NATIONAL IMMIGRANT JUSTICE CENTER
A HEARTLAND ALLIANCE PROGRAM

ASYLUM PROJECT INTAKE QUESTIONS

Conducting thorough and accurate asylum intakes is of critical importance to NIJC and our clients. The notes you take in an intake will guide our case acceptance decision and help us determine whether a potential asylum-seeker can obtain pro bono representation through NIJC.

Interviewing your client

- Start your interview inquiring about the **potential client's immigration history**.
  - Previous entries into and exists from the United States, including deportations;
  - Past visas and interviews at U.S. Consulates and Embassies;
  - Interviews at the border with immigration agents;
  - Previous immigration court hearings;
  - Any immigration applications previously submitted;
  - Any time in immigration detention
- Inquire about the potential client's **family members** and where they are located. Do they have any status in the United States? Have they ever been to the United States? After the intake, you must open a database account for spouse and children who are in the United States and are not U.S. citizens and associate the client's case with their cases in the database.
  - If conducting an intake with an unaccompanied child, obtain the necessary information to track potential adverse parties.
- Inquire about the **potential client's background**. The most important questions in this topic are the places where the client resided (if the client ever resided outside of his/her country of origin inquire what status he/she held in that country), education, employment history and groups or organizations that the potential client participated in.
- Ask the potential client if he/she can explain **what happened in the home country that made him/her leave the country**.
  - Potential clients will tell their stories in different ways. Some people will require the interviewer to ask more questions because they are more guarded or have difficulty organizing their story lines. Don't be afraid to interrupt if you were not able to fully understand parts of the story. It is important that you control the intake. **If you have a question about the story or there are logical follow up questions, be sure to ask. Chances are the intake reviewer will have the same questions you do.**
  - Ask **who** tried to harm, harmed, insulted or threatened the client.
  - Ask **why** the potential client thinks this person/organization did that.
  - Ask if the potential client **reported the persecution to the police**. If not, why? If yes, what happened?
  - Ask if the potential client is **afraid of returning** to his/her country.
  - If you are interviewing a child ask about his/her relationship with parents: did both parents help with expenses, did the child have a relationship with both parents, how was the relationship?
- After the potential client has told you his/her story, ask (unless already covered by the prior questions):

- Has anyone ever made you feel uncomfortable or ever harmed you or threatened to harm you because of your **religion**?
- Has anyone ever made you feel uncomfortable or ever harmed you or threatened to harm you because of your **nationality**?
- Has anyone ever made you feel uncomfortable or ever harmed you or threatened to harm you because of your **political opinion**?
- Has anyone ever made you feel uncomfortable or ever harmed you or threatened to harm you **because you dated or liked someone of the same sex**? (In intakes with children and some adults, you can phrase this in other ways such as "has anyone ever made fun of you because you were different or because you liked a boy or a girl in school?")
- Has your **boyfriend or girlfriend, partner or spouse ever made you feel unsafe, insulted, harmed or threatened you** in any way?

- Journey to the United States
  - How did the potential client make the trip? If the potential client had layovers, note them.
  - Did he/she pay for a guide/ coyote?
  - Did someone ask the potential client to carry anything for them?
  - Did someone hurt or try to hurt them in any way when they were coming into the United States?
- Life in the United States
  - Has the client had any interactions with the police (arrests, traffic tickets, imprisonment)? Has he/she ever called the police or been the victim of any crimes?
  - How is the current living situation? With whom does the potential client live; does he/she have to pay for shelter and food; can he/she come and go when he/she wants, does he/she have access to his/her documents?
- Ask if the potential client wants to tell you anything else that you have not asked.
- Review all potential client **documents**:
  - Passports **– go through all stamps and visas** with the potential client and write explanations in the database for all of them.
  - Collect all documents that immigration officers gave the potential client upon release from detention including, but not limited to: Notices to Appear, Release on Recognizance, Parole Cards, Credible Fear Interview transcripts.
  - Any documents that may support the claim.
  - In identification documents (birth certificates, etc.)
  - **If potential client has applied to asylum before, ask for the application and all receipts and decisions that client received**. If potential client has ever filed any other applications, such as for employment authorization, ask for the application and receipts as well.
- Do not make paper copies of the documents; please scan everything and confirm the scan has gone through before the client leaves. **You must return all of the original documents to the client.**
- Reserve a few minutes at the end of the intake to transition to a topic unrelated to the potential client's asylum case, such as school, the weather or an upcoming holiday. Remind the client that someone from NIJC will be in touch with the client in the next few weeks and that it's crucial the client return our calls within 48 hours.

At the end of the interview

- Make sure your notes are organized and check for typos. For clients in removal proceedings, call EOIR at 1-800-898-7180 and check for upcoming hearing dates.
- Add your intake notes to the database using "add staff time".
    - Save a copy of the client's documents in the client's folder on the M: drive and upload the documents to the database using the following format: First Name LAST NAME_intake documents_date. If there are too many documents to upload in one package, add an additional label to specify which intake documents are in each packet (e.g., government documents; identity documents; police reports; etc.).
- Open any derivative cases necessary.
- Double check that all information in the database is correct, especially A number and date of entry.
- Send an email to the pro bono coordinator telling her you completed an intake and uploaded your notes and client's documents to the database.