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This was a great year and I am excited to share our growth with the community. Last year began the first time that Step Forward was selected for a grant from CalOES as the direct recipient to provide legal services to victims of crime. This major grant allowed us to triple our family law capacity by hiring a full-time attorney, expand our service area to include Monterey county, and most importantly eliminate services fees to clients entirely. Until this grant, we relied on partners to include us as subcontractors, but now I am so proud to able to do the same for them. It really puts our name on the board.

We continue to be a key partner of the Family Justice Centers for Santa Clara County North and South centers. These Centers are thriving and driving our waitlist for services. And after a disruptive pilot project for consultations in Hollister, we learned that in-person meetings are still superior to video conferencing, even if offered less frequently. This year has served as a reminder of the intensity and sensitivity of victim services, and reaffirmed our commitment to providing victim-centered and trauma-informed representation.

Every year I am grateful to lead such a dedicated and accomplished team.

Karen Schulz
Executive Director, Step Forward Foundation
In 2019, we saw tremendous growth in our team.

After the departure of a Legal Assistant to a sister agency in San Jose, we welcomed **Dulce Sixtos** to our team in May as a Legal Assistant following her college graduation.

In June we brought attorney **Sarah Cottingham** back into family law practice after four years with CEB.

In August, we celebrated **Maria Ochoa**'s promotion to DOJ Accredited Representative after two years of dedication as a Legal Assistant at Step Forward.
Our immigration practice is a staple of Step Forward's services, and our strength and expertise expands every year. We continue to specialize in filing applications for victims of crime, primarily for victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual assault. In 2019, we partnered with Catholic Charities to take on more unaccompanied minors cases as well.

Due to high demand, we continue to limit our family law practice to victims of crime. With a generous grant from CalOES, we were able to hire a full-time family law attorney, which tripled our capacity for cases. Previously our practice was limited to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, but this grant allows us to expand to additional types of crime victims as well.

In 2019, we strengthened our contracts with our Of Counsel employment attorney, Ruth Silver Taube. By partnering with the County of Santa Clara's new Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement, and Working Partnerships, we now host a weekday hotline for employment-related questions in five languages. This hotline proved to be especially significant in early 2020.
client statistics

Country of Birth

Age

- 50-64: 9.3%
- 65+: 1.9%
- Under 18: 12.1%
- 25-39: 37.7%
- 40-49: 20.7%

Gender

- Female: 66%
- Male: 33.7%
- Transgender Male: 0.2%
- Transgender Female: 0.2%

*Data based on clients on whose case we worked during 2019
Despite the distance and several options for other high-quality and low cost services, a large portion of our clients live in San Jose and farther north. This is a testament to our commitment to the community and excellent reputation.

Step Forward is very proud of our diverse staff and community involvement. In 2019, 88% of the clients we worked with on cases identified as Hispanic.

Because of the nature of immigration and family law cases, our attorneys are often representing clients for almost a year. In immigration, this can be several years. This means many of our cases stay "open" but "inactive." This means we are still responsible for the cases but aren't currently performing work on the case.

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Average number of days a case was open before being closed in 2019.
Sofia* is a Salvadorian woman who was suffering from domestic violence at the hands of her abusive US citizen spouse. Sofia initially came to the Step Forward Foundation seeking family law help with an upcoming domestic violence restraining order trial. The Step Forward Foundation represented her at trial and obtained a 3-year restraining order against her husband. The attorney was then able to help Sofia apply for VAWA and she was approved in 2019. Today, she is able to legally work with work authorization and she was able to obtain child care certification so that she can work for a child care provider.

Fernando* is a 14-year-old boy from a small tribe in Mexico. His mother was trafficked to the US when Fernando was of a young age and he was left under the care of his father. He was habitually abused and tortured by his father and his maternal grandmother while his mother was providing financial support from the United States. One day he was able to get in touch with his mother and told her of the horrors he was suffering at home. His mother was able to arrange his escape from the tribe and he made it to the US-Mexico border where he was admitted and placed in removal proceedings. The Step Forward Foundation was able to apply for special immigrant juvenile status, which was approved, and Fernando is now waiting for his application to become a legal permanent resident to be processed. Fernando is now living a very happy life together with his mother and sister.
Ricky* is a Mexican man who was a victim of severe domestic violence from his US Citizen wife. In 2018, the Step Forward Foundation applied for the VAWA program for Ricky and he was approved. In 2019, the Step Forward Foundation represented him with his adjustment of status application and interview. In August 2019, Ricky's application was approved and he is now a legal permanent resident. In the Fall of 2019, Ricky was able to travel back to Mexico to visit his family for the first time in 20 years. He now participates in support groups for men who have been victims of domestic violence and he refers them to the Step Forward Foundation for legal help. He says, "Imagina lo agradecido que estoy con todos ustedes y principalmente contigo Muchísimas gracias." ["Imagine how thankful i am with all of you guys and especially with you. Thank you very much."]

challenges

Sadly all good things must come to an end; due to loss of funding, we closed down our Monday consultation clinics for general immigration questions. Though we still participate in three other consultation clinics per week, they are limited to survivors of crime. These individuals are referred to one of the many other excellent agencies in our area. However, this has allowed us to refocus our dedication to serving victims of crime.

With the generous grant from CalOES, we started a pilot project in Hollister offering three days per month of video consultations in addition to the one day per month our staff gave consultations in person. After several months of technological issues, due primarily to unstable internet and the client's need for hands-on assistance getting connected to an attorney, we ended the video consultations and reverted to having two days per month of in-person consultations instead.
Step Forward relies on contract attorneys to fulfill important parts of our mission, including family law and employment law services. Combined with our salaried staff, 88.1% of our budget is dedicated to providing legal services.

As our grant revenue increases, we are able to decrease service fees for clients, allowing the vast majority of our cases to be done free of charge.

Currently all of our funding is from government funding. This chart represents the source and amount of each of our current grants for 2019. The source of the funding sometimes differs from the monitor. In one instance, federal money is given to the State of California to disburse and monitor. In another, the County of Santa Clara gives money to a private foundation to disburse and monitor.