

# WELCOMING



## Putting Out the Welcome Mat: The Power of Citizenship to Connect Communities

April 13, 2016 @ 2:00 pm Eastern

### Slide 1

Welcome & Overview - Susan Downs-Karkos

Welcome to our webinar today: *Putting Out the Welcome Mat: The Power of Citizenship to Connect Communities*. This is Susan Downs-Karkos with Welcoming America, and we are delighted to have you with us today. We are grateful for the Office of Refugee Resettlement who support this work. We are happy to be partnering with CLINIC, the Catholic Legal Immigration Network. We are both providers of technical assistance for ORR, so we are excited to be partnering to share how to use citizenship to connect people in our communities in more meaningful ways.

### Slide 2

Today's Speakers

Leya Speasmaker, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc

Susan Downs-Karkos, Welcoming America

Homa Naficy, Hartford Public Library

Stephanie Ali, New American Pathways

### Slide 3

Session Objectives:

By the end of the webinar, participants will:

- Understand the importance of citizenship to new Americans and receiving communities
- Apply new strategies for incorporating receiving communities for greater impact

- Learn how to collaborate with community partners to strengthen citizenship work
- Recognize the role of legal services in their communities

## Slide 4

### Agenda

- Understanding the Importance of Citizenship – Leya Speasmaker
- Receiving Community Engagement and Citizenship – Susan Downs-Karkos
- Promising Example: Hartford Public Library Immigration & Citizenship Program – Homa Naficy
- Promising Example: New American Pathways – Stephanie Ali
- Moderated Discussion
- Resources and Call to Action

## Slide 5

### Understanding the Importance of Citizenship – Leya Speasmaker, CLINIC

- CLINIC stands for Catholic Legal Immigration Network and is based out of Baltimore, Maryland
- Membership organization – 60% Catholic, 40% non-Catholic
- Everyone in the network offers charitable legal immigration services in some capacity
- We provide technical assistance to members

## Slide 6

### Citizenship Benefits

- Full Civic Participation
- Right to Vote
- More Employment and Education Opportunities
- Derivative Citizenship for Children
- Travel Benefits
- Protection from Deportation
- Right to Immigrate Family Members
- Preservation of Social Security Income (SSI) Benefits

## Slide 7

### Results from Increased Rates of Citizenship

Civic, economic and linguistic integration can lead to:

- More families invested in the community

- More families volunteering and serving
- Better representation in civic leadership positions
- More income and property taxes paid
- Increased parental involvement in schools
- More voters

## Slide 8

### Potential Barriers in Applying for Citizenship

Reasons refugees and immigrants might not apply:

- Cost
- Perception of a process that may seem imposing or complex
- Lack of understanding of the eligibility requirements
- Lack of culturally appropriate services
- Citizenship can occur 5 years after arrival
- Ability to access authorized legal services

## Slide 9

### Reminders about Authorized Legal Service Provision

- Citizenship applications are complex
- The wrong help can hurt
- Notarios cannot provide legal immigration services
- Citizenship applicants should always consult with an immigration attorney or a BIA Recognized agency with Accredited staff members

## Slide 10

### Important Roles for the Receiving Community in the Citizenship Application Process

- Provide facts and resources about citizenship
- Provide support and encouragement throughout the process
- Offer ESL and Citizenship test preparation classes
- Offer authorized legal immigration services
- Offer referrals to authorized providers or to outside classes
- Serve as a bridge to the receiving community

## Slide 11

Citizenship and the Receiving Community - Susan Downs-Karkos, Welcoming America

## Slide 12

### The Benefits to Citizenship Programs

- Improved community climate, where immigrants feel more welcomed and participate civically
- Increased local visibility of program and achievements
- Strengthened program credibility, new champions
- Ability to attract additional resources
- Improved participant outreach and demand for citizenship services

## Slide 13

### Receiving Communities Approaches

- Leadership – engaging local leaders in our work
- Contact – building meaningful contact between the receiving community and newcomers
- Communications – how we can use positive communications to tell the story of how people are working to naturalize

## Slide 14

This can be a transformational Experience for immigrants and volunteers.

## Slide 15

### Building Meaningful Connections

- Recruit volunteers from a broader range of backgrounds
- Consider a citizenship mentoring component
- Consider classroom activities that engage the receiving community
- Nurture your volunteers and help them share their experiences broadly

## Slide 16

### Engaging Mainstream Leaders

- Consider local leaders from diverse sectors
- Engage in the classroom, at citizenship events
- Have a strategy for ongoing engagement and communication

## Slide 17

Incorporating Communications Strategies

- Share stories of New Americans and their volunteers
- Engage local media
- Consider citizenship ceremonies a golden opportunity
- Use photos and stories in your other collateral

## Slide 18

Promising Example: Immigration & Citizenship Program - Hartford Public Library, Homa Naficy

This is one of the most impactful programs that we run at the Hartford Public Library.

## Slide 19

Partner

Find a USCIS Field Office near you at <http://www.uscis.org> and contact the Community Relations Officer

Other partners will vary depending on location and enhancements

- Library
- Park
- City Hall
- The Capitol

## Slide 20

Location/Space

- Security
- Court Set up
- Seating
  - Candidates
  - Candidates' friends & family
  - Speakers
- Voter registrar
- Children's activities
- Presentation of the colors (seating)
- Choir (seating)
- Passport services

- Reception

## Slide 21

Select a date

What do you want to highlight?

A date, a theme, a person?

- Constitution Day (September 17)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Flag Day (June 14)
- Welcoming Week (Week of September 17)
- World Refugee Day (June 20)
- Adoption Month (October)
- Library Week (April 10-16)

## Slide 22

Speakers

- Master of Ceremonies – USCIS
- Opening welcoming and closing remarks
- Keynote
- Pledge of Allegiance

## Slide 23

Enhancements

- Choir/singer
- Presentation of the colors
- Gifts/favors
- Flag bunting
- Reception

## Slide 24

Promising Example: New American Pathways - Stephanie Ali

## Slide 25

### A Path to Citizenship

- Our office includes three BIA accredited immigration specialists, who process over 280 permanent residency applications and 230 citizenship applications per year
- Through a new grant from USCIS, in partnership with Literacy Action, we will increase applications by 100 over the next two years
- Literacy Action will focus on civics and English language tutoring to help improve passage of citizenship exam for applicants

## Slide 26

### Citizenship – Critical Partnerships

- Welcoming Atlanta – city has placed “Citizenship Corners” in all public libraries and recreation centers
- Latin American Association and GALEO – educating and encouraging communities on citizenship benefits and access, host Citizenship Day annually to process hundreds of files

## Slide 27

### Voter Registration & Engagement

- In partnership with ProGA coalition, work at USCIS ceremonies, local sites (like MARTA stations, temples, etc) and festivals to register new Americans to vote
- All newly-registered voters given take-home info about voting in Georgia
- Get Out the Vote effort includes mailed letters before election dates, partnering with organizations for door-to-door campaigns

## Slide 28

### Educating New Citizens

- Advocacy education – Hosted first in series of Advocacy 101 workshops for ethnic community leaders to better educate their communities in advocating for themselves
- Day at the Capitol – Annual New Americans Celebration at the State Capitol invites new Americans to learn and practice outreach with elected officials
- Localized Education Events – Goals for 2016 include specialized events for communities within their places of worship, Hot-To workshops for voting and Government 101

## Slide 29

### How to Get Started

- Learn more about citizenship requirements at <https://www.uscis.gov/>
- Volunteer in a citizenship test preparation program or ESL Program
- Serve as a conversation partner (check your local library)
- Ensure your library has a Citizenship Corner
- Attend a citizenship oath ceremony
- Refer potential applicants to authorized service providers at <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognized-organizations-and-accredited-representatives-roster-state-and-city>

## Slide 30

### Moderated Discussion – Susan Downs-Karkos

Q - How do you go about teaching N400 vocabulary? Are there any resources?

A - USCIS has great study materials on the vocab that is involved in the interview. They have many great materials that would be helpful for studying.

Q - Is it okay for a volunteer to help refugees fill out their N400 form?

A - It is very tempting to want to help people fill out their N400 form, especially when it's hard to find an authorized legal service provider who speaks their language. I would recommend finding an authorized service provider and sending them there. You can find another way to help such as helping them study vocabulary for their interview.

Q - How do you get libraries onboard with "Citizenship Corners"?

A - The great thing in Atlanta was that the Mayor made it a priority and presented the idea to libraries. One of the good things that you could do is get someone in administrative leadership involved, so that they can advocate for libraries to get onboard.

## Slide 31

### Citizenship Navigator Project and Resources – Leya Speasmaker

This free program is designed especially for refugee resettlement staff.

Citizenship Navigators receive:

- A dedicated hotline for answering questions about citizenship and BIA Recognition and Accreditation applications
- Trainings on citizenship and how to offer authorized legal immigration services



- Dedicated assistance for BIA Recognition and Accreditation applications
- Training materials on citizenship to use in your local community
- Access to a nationwide texting campaign providing information on citizenship to refugees and asylees.

Sign up for information and notifications at [cliniclegal.org/citizenshipnavigator](https://cliniclegal.org/citizenshipnavigator)

## Slide 32

### CLINIC Resources

- Citizenship Toolkit: [https://cliniclegal.org/clinic\\_toolkit/citizenship](https://cliniclegal.org/clinic_toolkit/citizenship)
- Creating a Citizenship Test Preparation Program: <https://cliniclegal.org/resources/comprehensive-citizenship-preparation-program-toolkit>
- Partnership Toolkit: <https://cliniclegal.org/resources/toolkits/partnership-toolkit>

### Federal Government Resources

- BIA R&A Roster: <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognition-accreditation-roster-reports>
- Find an ESL or Citizenship Test Preparation class: <https://my.uscis.gov/findaclass>

## Slide 33

Follow up information & Resources – Hannah Carswell, Welcoming America

Thank you again for joining us. Here is the contact information from the speakers who you heard from today. If you have a follow up question, please feel free to reach out. We will also be sending a copy of the slides out to everyone who registered, so don't worry if you're not able to get all of the information down right now.

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In the next week, we will be posting the resources from this webinar on our website. You can always find past recorded webinars and resources on our website [www.welcomingrefugees.org](http://www.welcomingrefugees.org).

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I'd like to highlight one of those resources that might be particularly helpful as you think about engaging volunteers with citizenship efforts. This is a short video that we created with the support of ORR to help you recruit and energize volunteers for your organization. Through interviews with volunteers, the video establishes the importance of welcoming refugees and discusses all of the benefits that volunteers receive from giving their time to an organization that serves refugees.

## Slide 36

We also have our annual National Welcoming Week coming up from September 16-25. During this series of events, communities bring together immigrants and U.S.-born residents in a spirit of unity to raise awareness of the benefits of welcoming everyone – including new Americans. Last year, there were 245 events in over 80 communities with more than 22,000 people participating. We hope that you will consider joining us by hosting or attending an event. This would be a great time to try your hand at hosting a citizenship ceremony. You can find more information about National Welcoming Week at [welcomingweek.org](http://welcomingweek.org).

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We also wanted to spotlight an upcoming series of events that HIAS and Repair the World are hosting from April 15-30. Their #SupportForRefugees movement focuses on bringing attention to global refugee issues during Passover. You can find out how to get involved at the website <http://wepair.org/passover/>

Here are some ways that you can stay connected with us after webinar today.

Last but not least, please take a moment to fill our evaluation. These evaluations are so important to us because they let us know how we can continue to improve and provide better training for you. Thank you all again for joining us.