



Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc. New Americans Citizenship Project

WHAT

The New Americans Citizenship Project helps extremely vulnerable individuals become United States citizens so that they can enjoy the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship and attain stability by becoming permanent members of our community. As citizens, they also become eligible to receive Supplemental Security Income benefits to help meet their basic needs.

WHY

Immigration laws make it possible for many elderly and disabled immigrants to naturalize. As citizens they become eligible for certain governmental benefits, including Supplemental Security Income benefits and much needed health care. Because immigration law is complex and dynamic, these immigrants require the assistance of an attorney to successfully negotiate the naturalization process. The New American Citizenship Project meets this need.

HOW

The New Americans Citizenship Project provides very poor elderly or disabled individuals the full range of citizenship services including confidential consultations, investigations to determine whether barriers to citizenship exist, and completion of citizenship applications, including applications to waive the English language and citizenship examinations due to medical conditions and fee waiver petitions. Project attorneys also represent clients during their interviews with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

WHO

LSGMI provides free civil legal services to the neediest individuals within our community. Our clients are primarily women, children, seniors, and the working poor. In many cases, we are the safety net preventing these individuals from becoming homeless or dependent on welfare. On a daily basis, our team of attorneys, who are organized into legal specialty units and projects, provides high quality representation to clients with problems relating to housing, health care, education, disability benefits, family issues, consumer problems and employment.

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New Americans Citizenship Project

Typical Cases

Eduardo, a 54 year old disabled Cuban man, had no resources to pay for his living and medical expenses. He applied for but was denied Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits because he was not a United States citizen.

Pro bono counsel assisted Eduardo in filing a citizenship application and indigent fee waiver. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services granted the fee waiver, saving Eduardo \$680.00 in filing fees. Additionally, Eduardo's pro bono counsel filed a petition to waive the English and History/Civics requirement for naturalization which was also granted. Thanks to his pro bono counsel, Eduardo obtained citizenship and became qualified to apply for SSI, a financial lifeline. He is now receiving SSI and living on his own.

Victor was disabled and without any income because he could not work. He was not eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits because he was not yet a U. S. citizen. And, because of his disability, he was unable to take the English and Civics exams required by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

With help from an attorney, Victor submitted a naturalization application which was not approved initially because he had spent over 200 days in Haiti. His attorney submitted documentation that Victor had become very ill while visiting his family in Haiti, and then was stranded there when the earthquake hit and could not return to the U.S. sooner. His attorney also submitted a medical waiver from his doctor stating that he could not take the required exams because of his disability.

As a result, Victor's application and medical waiver were approved, he was sworn in as a U.S. Citizen, and he is now eligible for SSI disability benefits which will provide him the income he needs to live independently.