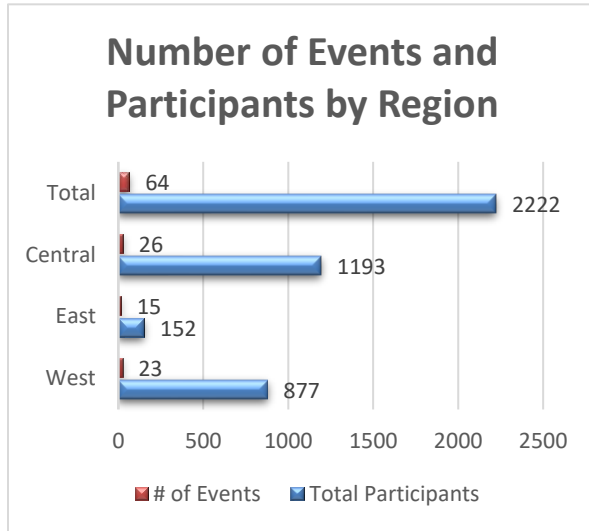
iii. Education, Leadership Development, and Capacity-Building

- Conducted 64 workshops and presentations, including Know Your Rights workshops, informational presentations about immigration and the program, educating 2,222 people in immigration rights, services and information
- Supported all three Local Leadership Councils in all three geographic regions of the County, leading monthly meetings and actively participating in Steering Committee functions
- Once the health orders were initiated, we were considered an essential service allowing our partner agencies to continue the work remotely

iv. Outreach

- Established a single point of contact with 19 schools within multiple County school districts (elementary, high school, and community colleges) and six faith-based organizations, provided information, resources, links to additional information, and collaborated to host events
 - In addition, provided informational materials to all 36 Catholic parishes in Contra Costa County, and
 - Provided informational materials to Muslim mosques, Jewish temples, and ecumenical faith-based organizations in Contra Costa County
- Continued in the development of a comprehensive plan with community college district to increase information and direct services for their students and families

- Provided information about Stand Together Contra Costa, including but not limited to the distribution of flyers and cards, to over 2,000 community members at various outreach events in



community organizations, faith-based locations, and schools. The chart below shows the breakdown of outreach efforts in the geographic regions of the County:

- In addition to the above outreach, our team participated in several media events on Univision and Telemundo, with an estimated 100,000 viewers during the local news broadcasts.
- The chart to the left also illustrates the challenges we have faced given the recent shelter-in-place orders, resulting in our cancelling of all events from March 2020 to the present. We have had to pivot to find ways to still be able to meet the need by using social media and online tools to achieve this deliverable.

v. Legal Services and Consultation

- Conducted 1,189 immigration consultations
- Completed 139 intakes for legal representation on the Hotline
- Represented/representing 128 cases in bond and removal proceeding
- As a result of COVID-19 and shelter in place orders we could no longer provide in-person events to provide free legal consultations. In order to ensure that these critical opportunities for accurate legal assistance would continue during the pandemic, our Community Engagement and Legal Teams worked together to hold a free legal clinic event via our Hotline so that we could still connect with the community and provide free legal consultations via telephone.

“I want to thank STCC for helping me not be deported to my home country where I would surely be tortured and killed.” -STCC Client

IV. EMERGING LESSONS

A. THE NEED FOR STAND TOGETHER CONTRA COSTA IS REAL.

In July 2019, we received 149 calls on the Hotline. In the months following we noticed a decline in the number of calls being received. Although we confirmed continuing ICE arrests in Contra Costa through our legal team, the hotline activity for reporting suspected active ICE arrests was low; yet the community continued to call the Hotline to ask for help navigating to other services, such as how to apply for public benefits, requests for immigration legal services for those not-detained, and accompaniment support for families, such as accompanying to appointments or advocacy with government agencies. Our program’s commitment to language access and our culturally responsive approach to services has established our hotline as a trusted resource among immigrant families throughout Contra Costa and has revealed the real need for enhanced and holistic service navigation services that are accessible and trusted by immigrant families in our community. These requests encouraged our project leaders to look at a possible pivot of our use of dispatchers on the Hotline from having them solely report and record ICE activity, to consider functioning in a community service navigator role.

In the most recent months, even with reduced reports of ICE activity, we see a steady call volume because people need to feel reassured that the service is still there. We are here to continue to provide rapid, responsive, reliable, trustworthy, and culturally appropriate services to an underrepresented and vulnerable population while building the county’s capacity to recognize and respond to the needs of our county’s immensely vital immigrant families.

In addition, given the ongoing horrifying policies and actions being executed by the federal government – tearing families apart with no regard for their safety or reunification, even in an ongoing global pandemic – Stand Together Contra Costa has served as a beacon of hope for the tens of thousands of immigrant residents who are inextricably woven into the fabric of our County.

B. PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP IS POWERFUL. PUBLIC MANAGEMENT IS VALUABLE.

Per the plan presented to and approved by the Board of Supervisors, the Office of the Public Defender serves as the administrative authority and manager for Stand Together Contra Costa. In the time since the Board's approval of the plan, the value of locating this initiative inside the County's administrative infrastructure has been unmistakable.

Stand Together Contra Costa is a complex undertaking: Born of grassroots advocacy, it is funded by both the public sector and philanthropic entities, authorized by the County's leadership, administratively managed by the Public Defender's Office, conducted in integral partnership with community-based organizations, and stewarded by government representatives and community advocates alike.

It is certainly not easy to design, launch, or manage such a complex structure; having fewer moving parts makes a machine easier to run. But the success of Stand Together Contra Costa is a product of the commitment, capacity, and connections brought to the project by its many constituent members. By embedding management of this complex structure into the institutional framework intrinsic to a public department, the County Board of Supervisors offered the project a level of legitimacy, rigor, visibility, impact, and accountability that might otherwise have taken far longer to achieve.

C. COLLECTIVE STEWARDSHIP BRINGS VOICES TO THE TABLE.

Stand Together Contra Costa is a testament to the power of dedication, partnership, and inclusion, embodied in the project's Steering Committee of representative leaders who volunteer their time to support this work.

The Steering Committee meets regularly and provides stewardship, critical inquiry, and collective wisdom to explore what's working, what needs adjustment, and what it takes to accomplish the project's important and ambitious mission. We have all three Local Leadership Councils (West, Central, East) actively participating in the Steering Committee meetings. Translation services are provided at every meeting, and for the past several months we have consistently been meeting at the Family Justice Center offices in Richmond and Concord. This unique approach of providing both a physical meeting space and using technology to link the two offices during the meeting, especially during the shelter-in-place, facilitates access to those community members who may be travelling from farther parts of the County, specifically East County. Before the pandemic, we would have also utilized the Antioch office of the Family Justice Center to afford community members access to that office as well. In the meantime, all of our meetings will remain virtual.

Members of the Local Leadership Councils who have attended the Steering Committee meetings have shared that they feel empowered and that their voices have been heard. In one session where a discussion was held to determine whether we should continue a 24/7 Hotline given that the call volume was going down, the Local Leadership Council members strongly supported maintaining a 24/7 Hotline. It reassures the community, one member said, to know that they can call at any time and speak to a live person. And given the current uncertainty of threats of ICE activity, it is more important that we maintain a 24/7 Hotline, but perhaps explore opportunities for collaboration to more efficiently maintain this critical service. Our Local Leadership Councils and their participation in our steering committee have demonstrated that centering community through a commitment to collective stewardship truly improves the quality and responsiveness of innovative county programs like Stand Together Contra Costa.

D. LOOKING AHEAD TO YEAR FOUR: ADJUSTMENTS FOR FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY.

In reviewing Year 1-3, the Steering Committee and project leaders have identified several opportunities for adjustment:

- i. **Legal Staffing:** Having access to quality legal representation is a cornerstone of due process and is critical to ensuring that the constitutional rights of Contra Costa's immigrant families are protected, regardless of their ability to afford an attorney. As mentioned earlier, only three years ago there were *zero* free legal immigration removal defense services in Contra Costa County. Through Stand Together

Contra Costa, there is now capacity in the County for free removal defense services provided by the Office of the Public Defender as well as by three of the leading non-profit agencies in the County – Catholic Charities East Bay, Jewish Family Community Services East Bay, and the Immigration Institute of the East Bay. All agencies have hired competent, caring and compassionate attorneys and have built an infrastructure that is conducive to the long term sustainability of this work.

In Year 4, we intend on fully staffing the legal services team by pursuing a one-to-one staffing ratio of attorney to legal assistant, that will provide critical support to the busy deportation defense attorneys on the Team and will continue to support the high quality of our overall service provision flow by holding the vast majority of the administrative work for our hundreds of legal consultations.

ii. Community Engagement:

- Partner with a wider array of CBO partners in order to facilitate improved outreach and community engagement with immigrant families throughout Contra Costa County, with a focus on establishing new collaborations with East County and South County organizations serving immigrant families.
- Determine improved digital and virtual tools and strategies for community outreach given COVID-19 pandemic by strengthening our social media footprint, maintaining contact with constituents via monthly newsletters and periodic social media and email updates and by continuing legal presentations on topics requested by immigrant residents.

iii. Support Staffing/Hotline Coverage: The staffed, 24/7 rapid-response Hotline is a cornerstone of Stand Together Contra Costa, serving as the hub for information, verification, and service dispatch. Yet staffing such a line 24 hours a day and seven days a week through both peak periods and slow times is challenging in terms of both cost and shift-coverage. Given this fact, the Steering Committee last year directed the project leads to explore options for ensuring adequate and appropriate coverage while reducing both cost and staff burden. To this end, the project leads explored options to partner with another network, the Alameda County Immigrant Legal & Education Partnership (ACILEP). ACILEP, led by Centro Legal de la Raza, absorbed the evening and weekend shifts. Conversations are ongoing to determine if ACILEP will support the Hotline fully, thus consolidating the immigrant hotline services throughout the East Bay. This type of inter-regional planning and resource-sharing can enhance collective capacity while providing useful leverage to each of the partner agencies. In Year 4, we will continue to strengthen the relationship with ACILEP to ensure Contra Costa County residents continue to have access to essential immigration hotline services.

"I originally spoke to Ms. Adriana when I called the hotline. She was so nice and helpful. She connected me with a nice attorney that said he would be helping my son that was detained while on his way to work. It has been nothing but blessings with all the resources she gave my daughter in law and myself. Thank you. – Hotline Caller (*Translated to English from Spanish*)

V. BUDGET

Sources	FY17-18 (six months)	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY20-21 *Projected*
Nonprofit Philanthropies	\$85,000	\$500,000	\$675,000	\$351,195
Contra Costa County (AB109)	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Total sources	\$585,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,175,000	\$851,195

For its fourth term (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021), Stand Together Contra Costa is operating on a total budget projection of \$851,195. Of this, the Office of the Public Defender, as the project’s administrative manager, would retain \$444,014 to cover the costs for one full-time Program Manager (Administrative Services Assistant III) and one full-time Senior Attorney/Legal Coordinator (Deputy Public Defender III), and a set of operational

items, including the Hotline infrastructure, website design, contract supervision, legal services coordination, translation services, and communications.

The balance of the project's fourth year budget – \$407,181 – serves to underwrite contracts with Catholic Charities of the East Bay, Immigration Institute of the Bay Area, and Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay, for the provision of removal defense and immigration legal services. This will provide for two full-time Removal Defense Attorneys, two Legal Assistants, including supervision and a set of operational items. Due to the drastic reduction in available funding, Stand Together Contra Costa will no longer be able to fund community engagement and dispatch staffing, meaning we will no longer be able to fund the staffing costs of the four Community Engagement Specialists and dispatchers at our partner CBOs. We are grateful for the

"My family will always trust and be grateful for the work done by Stand Together. With your help, we won our asylum case in 2020, and our lives changed forever. We will never forget that you always remember us and support us. I'm thankful with all of my heart for your constant help." - STCC Client

incredible work of our community engagement partners and Stand Together Contra Costa will forever be indebted to them for truly making this a program that is dedicated to being community-centered. Although we will no longer be able to fund community engagement work due to a steep decline in philanthropic contributions, Bay Area Community Resources and Monument Impact will continue to do the

important work of community engagement and public education and we will continue to collaborate on bringing culturally-responsive immigrant legal defense services to the community in trusted and innovative settings.

VI. FINAL THOUGHTS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Contra Costa County has accomplished an extraordinary collective achievement. Given the intensifying measures being deployed by the federal administration, marked by anti-immigrant rhetoric, confusion, reversals, and national debate, the existence of Stand Together Contra Costa is even more important than ever before. Immigrant families in Contra Costa need access to timely and accurate information about this constantly shifting landscape and access to critical legal due process services should they be at risk of deportation.

As we enter Year 4 of this collective endeavor, we are deeply committed to excellence, transparency, and ongoing partnership between the county and the county's grassroots coalitions, nonprofit and faith-based partners, public agencies, and elected leaders. It is with gratitude, humility, and unwavering dedication that we submit to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors this report on the project's third year.

"I am very thankful for everything you did for us. We had to leave Nicaragua because my wife, daughter and I could no longer be safe, and we arrived here not knowing what was going to happen. The help you provided us was beyond anything we expected, and we are forever grateful for you helping us win asylum and start a new life in the United States." -STCC Client

We look forward to continuing to provide no-cost immigration legal services to immigrant families in Contra Costa County and will continue serving as a key point of contact between Contra Costa County and the thousands of immigrant families in our community. We have built trusted relationships throughout the County and will continue to provide excellent immigration legal services as well as innovative and responsive community engagement partnerships. We hope to continue to build on the many successes of our pilot phase and to continue to serve the community through providing excellent no-cost immigration legal services and community education through Stand Together Contra Costa.