1. *What problem were you addressing?*

AFSC provided supportive case management services to immigrant seniors, including those recently released from ICE detention facilities and clients in our legal services program who need basic services. This support aided immigrant seniors who were otherwise unable to access crucially needed services and public benefits, leading to an improvement in their overall well-being. Aging immigrants face many barriers such as harmful immigration policies, language access and now the effects of the COVID=19 global pandemic. These barriers deter immigrant seniors from utilizing basic services including medical care, food, and Social Security benefits. This population is already at high risk; in our continuing crisis it is crucial that they receive the dedicated support needed to access services.

*What change did you expect to create? What were the desired objectives, outcomes and outputs of the program and progress made toward each during the reporting period?*

Through this project we set these goals to effectively assist twelve new senior immigrants by providing them with at least three services, connecting them to programs and benefits to address their needs. AFSC’s Social Worker Jonnelle Rodriguez was able to achieve most of these goals through several actions. Our original objectives for this project were:

1. At least twelve new senior immigrants will receive services and benefits that improve their quality of life.
2. At least 100 service providers, 50 immigrant seniors, and two agencies serving seniors will increase understanding of immigrant eligibility for public benefits.
3. At least two social service agencies that work with aging populations will obtain information regarding immigrant eligibility for public benefits and issues senior immigrants face, building their overall capacity to better serve their senior immigrant clients.

AFSC’s Social Worker Jonnelle Rodriguez assisted a total of 16 immigrant seniors comprised of six women and ten men from various cultures and countries such as Liberia, Jamaica, Cuba, Honduras and Sudan. Of these 16 seniors, six were new participants and ten were seniors from a previous cycle. These 16 seniors received a total of 41 services from October 2019 to early September 2020, averaging a little over 2.5 services per client. These services included completing benefit applications, making referrals and phone calls for services, client accompaniment and individual advocacy for medical services, mental health services, food access, housing, benefit recertifications and appeals. We unfortunately did not reach our goal of providing case management services to at least 12 new seniors this grant cycle due to unforeseen circumstances stemming from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic caused massive agency closures and suspended services which significantly reduced referrals and increased accessibility issues with seniors because of their severe vulnerability to the virus.

As a method to measure outcomes, AFSC’s Social Worker recorded client data on a case management software and developed and distributed surveys. Our original outcomes for this project were:

1. 50% of senior participants identify that their needs are being met, i.e., they are receiving benefits, healthcare, feel more confident in navigating the system and are becoming self-sufficient.
2. At least 12-20 senior immigrant clients will receive at least three services from AFSC staff including referrals, assistance in applying, accompaniment, and advocacy phone calls to obtain food, health care, housing, Social Security, or other essential benefits or services.
3. Immigrant seniors and social service providers have a better understanding of immigrant eligibility for public benefits and issues facing seniors through AFSC presentations, measured through post-screening evaluations.
4. The majority of our senior clients who have been wrongfully denied benefits or have had their benefits suspended will have those decisions overturned or their benefits restored because of AFSC’s advocacy and support.

To help us evaluate our work AFSC mailed 16 surveys to clients towards the end of this reporting year, 11 surveys were returned. The survey responses revealed that all clients felt their needs were met by the services they received, 10 of the 11 were very satisfied with the services received and all respondents reported the services received provided more stability in their lives. The total value of benefits and services for healthcare access, low-income housing, food access and necessary legal immigration fees that clients received was $79,586.76. Two seniors also received $900 in gift cards from a COVID-19 related grant AFSC received to assist immigrants who were excluded from the Federal Stimulus Package.

Jonnelle conducted a total of nine presentations and webinars where she reached a total of 203 individuals: 110 senior and general service providers, 11 seniors, 45 social workers, 26 social work students, 11 community members. Two of the nine presentations were done through the New Jersey Foundation for the Aging. The first webinar was done in June and the other as a part of their annual conference in August. Each presentation focused on different aspects of working with immigrant seniors and their access to services, especially during the outbreak of COVID-19. Jonnelle was able to connect with several other senior service providers from various agencies to network and support each other. This was imperative in sharing and developing innovative ideas to continue to best serve our clients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some of these outputs were measured through recorded case management data, surveys and client individual stories. Through post-presentation surveys, we learned that 85% of service providers have worked with immigrant clients who have experienced barriers in accessing or obtaining services and benefits and 79% of service providers found the information presented helpful to better understand immigrant eligibility for public benefits and assist their clients.

Many of our seniors who have been provided case management services by AFSC’s social worker have expressed becoming more self-sufficient with the support of this project. Insight through individual stories of clients has revealed that some of our most vulnerable seniors who have experienced some of the worst circumstances are now stable and thriving. Two of our seniors who were at one point homeless have been able to secure and maintain low-income housing, removing a great financial stressor from their lives. Two seniors who received services from this project were incorrectly told that they did not qualify for retirement benefits because of their immigration status. One senior now has retired with a stable income including back pay and the other senior is in the process of acquiring his retirement benefits with Jonnelle’s assistance. Assisting immigrant seniors in navigating benefit systems and helping them acquire benefits and services has provided the foundation needed for the journey to self-sufficiency and stability.

COVID-19 impacted AFSC staff and immigrant seniors’ lives significantly, including by limiting Jonnelle’s ability to identify new senior clients and to support existing ones. Since March, AFSC staff have been directed to work from home. Similarly, our elder clients are at high-risk and confined to their homes. In the first months of the pandemic many government agencies were shut down and there were significant backlogs for services. This put further financial and psychological strains on our community. Despite these limitations, Jonnelle experienced an increased workload and spent much of her time helping clients and others through crisis. This included many situations of seniors not being able to access food, masks and basic household necessities. Jonnelle checked on senior and other clients on regular basis.

3.How did you measure success--both quantitative and qualitative? A chart of objectives, actions, and results is helpful. Include numbers and demographics of people touched by the work. Explain your organization’s efforts toward diversity, equity and inclusion.

AFSC measured quantitative success in the form of post-service surveys, number of completed applications for benefits and services, benefits received and the value of those benefits, presentations completed, and the number of service providers and community members reached. Qualitative success was measured through individual client stories.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Original Objectives | Actions | Results |
| 1. 12 new clients who are senior immigrants will have received public benefits and or community benefits that improve their quality of life. | Served 6 new senior clients and 10 clients from previous year.  Conducted intakes, assessed needs and applied for public benefits or community services.  Provided case management that included completing applications for benefits, accompanying clients to appointments, making referrals, drafting support letters and materials and continued advocacy until benefits were granted. | -Thirteen completed applications for benefits and services.  -Three approvals, one being an appeal, for NJSNAP for a year resulting in food access valued at $4,608.  -Three approvals for health insurance recertification.  -Two approvals for low-income senior/disabled housing recertifications.  -Three approvals for fee waiver assistance for employment authorization documents with a total value of $1485.  -One pending application for Social Security Retirement benefits.  -One pending unemployment application.  -Seven referrals to food distribution sites.  -Seven referrals for other services such as low-cost health clinics, mutual aid and other community resources.  -Twelve phone calls for services  -Two support letters for ICE hearings. |
| 1. At least 100 service providers, 50 immigrant seniors, and two agencies serving seniors will increase understanding of immigrant eligibility for public benefits. | Developed and mailed post- service surveys to current and past senior immigrant clients.  Conducted presentations with up to date eligibility information to service providers who service or work directly with senior immigrants in the community. | A total of 110 service providers from several social services agencies working with immigrants, including the aging population, increased their capacity to serve their immigrant clients through the information discussed and disseminated in AFSC presentations.  100% of clients that completed surveys indicated they felt their needs were met by the services they received.  90% of clients that completed surveys indicated they were very satisfied with the services they received.  !00% of clients that completed surveys reported obtaining a sense of stability after receiving services. |
| 1. At least two social service agencies that work with aging populations will obtain information regarding immigrant eligibility for public benefits and issues senior immigrants face, building their overall capacity to better serve their senior immigrant clients | AFSC’s social worker has conducted nine presentations focused on servicing the immigrant community and working with immigrant seniors. Two of these presentations specifically were through the New Jersey Foundation for the Aging and geared toward senior service providers.  Maintained and updated resource list with dedicated section for senior services available on AFSC Immigrant Rights Program website. | At least 89 service providers from several different senior servicing agencies attended at least two presentations regarding public benefit eligibility and the financial implications immigration policy has on senior immigrants.  85% of service providers have worked with immigrant clients that have experienced barriers in accessing or obtaining services and/or benefits  79% of service providers indicated they felt more knowledgeable about immigrant eligibility for public benefits and better able to provide services to their clients. |

Numbers and Demographics of Clients: Clients are typically Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) from Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, and representative of various communities. Jonnelle managed a caseload of 16 immigrant seniors that was comprised of 10 men and 6 women. Cubans and Jamaicans represented the largest ethnic groups and Spanish was the primary language used amongst these clients. Each client had unique circumstances, some dealing with issues like homelessness, being previously detained in an ICE detention center, chronic health issues and disabilities.

AFSC’s Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: As an organization, AFSC is committed to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion both with its staff and communities we work with. AFSC has developed a policy to guide internal conversation, staff conduct and relationships with constituents and partners. Additionally, AFSC’s newly approved 10-year Strategic Plan reaffirms the organization’s commitment to applying an explicitly anti-oppression framework to all of our work. AFSC’s Immigrant Rights Program strives to hire staff that reflects the diverse immigrant communities we work with and values the experience our community members bring to us and to the larger society.

1. *Please note any collaborations that supported your work and/or ways that you leveraged resources. How did this project engage and empower staff from all levels of your organization?*

Connecting with Melissa Chalker at the New Jersey Foundation for the Aging allowed for more expansive networking among other senior service providers. It also provided more opportunities for continued learning to better assist clients in different capacities. The COVID-19 pandemic also brought more community engagement in the form of mutual aid that benefited AFSC’s clients. Working with some of these mutual aid groups expanded services for some clients who were especially vulnerable when COVID infections were peaking, including immigrant seniors.

The project has continued to engage and empower staff within our organization by creating more awareness of the experience of immigrant seniors and allowing for innovative collaboration efforts within the office.

1. *Please share any unanticipated outcomes or barriers encountered. Indicate any changes in the program’s goals, strategies, personnel or timelines and the reasons behind the changes.*

On February 24, 2020 the public charge rule change was enacted, further barring immigrant access to need-based benefits. The COVID-19 pandemic was a barrier that no one expected or initially knew how to adjust to. The pandemic caused many office closures, extreme delays in processing times for applications and shortages of need-based items and services. This caused a shift of focus on immediate need-based services for clients. Jonnelle focused even more on ensuring that clients had access to food and medical necessities and were up to date on effective methods of protection to prevent exposure to the COVID-19 virus. With the assistance of an intern, Jonnelle was also able to develop a [COVID-19 resource list](https://www.afsc.org/document/covid-19-resources-new-jersey) to share and distribute to clients, service providers and others who called the AFSC office seeking information.

1. *How do you plan to share and replicate your results?*

AFSC’s [benefit directory](https://www.afsc.org/document/covid-19-resources-new-jersey) will continue to be shared with community partners, social service providers and the immigrant community. The directory will be updated at least once this year and made available on AFSC's website. Learnings from experience working with immigrant seniors and through surveys will be incorporated into future presentations and educational materials to be shared with staff, partners and community members.

1. *Include a project financial statement (budget and actual) for the reporting period. Please explain significant variances from the original budget and reasons for the variances (with corrective measures if overages), as well as plans for future sustainability.*

See attached.

1. *Feedback on your interaction with FFA would be helpful. How have we helped? Made it harder? What else can we do to facilitate your work?*

Having in-person and web meetings with Susan was extremely helpful in presenting our work, sharing our experience and brainstorming relevant issues. Susan also provided different helpful trainings and resources that greatly assisted our efforts in serving our seniors.

1. *Additional comments:*