



# OVERVIEW OF THE IMMIGRANT SERVICES NETWORK OF AUSTIN

*A collaborative response to immigrant issues in Central Texas*

City of Austin Commission on Immigrant Affairs – April 8, 2013

# Brief History and Context

# History

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- First iteration of ISNA in 2003 as a quarterly networking/educational group
- Travis County HHS/VS staff (Research & Planning) stewarded processes to:
  - ▣ Conduct the Immigrant Assessment, 2006-2007
  - ▣ Present findings at a Community Forum, June 2007
  - ▣ Provided ongoing staff support to ISNA, 2007- 2012
  - ▣ Revise the Immigrant Assessment, 2010
- Building on the Assessment and its findings, ISNA took the lead as a planning and action body around immigrant issues

# Our Mission and Vision

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- **Mission**

ISNA is a working group of diverse community stakeholders and immigrant service providers operating together to *coordinate efforts, increase public awareness, and inform policy*, in order to better serve the immigrant community.

- **Vision**

ISNA promotes the success and well-being of immigrants in order to secure the long-term prosperity of the entire community.

# Our Values Platform



- We share information with each other, and educate and outreach to the community at large
- We come together in order to have a stronger, broader voice on immigrant issues
- We maintain ISNA as a neutral, non-political arena where stakeholders can convene in order to work towards local solutions
- We engage and remain in dialogue with partners from all issue areas and sectors
- We support one another in our respective work to care for the immigrant community
- We respect the dignity and humanity of all immigrants, regardless of status

# Our Role in the Community

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- Neutral Convener
  - ▣ A place where *all* parties can engage in a dialogue
- Non-Political
  - ▣ Immigrant well-being and community prosperity as a framework
- Inclusive Membership and Scope
  - ▣ Any person or organization who embraces the values platform has a right to participate
  - ▣ A forum to address a broad range of immigrant issues

# Our Membership

## Member Agencies

- American Gateways\*
- Any Baby Can
- Austin Community College
- Austin Free-Net
- Austin Police Department, Victim Services
- Austin Police Department, Office of Community Liaison
- Austin Public Library
- AVANCE Austin
- Caritas of Austin
- Casa Marianella
- English at Work\*
- Foundation Communities / Community Tax Centers\*
- Holy Word Lutheran Church\*
- The Law Offices of Thomas Esparza, Jr.
- Literacy Coalition of Central Texas
- SafePlace
- Saheli
- St. Helen Catholic Church\*
- Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service
- Travis County Health and Human Services, Research and Planning Division
- Travis County Sheriff's Office
- Travis County Sheriff's Office, Victim Services
- And individual volunteers\*

*\*Denotes an agency or group represented on the Steering Committee in 2013.*

# Our Membership, cont.

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## **Other Contributors**

- City of Austin Commission on Immigrant Affairs
- City of Austin Health and Human Services Department
- Compass Bank
- Consulate General of Mexico
- Goodwill Industries of Central Texas
- Grass Roots Leadership
- The Police Monitor
- Refugee Services of Central Texas
- Texas Civil Rights Project
- Texas Council on Family Violence
- Texas Rio Grade Legal Aid
- U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Service
- Workers Defense Project/Proyecto Defensa Laboral (PDL)
- And individual volunteers

# Our Current Work

# Immigrant Services Resource Directory

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- **Product:** A directory of services needed by immigrants, including healthcare, English language instruction, basic needs, and more.
- **Purpose:** This referral resource will help effectively resettle immigrants in a respectful, efficient way by allowing them to gain access to appropriate, critical services.
- **Uses:** Intended for case workers and service providers to improve information and referral.
- **Access:** Completed in January 2010 and available for download on the ISNA website.

# Family Safety Planning Toolkit

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- **Product:** A workbook with tools and worksheets addressing “Know Your Rights” information, family and children’s safety (including communication, guardianship, and medical planning), financial and legal planning, etc.
- **Purpose:** To educate immigrant residents about their rights, and to assist individuals and families with preparing an emergency plan for their household.
- **Uses:** Providers working with immigrants can use the toolkit to help them plan for their families’ well-being. Providers can also distribute materials to clients.
- **Access:** Completed in April 2010 and available for download on the ISNA website

# Immigrant Public Safety Training

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- **Product:** A public safety training, being developed in partnership between ISNA and the Austin Police Department
- **Purpose:** To increase immigrants' awareness of U.S. laws and their understanding of their rights and responsibilities as Austin residents
- **Uses:** Interactive training conducted by APD officers and cadets, within the agency setting, to increase public safety knowledge and build trust in law enforcement

# Educational Roundtables

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- Legislative Monitoring
  - Policy analyst guest speakers from Texas Council on Family Violence and American Civil Liberties Union
- Immigrants, Public Safety and Local Law Enforcement
  - Guest Speakers from APD (Chief of Police) and TCSO (Lieutenant Day Watch East)
- Federal Enforcement under a New Administration
  - Guest speakers from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (San Antonio Field Office Director) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (Area Director)

# Welcoming Initiative – (retired)

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- **Product:** A toolkit for speaking ambassadors
- **Purpose:** To change public dialogue and opinion about immigrants in Austin through public education
- **Uses:** Training and presentations at schools, churches, civic organizations, etc.

# Legal Services Workgroup (retired)

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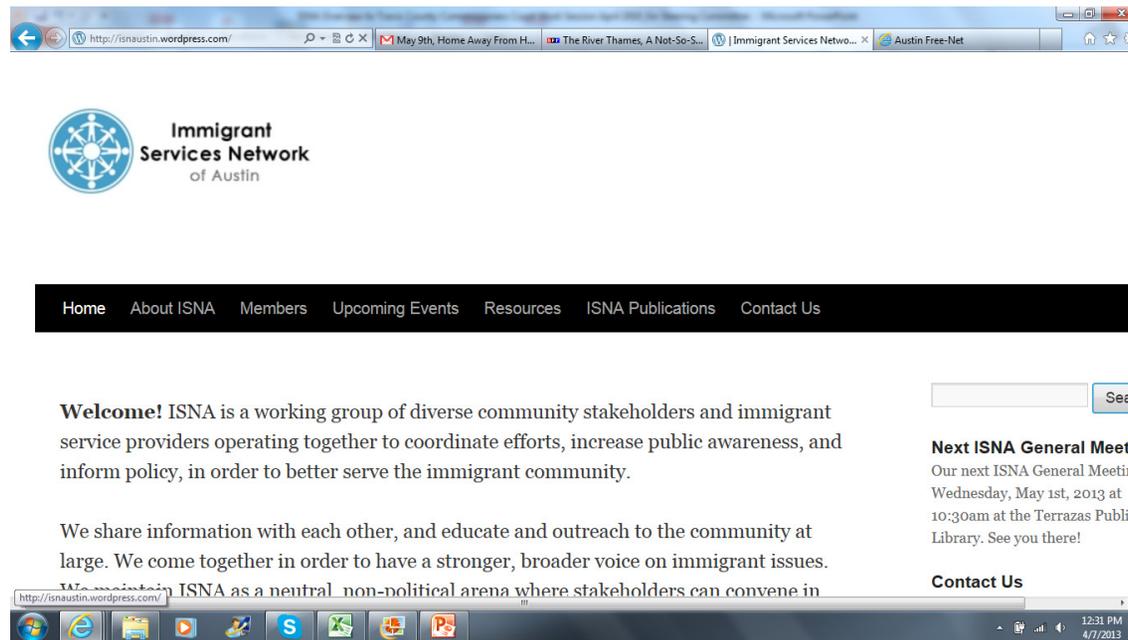
- **Products:**

- A networked group of legal service providers in Austin and San Antonio who meet every 2-3 months
- A Capacity Inventory of their U, T, and VAWA cases, updated quarterly and posted online

- **Purpose:** Coordination and communication on a regional level will enable:

- Better readiness to respond to emerging community needs
- Better preparedness for potential federal policy changes

# New ISNA Website



- <http://isnaustin.wordpress.com/>
- Download all of the products discussed today

Looking to the Future ...

# 2013 Projects and Plans



- Collaborate with AISD on Summer 2013 outreach event
- Continue outreach/distribution of completed publications
- Continue the Immigrant Public Safety Training program
- Continue to monitor emerging issues (e.g. 2013 Legislative Session) and respond to community needs as they arise
- Continue educational roundtables

# Key “Take Home” Messages

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- Immigrants are a key population in the City of Austin/ Travis County
- ISNA has been and continues to be a good investment – a platform to build on
- Travis County’s support was crucial in the past; ISNA is now actively seeking additional and diverse partnerships to sustain its institutional structure and work
- We are a resource to you for knowledge/expertise and connection to the immigrant community

## For More Information

- ❑ Attend our monthly meetings:
  - ❑ First Wednesday of every month, 10:30am at the Terrazas Branch Library (1105 East Cesar Chavez 78702)
- ❑ Contact a Chair:
  - ❑ Amy Thompson, [saferepatriation@gmail.com](mailto:saferepatriation@gmail.com)
- ❑ Visit the ISNA website: <http://isnaustin.wordpress.com/>

Our publications and tools are available online, including the 2010 Immigrant Community Profile.