

**San Mateo County Immigrant Forum**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**4/15/2021**

**1. Welcome & Introductions – Immigrant Services Team**

- a. Thank you to all for joining us on Zoom. The Immigrant Forum will be held virtually until further notice.

**2. USCIS Updates: Jesse Castro, Community Relations Officer**

- a. Increased flexibility for responding to requests for information/evidence
  - Additional 60 days past the deadline if the letter was issued between March 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021
- b. DHS withdrew Proposed Rule for Affidavit of Support on March 9
  - Form I-944 no longer is required with adjustment of status cases and has been discontinued
- c. DHS published a notice extending & re-designating Syria for TPS for 18 months, effective March 31, 2021- Sept. 30, 2022
- d. Starting last month on 3/9, Venezuelan nationals in the US are now eligible to apply for Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- e. USCIS has reverted to the previous 2008 civics test
  - Naturalization applicants at their interviews will be answering questions from 2008 civics test; the new 2020 test is gone
- f. These forms are available online to file electronically:
  - I-90, Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card
  - I-130, Petition for Alien Relative
  - I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status
  - N-400, Application for Naturalization
  - N-336, Request for a Hearing on a Decision in Naturalization Proceedings
  - N-565, Application for Replacement of Naturalization/Citizenship certificate
  - N-600/K, Application for Citizenship and Issuance of Certificate Under Section 322
  - AR-11, Alien's Change of Address Card
  - G-639, Freedom of Information/Privacy Act and Online FOIA Request
- g. There are mask mandates across all DHS offices, regardless if the policy isn't being enforced locally

**3. Legal Updates: Alison Kamhi, Supervising Attorney, ILRC**

- a. In the USCIS Policy Manual, the word "alien" was removed
- b. The "Blank Space" Policy was rescinded
  - Background: DHS would reject applications previously if applicants did not write "N/A" or "None" as answers to questions that did not apply to them
  - Many more applications will be processed due to the rescission of this rule
- c. A win for asylum
  - Gender is a basis for asylum, as a case in the 9<sup>th</sup> circuit just proved
  - Previous administration had declared gender was not
- d. Update to influx of youth at the border

- Moffett Field in Mountain View, CA is no longer under consideration to house minors temporarily in the barracks
  - The unaccompanied minors are being spread to sites nationwide
- e. Q/A
- Q: What is the average waiting time for citizenship interviews right now?
- A: The whole cycle time is taking about 12-14 months right now (from the time someone applies to the time someone becomes a citizen). If outside of 14 months, email USCIS.
- Q: If an applicant has an expired passport, can they still apply for Venezuelan TPS?
- A: Yes, an affidavit *may* be able to be used instead. Call Legal Aid as they are working with low-income Venezuelan residents in San Mateo County to help them apply.

#### 4. The Big Lift Inspiring Summers Program Presentation: Kathryn Wiszowaty, San Mateo County Libraries

- a. See PowerPoint and flyer for more information

#### 5. Office of Community Affairs Updates

- a. The Immigrant Services team is currently mapping out the Gateways for Growth Subcommittee framework for the Immigrant Integration Strategic Plan
  - Asking for Immigrant Forum members to be involved in the 5 subcommittees
- b. Canvassing efforts are taking place weekly in different cities/towns in San Mateo County to help spread the word on local pop-up neighborhood vaccination sites
  - To be added to the canvassing volunteer list, please email [jllamas@smcgov.org](mailto:jllamas@smcgov.org) or fill out this form: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe9zhvQHcQDSAAhnTUDM-vLz6cFpvLaUW6B1bIPtN6Iij-MuQ/viewform>
- c. To be added to the weekly Communications Calendar our office creates for COVID-19 related posts and graphics, email [mgosch@smcgov.org](mailto:mgosch@smcgov.org)
- d. Our office is seeking people to participate in our COVID-19 Community Campaign and send us videos relaying any topics related to COVID (i.e. testing, face coverings, vaccine, social distancing, etc.)
- e. The Community Crew continues to distribute masks 4 times a week to high COVID-19 positivity rate locations
  - Follow @SMC\_CommAffairs on IG/Twitter to see all locations
- f. The Immigrant Services team continues to host the monthly virtual Provider Spotlight Series every second Wednesday of the month at 5pm on the County of San Mateo's Facebook. We just hosted Immigration last night
  - May will cover AAPI-focused organizations to celebrate AAPI Month

#### 6. Agency Update Roundtable

- a. **Catholic Charities:** Not handling TPS cases until July
- b. **Latino Collaborative:** *Sana, Sana, Colita de Rana* virtual event postponed until June