Putting Out the Welcome Mat: The Power of Citizenship to Connect Communities

April 13, 2016

The webinar will begin shortly. If you experience a problem signing on, please contact the Webex Technical Support Line at 1-866-229-3239 for direct assistance.

The Welcoming Refugees Project is supported by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR/ACF/DHHS)
Today’s Speakers

Leya Speasmaker
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc

Susan Downs-Karkos, Welcoming America

Homa Naficy
Hartford Public Library

Stephanie Ali
New American Pathways
Session Objectives

By the end of this webinar participants will:

• Understand the importance of citizenship to new Americans and receiving communities

• Apply new strategies for incorporating receiving communities for greater impact

• Learn how to collaborate with community partners to strengthen citizenship work

• Recognize the role of legal services in their communities
Agenda

• Understanding the Importance of Citizenship
  Leya Speasmaker, Field Support Coordinator & Integration Program Manager, CLINIC

• Receiving Community Engagement and Citizenship
  Susan Downs-Karkos, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Welcoming America

• Promising Example: Hartford Public Library Immigration & Citizenship Program
  Homa Naficy, Chief Adult Learning Officer

• Promising Example: New American Pathways
  Stephanie Ali, Communications and Policy Coordinator

• Moderated Discussion

• Resources and Call to Action
Understanding the Importance of Citizenship

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.
Citizenship Benefits

- Full Civic Participation
- Right to Vote
- More Employment and Educational Opportunities
- Derivative Citizenship for Children
- Travel Benefits
- Protection from Deportation
- Right to Immigrate Family Members
- Preservation of Social Security Income (SSI) benefits
Results from Increased Rates of Citizenship

Civic, economic and linguistic integration can lead to:

• More families invested in the community
• More families volunteering and serving
• Better representation in civic leadership positions
• More income and property taxes paid
• Increased parental involvement in schools
• More voters
Potential Barriers in Applying for Citizenship

Reasons refugees and immigrants might not apply:

• Cost
• Perception of a process that may seem imposing or complex
• Lack of understanding of the eligibility requirements
• Lack of culturally appropriate services
• Citizenship can occur 5 years after arrival
• Ability to access authorized legal services
Reminders about Authorized Legal Service Provision

• Citizenship applications are complex

• The wrong help can hurt

• Notarios cannot provide legal immigration services

• Citizenship applicants should always consult with an immigration attorney or a BIA Recognized agency with Accredited staff members
Important Roles for the Receiving Community in the Citizenship Application Process

- Provide facts and resources about citizenship
- Provide support and encouragement throughout the process
- Offer ESL and Citizenship test preparation classes
- Offer authorized legal immigration services
- Offer referrals to authorized providers or to outside classes
- Serve as a bridge to the receiving community
Citizenship and the Receiving Community

Welcoming America
The Benefits to Citizenship Programs

• Improved community climate, where immigrants feel more welcomed and participate civically
• Increased local visibility of program and achievements
• Strengthened program credibility, new champions
• Ability to attract additional resources
• Improved participant outreach and demand for citizenship services
Receiving Communities Approaches

LEADERSHIP

CONTACT

COMMUNICATIONS

RECEIVING COMMUNITIES
A Transformation Experience

“I’ve learned a lot through this volunteer experience about what people from different countries are really like. These are the kindest, warmest people I’ve met.”

– Gerald Spence, Volunteer

“I want to thank Laura in a special way. She offered her time to prepare me for a second interview[...] I really feel American now [that I am a citizen].”

– Saba, Refugee Participant
Building Meaningful Connections

- Recruit volunteers from a broader range of backgrounds
- Consider a citizenship mentoring component
- Consider classroom activities that engage the receiving community
- Nurture your volunteers and help them share their experiences broadly
Engaging Mainstream Leaders

• Consider local leaders from diverse sectors

• Engage in the classroom, at citizenship events

• Have a strategy for ongoing engagement and communication

Photo Credit: Welcoming Colorado, City of Beaverton
Incorporating Communication Strategies

• Share stories of New Americans and their volunteers

• Engage local media

• Consider citizenship ceremonies a golden communications opportunity

• Use photos and stories in your other collateral
Promising Example: Immigration & Citizenship Program

Hartford Public Library
Partner

Find a USCIS Field Office near you
http:www.uscis.org

Contact the Community Relations Officer

Other partners will vary depending on location and enhancements
- Library
- Park
- City Hall
- The Capitol

Photo Credit: Grand Canyon National Park
Location/Space

- Security
- Court set up
- Seating
  - Candidates
  - Candidates’ friends & family
  - Speakers
- Voter registrar
- Children activities
- Presentation of the colors (seating)
- Choir (seating)
- Passport services
- Reception
Select a date

What do you want to highlight?
A date, a theme, a person?

- Constitution Day (September 17)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Flag day (June 14)
- Welcoming Week (Week of Sept. 17)
- World Refugee Day (June 20)
- Adoption Month (October)
- Library Week (April 10 – 16)
Speakers

• Master of Ceremonies - USCIS field officer

• Opening welcoming and closing remarks

• Keynote

• Pledge of Allegiance
Enhancements

• Choir/singer
• Presentation of the colors
• Gifts / favors
• Flag Bunting
• Reception
Promising Example

New American Pathways
A Path to Citizenship

• Our office includes three BIA accredited immigration specialists, who process over 280 permanent residency applications and 230 citizenship applications per year.

• Through a new grant from USCIS, in partnership with Literacy Action, we will increase applications by 100 over the next two years.

• Literacy Action will focus on civics and English language tutoring to help improve passage of citizenship exam for applicants.
Citizenship – Critical Partnerships

• Welcoming Atlanta – city has placed “Citizenship Corners” in all public libraries and recreation centers

• Latin American Association and GALEO – educating and encouraging communities on citizenship benefits and access, host Citizenship Day annually to process hundreds of files
Voter Registration & Engagement

• In partnership with ProGA coalition, work at USCIS ceremonies, local sites (like MARTA stations, temples, etc) and festivals to register new Americans to vote

• All newly-registered voters given take-home info about voting in Georgia

• Get Out the Vote effort includes mailed letters before election dates, partnering with organizations for door-to-door campaigns
Educating New Citizens

• Advocacy education – Hosted first in series of Advocacy 101 workshops for ethnic community leaders to better educate their communities in advocating for themselves

• Day at the Capitol – Annual New Americans Celebration at the State Capitol invites new Americans to learn and practice outreach with elected officials

• Localized Education Events – Goals for 2016 include specialized events for communities within their places of worship, How-To workshops for voting and Government 101
How to Get Started

Learn more about citizenship requirements ([https://www.uscis.gov/](https://www.uscis.gov/))

Volunteer in a citizenship test preparation program or ESL Program

Serve as a conversation partner (check your local library)

Ensure your library has a Citizenship Corner

Attend a citizenship oath ceremony

Moderated Discussion
Citizenship Navigator Project

This free program is designed especially for refugee resettlement staff

Citizenship Navigators receive:
- A dedicated hotline for answering questions about citizenship and BIA Recognition and Accreditation applications
- Trainings on citizenship and how to offer authorized legal immigration services
- Dedicated assistance for BIA Recognition and Accreditation applications
- Training materials on citizenship to use in your local community
- Access to a nationwide texting campaign providing information on citizenship to refugees and asylees

Sign up for information and notifications at cliniclegal.org/citizenshipnavigator
Resources

CLINIC Resources
• Citizenship Toolkit: https://cliniclegal.org/clinic_toolkit/citizenship
• Creating a Citizenship Test Preparation Program: https://cliniclegal.org/resources/comprehensive-citizenship-preparation-program-toolkit
• Partnership Toolkit: https://cliniclegal.org/resources/toolkits/partnership-toolkit

Federal Government Resources
• BIA R&A Roster: https://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognition-accreditation-roster-reports
• Find an ESL or Citizenship Test Preparation class: https://my.uscis.gov/findaclass
Contact Information

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Photo Credit: US Marine Corps
Recorded Webinars & Other Resources

www.welcomingrefugees.org
New Resource: Volunteer Recruitment Video

WELCOMING WEEK

September 16-25, 2016

Soccer Without Borders

Kentucky Refugee Ministries

BUILDING A NATION OF NEIGHBORS
Repair the World - APRIL 15-30, 2016

http://werepair.org/passover/
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