

## **AFSC NJIRP FY22 Final Report to the Friends Foundation for the Aging**

### **1. What problem were you addressing? What solution did you propose to address it?**

During the last several years, immigrants have continued to endure xenophobic and racist policies and treatment in the U.S. The COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, and financial insecurity have exacerbated these hardships and have had a disparate impact on immigrant communities, including seniors. Access to public benefits and supportive programs is often limited for immigrants, particularly those who do not have permanent residence or U.S. citizenship. Many of the seniors supported by AFSC's case management services experience significant challenges in meeting their most basic needs. In response, AFSC helps them access resources that ensure humane living conditions, better treatment, and dignified lives.

During this grant period, AFSC provided case management and support to 11 new and 5 existing immigrant senior clients. These services helped our clients to overcome barriers and improved their access to public benefits that keep them out of poverty and encourage self-sufficiency.

### **2. What actions did you take? What worked and didn't work toward your objectives? Please share any unanticipated benefits or barriers encountered.**

During this grant period, AFSC's Social Worker Jonnelle Tavarez conducted 16 intensive needs assessments with immigrant seniors and collaboratively developed intervention plans to address their individual needs. Case management included locating available resources, completing applications for benefits, making phone calls for benefits and services, accompanying clients to government agencies such as the Social Security Administration, and gathering documents to support applications for accessing benefits. In addition, Jonnelle has continued regularly checking in with immigrant seniors and sharing resources or activities to prevent social isolation.

To increase available resources and support for senior immigrants, Jonnelle conducted four community presentations to the Newark Parent Teacher Association, New Jersey Citizens Action, Community Affairs and Resource Center (CARC), and Monmouth University. Through these presentations, she provided information to 50 service providers on immigrant qualifications for public benefits, changes in policies affecting immigrants, and available services. As part of our commitment to changing the hostile environment and unjust system for immigrants, our Social Work team has conducted outreach to potential partners to identify opportunities for collaboration. We hope to partner with these organizations in the year ahead.

Jonnelle and our social work team have also helped clients apply for the NJ Excluded Workers Fund, which provides much-needed cash assistance for immigrants who did not qualify for federal relief. This helped alleviate some of the financial strain that many of our clients have been experiencing. Our program team has also joined the Protecting Immigrant Families Campaign on the national level and the TANF reform bill campaign on the state level, together

aiming to bring more resources and increase access to public benefits for immigrants, including aging immigrants.

Finally, with state funding from Legal Services of New Jersey and Kids in Need of Defense, we expanded our social work team, which was established, in part, through the generous support of the Friends Foundation for the Aging. With this larger team, we have been able to help more immigrants in need. Additionally, Jonnelle's role has grown to Supervising Social Worker, and she now supervises four other social workers who provided case management services to a total of 100 additional immigrants and their families, including seniors, this year.

The following example of a client from this grant period illustrates the positive impact of case management services on senior immigrants:

A 57-year-old woman originally from Jamaica has received case management services from a member of our social work team. This individual suffered long-term physical and psychological abuse, and she is a survivor of domestic violence at the hands of her ex-husband. When she first became an AFSC client, she was struggling tremendously. Our team was able to get her a work permit, as well as access to basic needs, including housing and food. More recently, we helped her begin therapy with a service provider through our Mental Health Project. Overall, she has gained more stability in her life through the support of AFSC's Immigrant Senior Project.

**3. How did you measure success--both quantitative and qualitative? Please include numbers and demographics of people touched by the work.**

AFSC measures the success of our social work services based on each person's progress toward the goals collaboratively established in their intervention plan. During this grant period, Jonnelle provided supportive case management services to 11 new senior immigrants and 5 seniors from previous years who have continued to receive services. Seniors received a total of 46 services, averaging about 3 services per client.

To gather feedback on clients' satisfaction with the services they received and to determine whether their needs were met, AFSC's social worker distributed a survey to 16 clients, 9 of whom completed it. Close to 90% of respondents reported being very satisfied with the services they received, and 100% of respondents indicated their needs were met.

The population of seniors served was extremely diverse: 56% Latinx and the remaining African, Pacific Islander, and other Caribbean-based ethnic groups. Of the seniors served, 50% identified as male and the other 50% as female. Primary languages included English, Spanish, and French.

<b>Assisted Cases by Country of Origin</b>	
Cuba	3
Cameroon	1
Dominican Republic	3
El Salvador	2
Honduras	1
Jamaica	3
Philippines	2
Togo	1

<b>Assisted Cases by Gender</b>	
Female	8
Male	8
Nonbinary	0
Transgender	0

**4. How did partnerships/collaborations enhance or challenge the project?**

AFSC’s Immigrant Senior Project is the only program in New Jersey that focuses on the needs of immigrant seniors, a group whose stories and experiences are often overlooked. To better serve this population and to lift their voices, concerns, and experiences, Jonnelle and the social work team partner with other agencies that also serve this population.

During this grant period, AFSC’s social work team explored new partnerships with Bridgeway Rehabilitation Services of New Jersey, Mental Health Association of Essex County, Jewish Family Services, and Haven Adolescent Respite, and we anticipate collaborating with some of these organizations to benefit immigrant seniors in the year ahead.

**5. Include a budget and actual for the project during the reporting period**

Please see attached budget to actuals.

**6. What conversations have you had on how to sustain the project after the grant, and do you have plans to share your results with other organizations?**

Thanks to support from the Friends Foundation for the Aging over the last seven years, AFSC has widened our scope of service, built our expertise in the elder services realm in New Jersey, and expanded our team of social workers. Current funding sources for this work include the State of New Jersey (via Kids in Need of Defense and Legal Services of New Jersey), the van Ameringen Foundation, the Friends Foundation for the Aging, and individual donors. While social work, mental health services, and case management services funders are scarce in philanthropy, we continue to vigorously seek funding for this program from other sources.

**7. 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?**

The support FFA has provided has been invaluable to our Immigrant Senior Project. FFA has provided helpful feedback and connections with other senior service-based programs. This relationship has positively impacted our progress in developing this project from the start. We have very much appreciated Susan's thoughtful questions about our work.

**8. Additional comments:** AFSC's NJ Immigrant Rights Program is grateful for FFA's support.