

# Immigration Counseling Services

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Knowing your rights is the best way to protect yourself. The following are some of your rights, regardless of immigration status:

- ◆ The right to remain silent, to refuse to answer questions and to refuse to sign anything.
- ◆ The right to speak to an attorney or an accredited representative.
- ◆ The right to make a phone call.
- ◆ The right, under certain circumstances, to request a hearing before an Immigration Judge.
- ◆ The right to receive in writing the charges made against you.
- ◆ The right to request a bond hearing to attempt to avoid a long period of incarceration
- ◆ The right, under certain circumstances, to request political asylum if you fear persecution on the basis of race, religion, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.
- ◆ The right, under certain circumstances, to appeal your case.

## CLIENT FEES

Private and public funding for immigration counseling programs is scarce. Additional funding is provided by the La Crosse Diocesan Annual Appeal. Our program depends on fees paid by our clients. At the outset of a case, fees for service are agreed upon by the caseworker and client. Our fee schedule is reasonable and we ask all clients to cooperate in paying any fees before we complete their cases. Clients must pay all fees required by the USCIS in order to process their case.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Our Program staff respect the confidentiality of all information disclosed by clients. Information is never released to out side parties unless the client has expressly granted his/her written permission. All clients are given a case number and telephone inquiries are only answered when the case number is given.

## TYPE OF IMMIGRATION SERVICES

MIRA staff is available to assist with the following types of services:

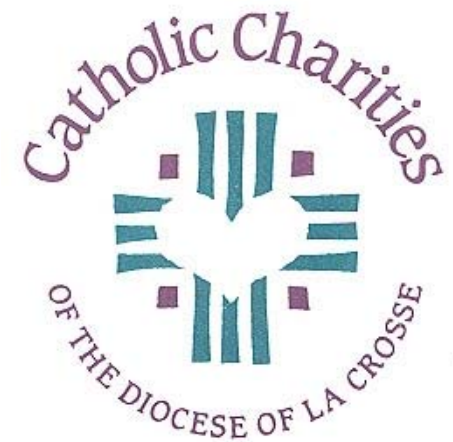
- ◆ Family Visa Petitions
- ◆ Adjustment of Status Applications
- ◆ Consular Visa Processing
- ◆ VAWA and U petitions (for abused immigrants)
- ◆ Naturalization/Citizenship Applications
- ◆ International Adoption
- ◆ Religious Worker Visas
- ◆ Immigration Civil Rights Education

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(608)782-0702 (fax)

1408 Ellis St.  
Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481  
(715) 344-2500  
(715) 344-5329 fax

## *Our Mission:*

*Catholic Charities proclaims Christ's Gospel of Life and promotes human dignity by alleviating poverty and strengthening individuals and families.*



You shall treat the stranger who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you, have the same love for them as for yourselves; for you too were once strangers in a strange land.

Leviticus 19:33-34

## **MIGRANT, IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse established MIRA in 2000 in response to the growing number immigrants moving to West Central Wisconsin. MIRA is accredited by the U.S. Department of Justice to provide a range of immigration counseling and representation to immigrants and their families. MIRA helps persons in west central Wisconsin to understand immigration law and learn to exercise their rights under the law.

The MIRA program is designed to advise and guide clients through the immigration process in an efficient, effective, and professionally caring manner. MIRA considers client participation critical to successful immigration processing and involves all clients fully in their own cases.

## **CLIENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

We can only serve our clients effectively when we have their full and total cooperation. WE expect clients to be truthful in all information disclosed to us. We cannot be held responsible for outcomes of cases in which facts and information have been misrepresented. We expect clients to remain in close contact with us and to inform us of any relevant changes pertaining to their cases. In circumstances where we do not have the client's full cooperation we reserve the right to discontinue all work on a case and to withdraw as the representative in the case.

## **FAMILY VISA PETITIONS**

MIRA helps people obtain immigrant visas so they may unite with family members living in the United States.

- ◆ A United States Citizen may petition for his/her:
- ◆ Spouse
- ◆ Children (including step-children)
- ◆ Siblings
- ◆ Parents

A Lawful Permanent Resident of the U.S. may petition for his/her:

- ◆ Spouse
- ◆ Unmarried sons and daughters

Waiting times differ depending upon which family relationship the petition is based on the age and nationality of the beneficiary.

## **ADJUSTMENT OF STATUS APPLICATIONS**

A person residing in the U.S. who has an approved Petition for which the priority date is current, he/she may be eligible to apply for Adjustment of Status (AOS) with USCIS. Complete consultations are needed to assess eligibility for AOS. *Not everyone qualifies for AOS.*

## **CONSULAR VISA PROCESSING**

Persons outside the U.S. and certain persons in the U.S. conclude the processing of their visas at American consulates abroad. MIRA can help these persons with the final documentation necessary for consular visa appointments.

## **REPRESENTATION OF ABUSED IMMIGRANTS**

Special provisions in the law allow foreign victims of violent crime, trafficking and domestic abuse and their children to self-petition for permanent residency without relying on the abuser's participation in their case. MIRA assists such persons in applying for permanent residency under these special provisions.

## **NATURALIZATION SERVICES**

MIRA accredited staff is available to help persons determine eligibility for United States citizenship. Basic requirements for U.S. citizenship include:

- ◆ Lawful permanent Residence in the U.S. for at least 5 years (3 years if married to a U.S. citizen)
- ◆ Actually reside in the U.S. for at least one-half of the last five years.
- ◆ Good moral character
- ◆ Basic knowledge of U.S. history and civics
- ◆ Ability to understand, speak, read and write basic English, subject to limited exceptions.

## **IMMIGRATION EDUCATION**

MIRA conducts outreach education throughout west central Wisconsin about general immigration matters and provisions in the law which protect workers from immigration-related employment discrimination. MIRA staff is available to make presentations to groups of workers, to employers, and other service providers. In cases of immigration related employment discrimination, MIRA staff is available to guide persons in filing discrimination claims.