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Amanda Pfeiffer

**Lone Star Legal Aid
Houston, TX**

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ONE-YEAR FELLOWSHIP UPDATE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Amanda provides family law services to refugees, human trafficking victims, and immigrant domestic violence victims who are seeking protective orders and divorces from their abuser and custody of their children.

NEED ADDRESSED BY PROJECT

Many families seeking assistance from immigration legal aid organizations are simultaneously in need of family law services for help with adoption, divorce, and child custody. This is particularly evident in Violence Against Women Act applications in which immigrant domestic violence victims are seeking legal status in the United States while also seeking a protective order or divorce from their abusive U.S.-citizen spouse and custody of any children. Establishing and growing a direct referral program between Lone Star Legal Aid and local immigration legal aid organizations will help to holistically meet the legal needs of both refugees resettling in Houston and the immigrant victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.

HIGHLIGHTS TO DATE

In the first year, Amanda has:

- Provided advice and brief service to nearly 70 immigrant domestic violence victims, supporting their right to apply for a protective order and file for divorce and child custody in Texas
- Undertaken full representation of nearly 40 immigrant clients on family law matters, parental rights termination, guardianship designation, protective orders, divorce and child custody
- Developed a direct referral program with Catholic Charities Center for Immigration Assistance, YMCA International, Kids in Need of Defense, and Casa Juan Diego Shelter

WHAT'S NEXT

In the next year, Amanda plans to:

- Expand outreach efforts to local organizations serving Houston's refugee community
- Focus on pursuing the family law component of Special Immigrant Juvenile status cases with the influx of undocumented children crossing the border
- Continue to develop relationships and direct referral programs with other local legal aid organizations to combine resources and meet the needs of Houston's vulnerable immigrant population