The Role of Public Libraries in Naturalization

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*The PowerPoint slides will be emailed to attendees after the webinar.*
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Overview

• Why partner with libraries?
• What can libraries offer?
• What’s required for a successful partnership?
• Challenges
• Models
• Resources
Survey Questions

1. Please describe your organization (immigration legal service provider, other service provider, library, other)

2. Does your program currently enjoy a partnership with a local library?

3. Are you interested in resources from CLINIC on how to promote immigrant integration within your agency and community?
Why partner with libraries?

"Public libraries in the United States have a long history of providing resources and education to immigrants. This tradition may be traced to Andrew Carnegie’s support for public libraries as a place for immigrant self-education, enlightenment, and the study of democracy and English.”

- Library services for immigrants: A report on current practices (USCIS, 2006)
Why partner with libraries?

• More than 55% of new Americans use the public library at least once a week
• Libraries are perceived as a neutral gathering place, attracting many people
• Libraries are a trusted source of community information
• Overlapping missions – library mission typically to build/strengthen community, share information
What can libraries offer?

- Space for classes or workshops
- A “Citizenship Corner” with outreach materials
- Referrals
- Outreach to new groups and locales
- A convenient, accessible location
- Coordination of services
- Supplies (textbooks, equipment, technology)
- Volunteers
What’s required for a successful partnership?

• Staffing/coordination
• Clear roles and responsibilities – MOU
• Regular communication
• Funding/financial support
• Shared goals/interests
• Proximity (to both immigrants and your office)
• Flexibility (on fees or other challenges)
USCIS Office of Citizenship

Our Mission

- Promote instruction and training on citizenship rights and responsibilities
- Provide federal leadership, tools, and resources to foster immigrant integration
- Engage and support partner organizations in their integration efforts
Why partner with public libraries?

- Welcoming spaces
- Convenient locations
- Public Internet access
- Librarians act as information navigators (both inside and outside the library)
- Popular resource for immigrants
  
  ➢ More than 55% of people who immigrated to the U.S. within the last 15 years use the public library at least once per week
Common Questions Heard in Public Libraries…

- Where can I find immigration forms?
- How can I check my case status?
- Where can I find English and/or citizenship classes?
- How do I apply for a green card?
- How do I apply for U.S. citizenship?
- What study tools are available for the naturalization test?
- How can I find legal assistance?
USCIS-IMLS Partnership

- USCIS formed a partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences (IMLS)
- Goal is to provide immigration and citizenship information at public libraries

June 29, 2013: Former USCIS Director Alejandro Mayorkas and IMLS Director Susan Hildreth sign a formal agreement
USCIS-IMLS Partnership

**Key Focus Areas:**

- Tailored training opportunities for librarians
- Dissemination of immigration and citizenship education materials to libraries
- Hold citizenship information sessions and naturalization ceremonies in local libraries
- Partner to combat the unauthorized practice of immigration law
- Dedicated page for libraries on the Citizenship Resource Center
USCIS-IMLS Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2014

- 5 webinars provided for library audiences
- 73 naturalization ceremonies held in public libraries
- 212 naturalization information sessions held in public libraries with 4,023 individuals in attendance
- 1770 individuals registered for the Updates on the IMLS Initiative email registry
- USCIS staff attended 8 library related conferences, leading sessions and distributing materials
- A dedicated web page for libraries and a page on Citizenship Corners [http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/organizations/libraries](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/organizations/libraries)
Partnerships with Cities

- USCIS signed Letters of Agreement with three U.S. cities to promote citizenship
- Cities: Los Angeles, Chicago, Nashville
- Working with public libraries is central to these partnerships
Partnerships with Cities

Key Activities:

- Training for library personnel
- Distributing citizenship materials
- Setting up Citizenship Corners
- Referral list of naturalization assistance providers
- Working with non-profits to hold citizenship and English language classes, application assistance, and info sessions in library community rooms

Brighton Park Library, Chicago, Illinois
Courtesy of the Chicago Public Library
What is a Citizenship Corner?

- Designated space in the library where immigrants can find information and resources on becoming a U.S. citizen

- May include:
  - Citizenship test preparation materials
  - Information about the naturalization process
  - Information about relevant community resources
  - English teaching materials
Using Community Space in Libraries

• Talk to libraries about using their space for:

  ➢ Citizenship classes and English language classes
  ➢ Naturalization application workshops
  ➢ Information sessions for the public about the naturalization process and requirements
  ➢ Naturalization ceremonies
How to Approach Libraries

• Talk to the central administration office for your local library system, rather than the local branch.

• Explain to the main librarian how your services/event will help the library and the public.

• To reach out to a new library, ask a librarian you're familiar with to put you in contact with someone there.

• Contact your local USCIS Community Relations Officer for guidance.
USCIS Web Resources for Libraries

Through its partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), USCIS is providing libraries with information, educational materials, and training resources on immigration and citizenship. This collaboration is founded on the idea that libraries play a critical role in serving immigrant communities. Through our joint effort with IMLS, we plan to educate librarians, and in turn their immigrant customers, on topics ranging from naturalization, the unauthorized practice of immigration law, and the importance of digital literacy.

**USCIS/IMLS Partnership Goals**

- Provide citizenship and other immigration-related educational materials to libraries.
- Offer training opportunities for librarians on a variety of immigration topics.
- Host USCIS naturalization information sessions and administrative naturalization ceremonies in libraries.
- Check out the list of naturalization information sessions at libraries throughout the country. If you are interested in hosting a similar session at your library, contact your local USCIS Community Relations Officer.

[http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/organizations/libraries](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/organizations/libraries)
USCIS Email Updates

• Sign up for the USCIS-IMLS email list at www.uscis.gov.
• Select ‘Get Email Updates’ in the upper left hand corner.
USCIS Email Updates

- Under Outreach, select ‘Updates from USCIS-IMLS’.

- Genealogy
  - USCIS History Library

**Citizenship**

- Citizenship
- Citizenship Resource Center

**Outreach**

- Updates from the USCIS Public Engagement Division
  Invitations for all upcoming national stakeholder engagements and notification of all documents available for public comment.

- Updates from USCIS Intergovernmental Affairs
  Invitations for upcoming IGA stakeholder engagements and messages for our intergovernmental partners (federal, state, local, and tribal).

- Updates from USCIS-IMLS
  USCIS and the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) are working to strengthen the relationships between local libraries and USCIS in an effort to provide immigration information and educational tools to assist librarians serving immigrant communities. Register with this topic to receive invitations and updates on USCIS-IMLS.
How to get involved

- Contact your local library!
- Visit the USCIS Citizenship Resource Center’s library page under the Organizations tab at www.uscis.gov/citizenship
- Subscribe to the IMLS newsletter (Primary Source) at www.imls.gov/signup.aspx
- Visit the USCIS-IMLS partnership page at www.imls.gov/about/serving_new_americans.aspx
- Register for the USCIS free email alert service at www.uscis.gov/citizenship and click on “Email Updates”
- Contact your local USCIS Community Relations Officer
Questions?
About this Presentation

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Program Models

• Catholic Migration Services of Brooklyn, NY
• Catholic Charities of Worcester, MA
• Hartford Public Library, CT
Resources

• USCIS page on libraries:
  http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/organizations/libraries

• Institute of Museum and Library Services page on serving new Americans:
  http://www.imls.gov/about/serving_new_americans.aspx

• CLINIC toolkit on partnerships:
  https://cliniclegal.org/resources/toolkits/partnership-toolkit

• CLINIC’s new Center for Immigrant Integration:
  https://cliniclegal.org/resources/immigrant-integration
CLINIC Subscription

• Provides assistance with BIA R&A application process
• Discounted registration fees for trainings
• Access to attorney hotline for case consultations
• More information: http://cliniclegal.org/subscribers
Thank you for learning with us!

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Stay involved, build your expertise, and empower your community.

For the latest immigration happenings, CLINIC trainings, and newest resources, we invite you to sign up for e-news updates.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter, visit our homepage for featured blogs and resources, and check our calendar of events to stay informed.

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