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Helping Lawyers Help Community



Amanda Pfeiffer

**Lone Star Legal Aid
Houston, TX**

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**Texas Access to
Justice Foundation**

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SIX-MONTH FELLOWSHIP UPDATE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Amanda is providing family law services to refugee families, trafficking victims, and immigrant victims of domestic violence who are seeking protective orders and divorces from their abuser and custody of their minor children.

NEED ADDRESSED BY PROJECT

Many families seeking assistance from immigration legal aid organizations are also simultaneously in need of family law services like adoption, divorce, and custody of minor children. This is particularly evident in Violence Against Women Act applications where an immigrant victim of domestic violence is seeking to obtain legal status in the United States while simultaneously seeking a protective order or divorce from her abusive US citizen spouse and custody of any minor children. In establishing and growing a direct referral program between Lone Star Legal Aid and local immigration legal aid organizations, this project promotes access to justice by holistically meeting the legal needs of two vulnerable populations in our city: the refugee resettling in Houston and the immigrant victim of domestic violence.

HIGHLIGHTS TO DATE

In the first six months, Amanda has:

- Provided legal services to over 50 immigrant victims of domestic violence, and developed direct referral programs with numerous local immigration legal aid organizations
- Provided advice and brief service to more than 40 immigrant victims of domestic violence regarding their right to apply for a Protective Order and the process for filing for divorce and custody of minor children in Texas
- Undertaken full representation of 13 immigrant clients on family law matters, including termination of parental rights, designation of guardianship, protective orders, divorce and custody
- Met with numerous local immigration legal aid organizations and local law schools to inform the legal community of assistance available at Lone Star Legal Aid
- Developed a direct referral program with Lawyers Against Human Trafficking to specifically assist minor victims of trafficking in obtaining Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

WHAT'S NEXT

In the next six months, Amanda plans to:

- Expand outreach efforts to local shelters caring for undocumented victims of violence
- Continue to develop relationships and direct referral programs with other local legal aid organizations to pool resources and holistically meet the needs of Houston's vulnerable immigrant population
- Continue direct representation, outreach, and education efforts