



International  
Institute of  
New England

# Spotlight

## ON LEGAL SERVICES

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## A Message from the CEO

*Am I safe now? How long will I be able to stay here? When can I get a job and start building a life?  
What documents do I need and how do I get them?*



**IMAGINE HOW YOU MIGHT FEEL** arriving in a new country where you don't speak the language and have very little money and few social connections, if any. Imagine how fearful you might

be when talking to an official or signing a document you don't fully understand, unsure if you have made a mistake.

The U.S. immigration system can feel like a high-priced, high-stakes labyrinth—expensive and complex to navigate even for a native speaker. Many newcomers who are already dealing with the trauma of being forced to leave their homes find the maze of rules and applications prohibitive, inaccessible, and fear-inducing.

The majority of individuals and families IINE serves are admitted to the U.S. lawfully but with temporary or restricted legal status, meaning each must go through a series of complicated steps to maintain or continuously adjust their legal status. Most need to work hard to secure legal permission for very basic rights: to reside and work in the U.S.; to reunite with family; to access food and shelter support and healthcare; and to protect themselves from human traffickers.

"Immigrants are eager to stay in the U.S.—their new home—lawfully and permanently, but the legal journey is complex. Your support helps them find a path."

**JEFF THIELMAN, PRESIDENT AND CEO**

Because of your support, more than 2,000 refugees and immigrants receive free, professional services each year from IINE's trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and dedicated legal providers. These are lifesaving services to which they simply would not have access without your generosity—services that turn nightmares into dreams.

This year, in response to a tremendous increase in need, IINE has expanded its legal services to serve more newly arrived families in need of legal protection. Thank you for making it possible for more refugees and immigrants to safely put down roots here and, most importantly, stay.

**Jeffrey Thielman, President and CEO**



**In FY23, IINE's Legal Services team helped 99 legal permanent residents become U.S. citizens**

# The Need

**ACCESSIBLE, PROFESSIONAL LEGAL REPRESENTATION** is a scarce commodity for newcomers to New England. Private immigration attorneys are unaffordable for refugees and low-income immigrants, and attorneys offering pro bono services quickly build long waitlists. Out of desperation, some immigrants turn to unauthorized legal consultants, known as “notarios,” who misrepresent their expertise and take advantage of vulnerable clients. Meanwhile, free legal clinics exist but offer only the most basic support. It is extremely risky for refugees and immigrants to manage complex immigration petitions themselves given their limited English language skills and the very high stakes—including deportation—if errors are made.

Without competent legal services, many newcomers are unable to receive the benefits for which they are eligible, work legally, or in some cases, remain in the country. Over the past year, the need for these services has reached emergency levels. The federal government’s new uses of “parole,” a legal status that allows individuals to come to the U.S.

temporarily for urgent humanitarian reasons, have led to thousands of displaced Afghans, Ukrainians, Haitians, Cubans, Venezuelans, and Nicaraguans needing to find immigration attorneys to apply for more permanent status and to get work authorization as quickly as possible. Legal support is key to stability and self-sufficiency.



## How You Can Help

### DONATE

Contribute funds to keep legal services free for refugee and immigrants who could not otherwise afford them.

### REFER

Let immigrants in need know [about our legal services](#).

### ADVOCATE

Help honor our commitment to welcoming persecuted immigrants by protecting asylum, humanitarian parole, and temporary protected status.

## How IINE Helps

IINE provides culturally responsive, trauma-informed, individualized, free and low-cost legal representation to help refugees and immigrants secure:

- Legal access to public benefits to which clients are eligible, including food, cash assistance, and healthcare
- Authorization to work legally
- Long-term protection to stay in the U.S.
- Family reunification
- Specialized legal support for children who cross into the U.S. unaccompanied, and for survivors of human trafficking, gender-based violence, and other crimes



IINE’s professional legal services help refugees and immigrants to access public benefits, work, reunite with family, and stay in the U.S. legally

## Impact Numbers

### IN FY23 IINE:

- Represented **2,515** legal clients
- Helped **99** legal permanent residents become U.S. citizens
- Supported **151** clients in getting Green Cards, including 81 Afghan evacuees
- Helped **249** immigrants become authorized to work



# Cause for Joy: IINE Staff Become Citizens

**JEROME CHARLESTON, Case Specialist, came to the U.S. from Haiti in 2016** “I would like to express my sincere thank you to IINE for the professionalism, patience, and support with my case. I don’t know how, when, what I would have done without them during the last five years of dealing with these very stressful cases. My children and I admire their candor, composure, and most of all, excellent representation from Green Card to citizenship in 2023.”

**ATANUR ARAPOGLU, Director of IT, came to the U.S. from Turkey in 2001** “At long last, I am officially a U.S. citizen! I have the highest gratitude for this incredible privilege, and I would like to thank everyone who has supported me throughout this long process. I would like to thank [IINE Department of Justice Accredited Representative] Ashley Wellbrock, my long-time dear friend, and my council for guiding me through this process and accompanying me on the day of my citizenship interview.”



Safeena Niazi, an immigrant from Afghanistan and member of IINE's Legal Services team, who recently became a U.S. citizen with the support of Senior Director of Legal Services Chiara St. Pierre

**ANCA MORARU, Chief Program Officer, came to the U.S. from Romania in 2003** “It is a dream come true and I am very thankful. It has been a 20-year-long journey, but it was all worth it at the end.”

**SAFEENA NIAZI, Case Specialist, came to the U.S. from Afghanistan in 2017** “[IINE Senior Director of Legal Services] Chiara [St. Pierre]

was my attorney for citizenship and accompanied me to the citizenship interview at USCIS. Even though I’m part of the legal team at IINE, I don’t normally assist with citizenship, so this was all very new to me, and I needed to prepare for the civics exam. The legal team provided me with materials and guidance to help me prepare for the test, for which I am truly grateful. Becoming a U.S. citizen is just the beginning of a new journey where I will play a vital role in shaping the future of this great nation. I am excitedly looking forward to casting my vote in federal, state, and local elections.”

## Expanding the Team

Over the past several months, IINE has expanded its Legal Services department from four staff members to twelve, adding attorneys and legal support staff to help thousands of families who are living in emergency shelters to apply for work authorization and asylum. With authorization, families can enter the workforce and build incomes that can support more permanent housing. In partnership with case specialists, legal staff help clients take steps to exit shelters securely and sustainably.

## Key Terms & Services

### LEGAL STATUS

**U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES (USCIS):** USCIS is the federal department that oversees lawful immigration to the U.S. IINE helps clients through the citizenship application process including representing them at their naturalization interviews.

**ASYLUM:** Asylum is a legal status granted to individuals who, once in the U.S., have proven that they have suffered persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution in their home countries. IINE helps asylees obtain their Green Cards and finds representation for clients seeking asylum.

### TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS (TPS):

IINE helps eligible clients secure TPS which allows federally designated residents, who were born outside of the U.S. and are not citizens, to temporarily remain in the U.S. while it is deemed unsafe to return to their country of origin. In recent years, IINE held special legal clinics to help hundreds of Afghans secure TPS.

**RE-PAROLE:** Parole is a legal status that allows individuals to come to the U.S. temporarily for urgent humanitarian reasons. IINE helps eligible clients to renew this status so they can remain in the U.S.

### DOCUMENTS

**REFUGEE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:** IINE helps refugees and asylees secure the documents needed to leave the U.S. for travel and then legally reenter the U.S.

**GREEN CARDS:** Green Cards are proof of “legal permanent residence.” IINE helps secure Green Cards for refugees and asylees and processes family and marriage-based Green Cards and renewals.

**SPECIAL VISAS:** A visa is an endorsement on a passport indicating that the holder is allowed to enter, leave, or stay in a country for a specified period of time. IINE helps to secure special visas for survivors of human trafficking, gender-based violence, and other crimes.



# Uwezo's Story

**A REFUGEE FROM THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**, Uwezo was fearful of coming to the U.S. "When you come to this country it scares you. When I left home, I was like, where will I get my passport when I get to the U.S.? Which papers will I need?"

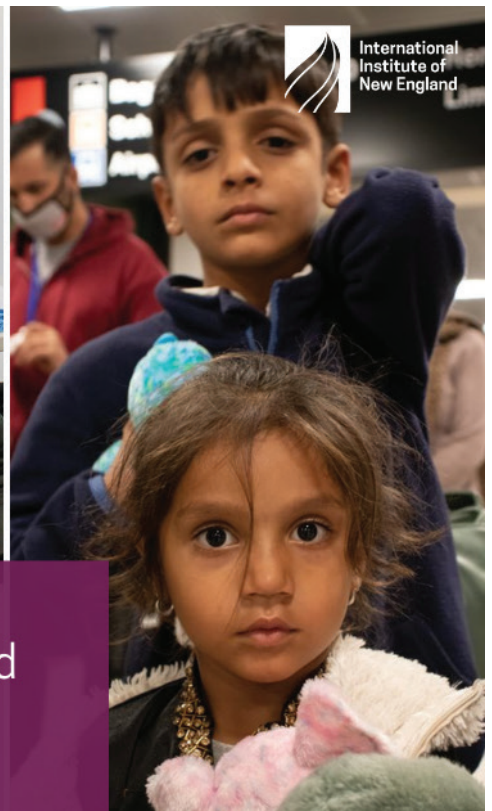
Thankfully, as soon as Uwezo found IINE, those fears dissipated: "IINE provided everything." In 2017, IINE resettled Uwezo and helped him embark on the process of obtaining citizenship. He enrolled in IINE's ESOL classes, where he excelled, and with the help of IINE's skills training and employment services, he quickly found work and advanced to higher positions.

Uwezo was grateful for the support and proud of his achievements, but it wasn't all easy: "It was hard living alone without a family." IINE helped Uwezo get a Green Card so he could return home to see his loved ones. "[IINE] made me feel like...you can conquer anything." In 2022, with IINE's support, Uwezo achieved his ultimate goal: becoming a citizen. "The International Institute, they really, really did a great job...It's not easy if you try to do it on your own...but they find a way to make everything easier."



IINE Department of Justice Accredited Representative Ashley Wellbrock (L) with legal services clients Uwezo and Bahati, who recently welcomed their baby boy: "A new American!"

Uwezo soon celebrated his new status as a U.S. citizen with his wife, Bahati, who was able to join him in the U.S. The happy couple recently welcomed their first child: "A new American!"



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## Is Humanitarian Parole Humane?

Behind an Immigration Status That Has Created Uncertainty for Forcibly Displaced Immigrants

VIRTUAL TOWN HALL | MARCH 27, 2024 | 4-5 PM



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