La Frontera: Coordinación De Los Servicios De Trabajo Social Para Los Menores Sin Acompañante En Arizona*

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Introduction

The position of Children’s Specialist/Case Manager (CM) at the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project (FIRRP) is a case management CMG and program development position working with unaccompanied minors in Phoenix, Arizona. Founded in 1989, FIRRP is a non-profit organization that provides free legal and social services for detained unaccompanied immigrant youth and adults in Arizona. The Children’s Specialist/Social Worker (the second author, Anna Marie Smith) supports clients

by coordinating various social service needs related to their legal cases, particularly crisis prevention and intervention. In this role, the CM is expected to have 35 cases with varying degrees of needs, continually develop resources and best practices for clients, and serve as a resource to attorneys and staff to ensure clients’ legal and basic needs are met.

**The Clientele**

Unaccompanied minors are legally individuals under the age of 18 who have crossed the United States border without parent(s) or legal guardian(s). Upon apprehension, they are taken into the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), then are detained in youth-only shelters, and afforded legal access to medical care and educational opportunities. Within Arizona, the shelters in which they are detained are operated by non-profit organizations that are sub-contracted through ORR. Of primary importance while being detained is the identification of familial or organizational sponsors to whom these children can be eventually released. At the point of release, these youth often face significant barriers accessing social services given their lack of legal guardians and tenuous immigration status. By virtue of their legal status, they are for example, disqualified from receiving medical insurance and have no access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or other social benefits. It is for these very reasons that organizations like FIRRP are critically important to ensuring access to legal counsel and representation during immigration proceedings.

Once a case is accepted by FIRRP, initial efforts focus on determining whether the child has any legal relief to stay in the United States with permission, which may include securing legal immigration status for these minors through four main visas: Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, Asylum, U non-immigrant visa for victims of qualifying crimes, or non-immigrant visa for victims of trafficking. In this process, FIRRP attorneys are charged with representing the minors in their cases, but often and quickly call upon the social work CM to attend directly to their social and emotional needs. The CM will, for example, facilitate school enrollment, procure stable housing, and arrange for counseling and psychological evaluations to support legal claims.

**Socio-demographic profile of clients.** The demographic profile of the 110 youth receiving services from FIRRP in 2014 mirrors national trends. The U.S. ORR (2015) indicated that the majority of children detained in 2014 were male (66%), 14 years old or older (73%), and migrated from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (95%). Although FIRRP clients have been reported as young as 3 years old, the average is between 14 and 19, with several remaining active cases until the age of 20 as they await final court decisions regarding their immigration status (ORR, 2015). Also of note is the rising numbers of female clients, with an 11% increase from fiscal year 2012 to 2014 (ORR, 2015).

There are various reasons why these children leave their home countries. According to a study by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (2014), which interviewed 404 children from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico,
the five most common reasons cited were the following: “violence in society, abuse in the home, deprivation and social exclusion, family re-unification or better opportunity, and other” (p. 23). While each of these countries has distinct cultures and unique experiences, 48% of all children interviewed expressed how they experienced violence due to organized crimes such as drug cartels, gangs, and state-sponsored groups (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2014, p. 6). The individual and collective impact of these forces results in thousands of children fleeing to the United States each year.

With respect to country of origin, children migrating from non-contiguous countries, are automatically transferred to the custody of the ORR; however, youth from Mexico (2% in 2014) must demonstrate reasonable fear resulting from, for example, experiences as victims of trafficking to avoid swift deportation (ORR, 2015). Language barriers present significant challenges to ensuring adequate council and attainment of social services, given that 97% of the children in the custody of ORR come from Spanish-speaking countries (ORR, 2015), with the vast majority of them speaking Spanish and, at times, indigenous languages (e.g., Mam, K’itché’, Ixil) only.

Based on personal experiences prior to, during, and following migration to the United States, the vast majority of these minors have experienced one or multiple traumatic events, which include rape, domestic violence and abuse, trafficking, abandonment, and extreme poverty. Given their prominent trauma history, these clients present common behaviors (for survivors of trauma) such as aggression, sleep disturbances, substance abuse, learning disabilities, attention difficulties, low self-esteem, unhealthy attachments, and increased medical problems (Social Work Policy Institute, 2010).

One, if not the most immediately pressing and continual needs of these clients is access to safe and stable housing. Many do not qualify for housing programs given their immigration status, language abilities, or inability to work. In Phoenix, we currently have four organizational programs that do accept these youth; however, significant unmet needs remain. Housing is fundamental to creating stable lives for these youth.

There is also a legal issue for those detained by ORR, who are not re-unified by their 18th birthday; youth unable to secure a viable individual or organizational sponsor prior to their 18th birthday will be taken into the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). ICE then processes these individuals and may release them on their own recognizance if they have a release plan. If such a plan is not in place, however they are immediately transferred to an adult detention facility where they have fewer legal rights and less access to services. Therefore, finding housing for these “age-outs” is crucial to avoiding subsequent adult detention and guaranteeing access to social and legal services.

Also a significant need is mental health counseling and support services. As mentioned previously, many FIRRP clients have suffered multiple, sustained traumas throughout their lives. As such, the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate, as well as financially accessible counseling, is of critical importance to the social and
emotional well-being of these clients, as well as instrumental to effectively document-
ing their asylum claims.

A final area critical to the support of these clients is CMG. For example, FIRRP cli-
ents often need assistance enrolling in school, completing the necessary paperwork to
obtain a social security card, determining eligibility and enrolling in state-sponsored
health insurance, and finding free or reduced-cost available health care providers.
Successful attainment of these services is critical to the long-term social, physical, and
emotional well-being of such a vulnerable population.

**Typical client.** Ivan, a 16-year-old male recently migrated from a small town in
Guatemala, was newly released to a brother in the Phoenix, AZ area. He reported that
his father abandoned the family at a young age, and his mother died shortly there-
after. Ivan had completed the sixth grade and resided with various family members
in Guatemala during which time he experienced physical and emotional abuse from
multiple family members. To support the family and himself, he began working
around the age of 12 in agriculture; however, due to limited economic opportunities,
lack of parental care, and the pervasive presence of violent gangs in his hometown,
Ivan migrated to the United States. In so doing, he hoped to escape the threat of forced
gang life, unite with his family members, and obtain gainful employment. FIRRP is
currently assisting with filing for his Special Immigrant and Juvenile Status, as well
as school enrollment, assessing safety issues in his brother’s home, and accessing
health care for free or at a reduced cost. A typical case like Ivan’s can last between 4
to 12 weeks.

**Atypical client.** Jesus, a 17-year-old male from a middle-class Mexican family, has
been working in the United States for 6 months and was recently detained by the Border
Patrol. He has no family in the United States and does not have supportive relationships
with those he has met through work. He reports his stepfather was a leader of one of
the drug cartels in Mexico and was severely abusive toward him. To escape, he fled to
the United States. At the time of his entrance into the United States, he did not know
how to apply or avail himself of asylum status. Now with FIRRP as his counsel, he has
applied for asylum and is awaiting his interview. In addition to supporting his asylum
case, which is exceptionally time sensitive, given he will turn 18 in 3 weeks, FIRRP is
trying to coordinate a counselor to document the abuse and its emotional/psychologi-
ical effects, obtain a medical assessment to document the physical scars, and procure safe
and stable housing so that he will not be transferred to an adult detention facility on his
18th birthday. An atypical case like Jesus’s can last between 10 to 20 weeks.

**Practice Roles and Responsibilities**

The social worker CM position at FIRRP is both micro and macro. The CM is
expected to perform referral and direct CMG services, as well as engage in program
development and advocacy efforts. An appreciation for the ways in which these
two spheres of practice are mutually supportive is critical to supporting clients.
For example, being aware of resources that accept our clients, the legal processes
concerning referral mechanisms, and specific documentation guidelines concerning
asylum cases richly informs the creation of policies, necessary to support program development, sustainability, and replicability of our agency’s service model. Also many individuals, systems, and organizations are unaware or misinformed regarding the unaccompanied minor’s system, thus engaging in local educational advocacy to ensure access to, for example, medical and educational services are essential. Within policy arenas, sponsoring initiatives that delineate procedural boundaries with respect to case acceptance, referral and closure procedures are necessary to ensure the uniform provision of adequate services, both locally and nationally.

Encompassed within these larger roles are a myriad of specific responsibilities. Not unlike most CM positions, administrative work at FIRRP includes engaging collaboratively with staff members, opening and closing files, and completing case notes and documentation to support legal cases. All of this is moreover, richly informed by meeting clients daily, determining resource availability, making referrals, accompanying clients to referral appointments, collaborating with attorneys and other CMs involved in the case, to determine best practices, and maintaining regular communication with current clients. A unique CMG responsibility at FIRRP also involves serving as a (Spanish-English) translator for clients. In doing so, the language barrier that all-too-often prevents clients from accessing adequate agency and organizational services is overcome.

The CM is also responsible for maintaining contact with established service providers, as well as securing additional referral agencies and organizations interested in serving our clients in the “community-of-care.” The latter involves actively engaging the local community to establish connections within and among existing networks of community members, church members, service providers, stakeholders, and advocates concerned with unaccompanied youth, immigrant, and human rights.

Social work skills used for effective practice. The social work skills essential to this CM position include: education in legal processes and cultural awareness; child, youth, and adult advocacy; cultural humility; and, using a strengths-based perspective. Throughout the various roles and responsibilities, the CM is engaged daily in educating clients about the functions of various systems within the United States (e.g., education, health care, etc.), educating local community members and organizations about unaccompanied minors and their current service needs, and educating the attorneys and staff at FIRRP regarding socially informed and evidenced-based best practices. Informing educational efforts and processes is advocacy work. In this way advocacy, often within inhospitable systems, is needed to ensure barriers concerning language, legal status, and educational background are overcome to safeguard essential services for clients. For example, all clients have the right to a free public education, however we, as client advocates, must successfully navigate unwelcoming administrations that openly disagree with the enrollment of our clients in their school district.

While cultural humility is often thought of as a “perspective,” it is likewise a skill that deeply informs all aspects of CMG at FIRRP (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). In this way, the CM is invited—to relinquishing notions of “cultural expertise,” and instead engages in an ongoing, dynamic process of learning about how and in what ways language and cultural practices inform client experiences and
best-practices. Also, given the ways in which individual and collective narratives concerning our client population are often framed in rather negative terms—lacking for example, English language abilities, educational preparations, or legal status—a strengths-based perspective is critical to ensuring and maintaining the dignity and rights of our clients. In this way, the CM actively engages clients in identifying and re-claiming their strengths, which often include an ability to speak multiple languages (e.g., Spanish and indigenous languages), a hard work ethic, an optimistic attitude, resiliency, and perseverance in spite of the many challenges they have and continue to face.

Challenges and barriers. One of the most significant barriers to effective practice at FIRRP is negotiating anti-immigrant and racist sentiments. Unfortunately, we experience the repercussions of widespread assumptions against such undocumented youth that continue to inform the enactment of laws and regulations that significantly impact access to resources and restrict the self-confidence and goal setting/achievement among our clients. For example, we recently worked with an 18-year-old client—“Miguel”—who wanted to enrol in high school for the first time. After learning that Miguel was 18 and from Guatemala, the school administrator sat Miguel down (while he remained standing), and proceeded to detail the countless reasons why he should not be enrolled in school, how Miguel could not possibly graduate on time, and how it would “not be good for anyone” if he attended. While the client could not understand all that the administrator was saying, Miguel was keenly aware that he was unwanted—primarily due to his legal status, language, and ethnicity.

Another, deeply related to the aforementioned challenge is that the laws surrounding legal status, which preclude “unauthorized immigrants” from receiving certain benefits. That is, these individuals are known to be residing within the United States. However, they are not “authorized” to do so. This designation creates significant barriers for example, in Arizona, where unauthorized immigrants are ineligible to obtain a driver’s license, do not qualify for health insurance and other public benefits, and are not authorized to work. Increasing their vulnerability is the awareness that one small mistake (e.g., a driving infraction) can make in the difference between their being granted legal residency and facing deportation (Morse, 2011). As a result, coordinating resources for our clients presents formidable challenges, as the majority do not qualify for public benefits, and are unable to access personal resources given their inability to work. A unique and particularly challenging situation presents among our pregnant clients. Although eligible to receive emergency governmental insurance upon the birth of a child, there is no access to free or reduced prenatal care, through current state or federally funded programs.

Finally, the extensive and often-repeated trauma experienced by nearly all of our clients demands a high-degree of trauma-informed knowledge and specialized practice. Given such extensive trauma histories, establishing trust presents, nearly universally, as a significant challenge to developing a supportive professional relationship with our clients. Also, repeatedly bearing witness to stories of rape, abandonment, and human trafficking raises concerns about compassion fatigue, burn out, and secondary
trauma. For example, a client, 18 years of age, recently detailed her traumatic experiences of rape, incest, kidnapping, family dissolution, and abandonment. As such, there remain ongoing challenges of how best to support trauma-informed practices, with respect to both client and staff well-being.

**Role Development Potential**

There are many ways in which the role of the social work CM could be developed and expanded at FIRRP. Currently, given the large case load, CMG is—by necessity—task-based. If, however, with the expansion of social work positions, caseloads could be decreased and a more relational CM system could be developed. In so doing, greater time and attention could be leveraged to nurture long-term relationships that can holistically address both short- and long-term needs and goals of our clients (e.g., basic and legal needs, educational goals, integration into American society and culture) (Segal, 2013).

Another mechanism to develop this position, and the quality and type of services provided therein, would be to offer additional opportunities for more policy advocacy. “Advocacy” and “leadership” is one of the standards identified by the NASW Standards for Social Work CM (2013). Calling upon their knowledge and experiences working with such vulnerable youth, CMs could be supported in developing policy briefs, working collaboratively with other agencies to develop public service announcements, and engage in relationship building within and among key stakeholders within local, state, and national policy arenas. In so doing, our work can simultaneously address immediate needs, while also attempting to overcome systemic barriers faced by the agency and clients.

**Social work education for this position.** Course work associated with an MSW degree adequately supported basic skill development necessary to this position however, significant gaps still remain. For example, competencies surrounding reflective listening, more culturally supportive practices, and community empowerment are invaluable in this agency. Likewise, spanning the micro-macro divide, this position asks CMs to be conversant with program planning and development, evaluation, policy analysis, and advocacy. Within and across these domains, one of the most critical and valuable learning experiences concerns that of participatory practices (as informed for example, by Paulo Freire, 1970). Given the level of vulnerability of our client population and the ways in which the majority of their life choices [at least in the short-term] are determined by others, creating supportive, participatory systems that respect self-determination are essential—necessary even, as our work is deeply concerned with issues of dignity and justice.

Toward that end, we believe there are several areas in which the MSW curricula could be enhanced to better prepare students for such positions. For example, more course content, possibly in policy or community practice courses, concerning the intersection of law and social work is greatly needed. Social work CMs working in various agencies and settings are often called up to interact with the judicial system...
in support of our clients. Including course content for example, concerning unique professional roles and responsibilities within law and social work, prominent legal cases and precedence that impact social work practice, exposure to common legal language/jargon, as well as opportunities for law and social work students to interact, possibly in service-learning opportunities, could readily address some of the current challenges surrounding trans-disciplinary partnerships and best practices necessary to work effectively in this position.

Also, there are very few courses offered within MSW curriculum, nation-wide, that bring specific attention to immigration (particularly as it informs policy practices and debates), and/or the Hispanic/Latino population. For example, understanding that legal status is not a static concern, but that immigrants can obtain and fall out of status greatly impacts CMG and service provision. Also, given the projected growth of both foreign-born (85% increase from 2014 to 2060—from 42 million to 78 million, respectively; Colby & Orman, 2015) and Hispanic/Latino population projections (from 17.4% in 2014 to 28.6% in 2060; Colby & Orman, 2015), it appears this content is deeply needed to adequately respond to changing U.S. demographics with its persistent and emergent social needs. Likewise, for those interested in working with undocumented individuals, and/or refugees—on individual, family, community, or policy levels—language competencies are absolutely essential. Listening and being heard in one’s native language is fundamentally about dignity, necessary processes which foster trust, healing and well-being among our most vulnerable clients and communities. And, given that general language courses often do not cover vocabulary concerning CMG issues (e.g., mental health, substance abuse, sexual education, etc.), enhancing MSW curricula to provide, for example, elective (1-credit) courses concerning “Essential Spanish and Cultural Best Practices for Social Service Workers,” would speak directly to this limitation. As a corollary here, offering such courses might also garner a diverse group of students, to include those within medicine, law, psychology, and education, thereby supporting a collegial culture of trans-disciplinary partnership and advocacy.

There are several social work skills and personal experiences that have proved invaluable in this position. The first and foremost being knowledge of the Spanish language and study in Latin America. As noted previously, cultural humility is essential to effective practice. So, while never claiming formal “expert” status, demonstrating an ongoing history with and commitment to learning one’s language and culture, truly embodies the essence of culturally humble practices. In so doing, the process of establishing rapport and trust with our clients, particularly when we can reference time spent in their home villages and countries, is greatly supported.

Also, as a social worker, professional training and experience concerning program planning, evaluation, and political advocacy are essential to the work of FIRRP. Being able, for example, to research and identify best practices that are then infused with culturally responsive programming, is central to our ongoing efforts to best support the short- and long-term well-being of our clients. Likewise, embracing the dynamic, socio-political context in which we find ourselves working calls upon our
flexibility and attention to both processes and outcomes. And, not unrelated, are the countless ways in which our direct service and communication skills are used to establish relationships with individuals, community members, and key stakeholders to enhance awareness regarding undocumented youth and support ongoing advocacy efforts to address many of the political (and legal) obstacles they encounter while seeking asylum.

Concluding Remarks

As indicated above, working with unaccompanied minors is no easy task. There exists systems and policies as well as personal and collective biases that complicate and frustrate our efforts to support this rather detached and unique sub-population. For those with a firm sense of humility and a penchant toward justice, this work is unquestionably meaningful, rewarding, and joyful. To manage the former and support the latter, self-care becomes a priority, not least of which due to the extensive trauma histories of most of our clients. Listening actively, deeply, and repeatedly to traumatic narratives necessitates the need to engage in formalized, non-negotiable supervision and self-care practices. In so doing, space is created to bring thoughtful attention to the very real effects of secondary trauma and compassion fatigue, thereby mitigating their effects. Not unrelated to self-care is the need to establish and maintain professional boundaries with our clients. This process can prove quite challenging given their cultures, case histories, and lack of prior experiences with healthy boundaries—both personal and professional—among many of our clients. Given this, it is incumbent upon the social work CM to model for clients, as well as other FIRRP professionals and staff members, how and in what ways to maintain these boundaries as part of clinically informed practice, service coordination, and professional self-care.

Also, when working with this unique population, we must remember that they are still children and teenagers. That is, despite the countless ways in which they have been forced—out of necessity—to engage in adult decision-making, they are developmentally still working through for example, questions of (healthy) intimacy, self-esteem, personal identify, sexuality, and the intricacies of social belonging and connectedness. As such, maintaining mindful attention to the developmental capacities of each client, meeting her or him where she or he is at emotionally and otherwise, and supporting developmentally appropriate self-determination are essential to this work.

Finally, as professionals in our setting, we are called upon to work in solidarity with an exceptionally vulnerable group of individuals: undocumented and unaccompanied minors. In so doing, flexibility and humility become the essence of our practice, as we are asked to respond to their dynamic needs, their attorneys, and the legal and political systems in which we work. This work—rife with uncertainty, grit, and joy—is social work practice at its best as it is the work of social justice.
Case Example

Although there are various types of cases and clients at FIRRP, one of the most challenging (not least of which because it was one of my first [A.M.S.]), interesting, and important cases was that of “Javier Tomas Garcia Montoya,” an 18-year-old male from Honduras seeking asylum due to gang involvement. A father unknown to him and abandoned by his mother at a very young age, Javier was raised by his maternal grandmother until the age of 12 when she passed away. At this time, he became homeless, residing on the streets of Honduras doing odd jobs until the age of 13, when he was recruited into a local gang. He said the gang appealed to him as a means through which to belong, to be protected, and to be provided with shelter and income. As a gang member, Javier began selling and transporting drugs, extorting people, and using physical force, when necessary. He was also exposed to, and began using drugs. Following the murder of his girlfriend (by the gang) at the age of 17, he fled to the United States fearing for his own life.

Immediately following his arrival in the United States, he was detained by ICE and placed in an ORR shelter. Shortly thereafter, he received representation by the Florence Project and started his asylum application. However, following an interview with an asylum officer, he was denied asylum because of his gang involvement. As such, he is currently pursuing asylum through a trial with an immigration judge. During this process, Javier turned 18 and secured housing through a local nonprofit. His transition proved rather challenging however, and gave rise to depressive and self-injurious thoughts, resulting in an anti-depressant being prescribed.

Also at this time, Javier received a trafficking letter from the Department of Health and Human Services, which provides a CM and grants 3 months of financial assistance and public health insurance to victims of trafficking (in their home country, or the United States). As such, his support team included his attorney, FIRRP’s former case worker, the housing program CM, his trafficking CM, and his former CM from the ORR shelter, all working on his case. In consultation, each of these professionals consistently described Javier as a “difficult” client to work with because he was often negative, unwilling to compromise, and at times disrespectful and rude to adults.

When I first met Javier, he was not working and was failing to attend English classes. Upon receiving his case information, my initial focus was to co-identify short-term goals, particularly given concerns among his support team that he might be exploring gang behavior, and/or such affiliation here in Phoenix. During our initial intake, Javier was polite and friendly with the CM; however, sustained engagement proved challenging thereafter (e.g., he would often listen to music during our meetings). During a subsequent meeting, he mentioned a dating relationship with a 17-year-old girl, which raised concerns given that sex crimes (i.e., Arizona laws concerning consensual relationships between 17 and 18 year olds are rather complicated), can cause immigrants to lose or prevent them from being approved for legal status. When receiving counsel from his attorney on the matter, he became belligerent.

Given these challenges, our limited resources, and extensive caseloads, I asked Javier during our next visit: “Do you want our help? Do you want to stay in the United States?”
At first he was flippant, stating he might want to return to Honduras because the United States had too many rules and even prevented him from having a girlfriend. I encouraged him to move beyond this and really think about what it would be like to return to Honduras. He stated that he would return to the gang. I asked him what it was like to be part of the gang, and he stated that it was not something he wanted to talk about, but it was hard. From this space, we were able to discuss his bravery in leaving the gang, explore some possibilities he might have here in the United States, and co-create goals to focus on moving forward. Toward that end, Javier has since received his work permit, secured (on his own accord) a part-time job at a bread company through a connection with his previous CM, and enrolled in high school. Although he faces significant educational challenges (e.g., prior sixth-grade education, English as a second language, and a need to graduate prior to his 22nd birthday), he remains stable and continues to attend school regularly, while he awaits his asylum trial.

During this time, I was also actively engaged in a significant amount of collateral work with several other CMs and service providers, which proved quite challenging with respect to language and structural barriers, in particular. For example, coordinating care with his psychologist, who speaks very little Spanish, presented significant concerns regarding access to and quality of care: namely, without adequate translation services (which Javier trusts), what is the quality of care being provided, specifically with respect to adequate medication monitoring? Likewise, Javier’s enrollment in Arizona’s public insurance was delayed by nearly 4 months, given the extensive requirements and coordination necessary among service providers. As such, although collaboration is often necessary with our cases, it requires additional effort with respect to time and effective communication.

This case example highlights several common themes within our work, namely: extensive histories of trauma and abandonment, gang influences, and/or affiliation, challenges associated with multi-agency coordination, lack of bi-lingual/bi-cultural professional staff, and educational barriers. In response to these very real and pressing issues, social work CMs are expected to engage in culturally humble and trauma-informed practices that span the micro–macro divide, to include engaging in reflective listening, re-framing negative self-talk, and identification of goals and objectives with clients; coordinating CMG responsibilities and resource sharing among inter-agency collaboratives; and, supporting ongoing educational and political advocacy and reform initiatives surrounding immigration and unaccompanied minors. Exhausting? Yes! Rewarding? Unquestionably!

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The Florence Project Children’s Program educates, empowers, and provides legal assistance to unaccompanied immigrant children in removal proceedings in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona. Many of the children served are held in shelters, group homes, or long-term foster care overseen by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) while awaiting deportation hearings. Our office works as a team to provide unaccompanied children “know your rights” presentations at shelters, individual intakes, pre-court counseling sessions, and representation in front of the immigration court, family court, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. We also provide services to children released from ORR custody, reunited with sponsors or family members in Arizona.

The Position: Case Worker for Children’s Program

The Case Worker/Social Worker will work on a legal team comprised of five to seven people, serving immigrant children who have been released from ORR/Federal care to Arizona. The Case Worker will maintain a caseload of approximately 30–40 cases. The position includes extensive client contact with children, including indigenous children and children who have suffered abuse, abandonment, neglect, or other emotional and physical trauma. The position also includes substantial administrative work including file management, data entry, and referral services, as well as supporting the attorneys representing released children. The position is not a counseling position, but rather a CM position that links children with services in the greater Phoenix area, and works collaboratively with legal staff. The Case Worker’s major responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Connect clients to non-legal services including housing, medical, mental health, vocational, and educational services. Meet regularly with legal staff to discuss client referrals.
- Under supervision and in collaboration with other social services team members, develop and update a manual of social services available to our clients in Arizona. Identify new resources and services in the community.
- In collaboration with legal staff, create case plans for clients, addressing most pressing social needs.
- Act as a liaison between clients and staff attorneys, including assisting clients schedule meetings with attorneys and other legal case-related appointments, understand the legal processes, and gather factual information from clients for legal cases, as needed.
- Accompany clients to USCIS or ICE appointments as needed, and assist clients in attending medical and social services appointments as it relates to the legal case.
- Communicate with client’s CMs at school or other community agencies, as needed.
- Respond to clients in crisis and refer clients to appropriate agencies.
- Help clients prepare and understand forms and paperwork.
- Teach clients how to use public information resources (i.e., library) and transportation systems.
- Communicate effectively in person and by telephone with clients.
- Maintain clear and concise case file documentation to reflect the needs of the individual client.
- Be an effective, supportive team player—work with legal teams, and with other
Florence Project social services team members to coordinate and share knowledge among our three offices and different programs.

- Adhere to organization’s policies particularly those related to confidentiality and client privacy.
- Participate in “Know-Your-Rights” trainings and intakes with detained children as needed, for coverage purposes.
- Participate in all program meetings and staff development activities.
- Participate in organizational fundraising and communications efforts as needed.

**Requirements for the Position**

Background in social work is strongly preferred, including BSW or MSW degree or studies. If the successful candidate has social work education, the position title will be social worker (instead of case worker). The ideal candidate will have prior supervised experience with social services CM. Fluency in Spanish is required. Prior experience working with teenagers and traumatized individuals is a plus.

We are seeking applicants who have a demonstrated commitment to immigrant rights, social justice, or human rights issues with excellent interpersonal skills who enjoy working in a collaborative, client-centered law office environment. Must have excellent organizational skills with regards to administration and logistics, and use time effectively and efficiently. Must be flexible, and able to handle multiple tasks at once. Must be a self-starter and able to work independently, as well as part of a team. Must be culturally competent. Must have reliable transportation.