



LICENSE TO FREEDOM

2016 Newsletter

Letter from Executive Director:

I would like to thank our board of directors for providing us with the many opportunities we have to help refugees with assimilation, domestic abuse education and legal support. Our appreciation also goes to our many funders who have stood by License to Freedom's capabilities to educate and serve the San Diego area. I would also like to extend thanks to our team who has helped us support a number of people in the community.



Since its inception thirteen years ago, License to Freedom has expanded greatly and today provides comprehensive range of education, direct counseling, legal support and many other services. A few specific programs we offer include therapy, health literacy classes, American culture assimilation classes, offender rehabilitation classes, parenting classes, matching up clients to lawyers and overall support for the refugee people of San Diego. With the growing diversity in San Diego, East County now has the second largest middle eastern population in the United States.

Throughout the last year, East County has received a plethora of Syrian refugees and because of multiple donors we have been able to provide them with homes, food, supplies and education. We were even able to provide a Thanksgiving dinner for 200 Syrian refugees to help welcome many of them to our country.

Domestic Abuse thrives when we are silent, but if we take a stand and work together, we can end domestic violence. License to Freedom stands for respect for the diversity, collaboration within the community, accepting one another, and the responsibility to help those around us.

Dilkhwaz Ahmed

Welcoming Syrian Families:

East County has been very generous to accept Syrian refugees in their difficult times. License to Freedom has been able to help 250 Syrians by providing food, home supplies, toys for the children, clothes, education and support and even hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for them.



Special Thanks:

Thank you Dr. Huma Ghosh at the San Diego State University Women's Study Department for working with our organization. She was able to send over students to preform a needs assessment with License to Freedom to improve the services and to support future effort in order for our organization to move forward.

Thank you to Public Consulting Group for collaborating with License to Freedom to be able to send us wonderful people to work with us and become part of our team.

Thank you to the San Diego State University Psychology Department for sending students to intern and volunteer in the office in order to keep the office running smoothly.

Thank you to Anita Sterling from Cuymaca College Social Work department for sending students to work with us and contribute to what we are able to do in the office.

And special thanks to everyone who were able to contribute to the refugee community. We would not be able to make the great impact we do without everyone's generosity.



Our Mission:

License to Freedom is a community based, non-profit organization that aims to stop domestic violence in refugee and immigrant communities in San Diego County. Our organization promotes non-violence through education, self-sufficiency, and advocacy for survivors of domestic and relationship abuse. At License to freedom, it is believed that refugee and immigrant women and children should be able to seek and receive help and services that are respectful of their language, cultures, race, age, sexual orientation, disabilities, and religious beliefs.

Target Population:

License to Freedom's target population consists of refugees and immigrants from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Our focus is primarily on serving Iraqi, Iranian, Burmese, Afghani, Kurdish, Turkish, Syrian and African populations. Our focus is to aid in the specific context of legal and crises intervention services for survivors of domestic violence and victims of crimes. Many of these persons have experienced significant trauma prior to arriving in San Diego, and most are living on modest incomes and have no health insurance, or insurance that does not cover mental health and Domestic Violence services. Given these individuals' experiences, many suffer from problems of anxiety, depression, and anger, and/or live with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and these conditions have festered for many years, in many cases. The new stresses of life in an alien society, coupled with the values and customs brought from very different societies, create a reality in which there are many tensions and domestic violence is a fairly common occurrence. At the same, many members of this population do not trust institutions as a result of both prior experiences and the barriers of language and culture that complicate such interactions. License to Freedom's value derives from its status as the sole organization in this major refugee/immigrant catchment area capable of serving these populations in a culturally and linguistically relevant manner, and gain their trust.

Funding Resources:

- Price Charities
- Blue Shield of California
- San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Programs
- Access Immigration
- Bilateral Safety Coalition Corridor
- San Diego State University Vagina Monologues
- University of California San Diego Vagina Monologues
- Institute for Public Strategies

Because of the funding we received, we were able to help many different people by providing legal services, counseling, ESL class, health literacy class, offender rehabilitation class, and help many refugee families assimilate to the American culture.

Programs Offered:

- Community dialogue for change program
- Individual and family therapy (all ages)
- Domestic violence (DV) group treatment (women)
- DV perpetrators' group treatment (court-ordered treatment group for men and women)
- Expressive art therapy (for children, provided while parents are in therapy session)
- Music therapy (drumming circle program, all ages, to help lower levels of depression and anxiety)
- Parenting classes
- In-home therapy (all ages)
- Provision of outreach and education to new immigrants re: U.S. cultural expectations
- Cooperative efforts with local faith leaders/communities to address DV and support prevention.

Programs:

Through the Community Dialogue for Change Program we seek to engage people through conversation and active learning to educate them about the issues surrounding domestic violence, including the American legal system and wider concepts of human rights definitions of abuse, the importance of communication and preventative measures, and their civil rights and recourses to legal action as U.S. citizens. Classes also include, Nutrition sessions and child development session, ESL services to aid the development of their English language abilities and assimilation.

Through our mental health program we have an experienced group of therapists who have personal experience with refugee communities, have been trauma informed, are bilingual, understand the refugee process and migration history, and have been trained and certified in conflict resolution, music therapy, psychological first aid, domestic violence, and child abuse report. In addition, we provide expressive art therapy and music therapy.

Through our legal partnership with Access, Inc. License to Freedom provides legal assistance and support to Middle Eastern immigrant and refugee victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking in San Diego County. We were so fortunate to partner with San Diego Volunteer Lawyer program to provide services to refugee immigrants who were victims of crime.

We advocate for services with specific reference to Arabic-speaking clients with education and employment assistance, weekly Community Dialogue for

Change meetings in East San Diego County, and survivors'/support group meetings in East San Diego County.

License To Freedom is the only organization to offer a domestic violence treatment program to offenders. Through provision of a male batterers' 52-week domestic violence offender group for men under order by Child Protective Services or the courts;

We offer workshops that address nutrition and healthy lifestyles; mental health services for domestic violence survivors and family members as noted above; development of relationships with the religious community with the Pursuing Justice Through Faith initiative; and participation in the local shelter committee and collaboration with other Domestic Violence-related groups.

License To Freedom offers cultural competency training to many service providers and organizations that are interested in learning about immigrants and their culture.

High Risk Team:

License to Freedom is proud to be part of High Risk Team in order to pursue justice by reviewing cases with Child Protective Services, District Attorney's office, Adult Protective Services and other domestic violence agencies in San Diego.

Domestic Violence Task Force:

DV Task Force Team is still working on getting more community members involved in being part of finding solutions to major challenges that face our refugees, finding more trauma informed resources, and more awareness and education efforts on Domestic Violence dynamics and cycles.

Through the monthly meetings, we realized that it is extremely important to address mental health services and domestic violence. Since License to Freedom is the only organization that provides domestic violence services to the refugees, it creates a need for funding in order to expand services for refugees and immigrants. There is a lack of opportunities for mental health services for refugees and survivors of domestic violence due to a lack of funding and shortage of therapists who speak their language. We are in a process to plan for next year to conduct two domestic violence community forums with refugee youth to address healthy relationships for the new Syrian families to address domestic violence, child abuse, acculturation, and navigation through the American justice system.

Our Team:

- Jessica Toma- MFT
- Shatha Dashash-
Community outreach,
domestic violence education
- Donna Daum- ESL
teacher, and acculturation
specialist

Outcomes with Fundings through 2016:

The health and well-being of a minimum of 250 individuals have been improved during this past year through the community dialog for change.

Over 350 survivors and their children have received domestic violence legal support, crisis intervention and education in the last year.

250 children and adults have received mental health services and treatment through our mental health program which includes counseling, individual and group therapy, expressive art therapy, and music therapy.

Approximately 30 males who had engaged in acts of domestic violence addressed their responsibilities related to those acts and improved their

communication and interpersonal family skills through participation in a 52-week mandatory offenders class.

Over the year of 2016, License to Freedom has been able to help a total of 1,130 refugee in San Diego.

For more information please our updated website:

www.licensetofreedom.org

Or email our executive director Dilkhwaz Ahmed:

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