

San Diego County Immigrant Legal Defense Program (ILDP)

ABOUT THE ILDP

The San Diego County Immigrant Legal Defense Program (ILDP) was established in 2021 by Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer and the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. The groundbreaking program provides legal representation to detained immigrants facing deportation, ensuring due process and fairness in immigration proceedings. Launched in April 2022 by the Office of Assigned Counsel (OAC) within the Public Defender's Office, ILDP operates on a merit-blind basis.

As a border region, we are the epicenter of the nation's broken immigration system. The immigration court system is slow, bureaucratic, and riddled with errors and inefficiencies. That's why the Board of Supervisors established the Immigrant Legal Defense Program - to ensure we protect the constitutional right to due process and make our system faster and fairer. Since then we've gotten 17 calls a day from people detained in San Diego County and facing the immigration system in need of help.

PROGRAM IMPACT



2,500 individuals represented since 2022



7,275 calls received from individuals seeking representation, an average of **17** calls per day



Representation rates of clients detained at Otay Mesa nearly tripled, from **10%** to **28%**



66% of cases with substantive outcomes resulted in a win or stay in the country.

CASE EXAMPLES

- A young gay man fled El Salvador after being persecuted by gangs and targeted under the government's "State of Exemption" policy, which imprisons people for suspected gang ties. He was beaten by police and repeatedly raped in prison. After fleeing to the U.S., the ILDP secured his release from detention, and he now lives safely with family in Maryland.
- A Cuban refugee was tortured for opposing the government and continued his activism online after arriving in the U.S., making him a target under Cuba's new libel laws. A judge granted him protection under the Convention Against Torture. Although the Department of Homeland Security appealed, he was released with the support of the ILDP and is now living in a Texas shelter while awaiting a work permit.

QUALIFICATIONS

- a. This program is limited to detained immigrants or those presently in Alternative to Detention status in San Diego County

A MESSAGE FROM SUPERVISOR TERRA LAWSON-REMER

Four years ago, we launched the San Diego County Immigrant Legal Defense Program with a bold vision: to ensure that no one in our community faces the threat of deportation alone simply because they cannot afford an attorney.

Today, I am proud to share that this program has provided vital legal representation to more than 2,500 individuals, standing up for fairness, due process, and human dignity. Thanks to the dedication of our legal partners and the support of our community, we are making a real difference—keeping families together and ensuring our immigrant neighbors have a fighting chance to stay in the place they call home.

This program is about more than just legal representation—it is about justice, fairness, and due process. As we reflect on the impact of this program, I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved and even more determined to expand this critical work in the years ahead.

- **Terra Lawson-Remer**

San Diego County Board of Supervisors

For More Information: Phone : (619) 446-2883
Email: oac@sdcounty.ca.gov
Hours: Monday - Friday | 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Otay Mesa Detention Toll-Free Line: 1157#