

**“I WAS A STRANGER
AND YOU
WELCOMED ME.”**

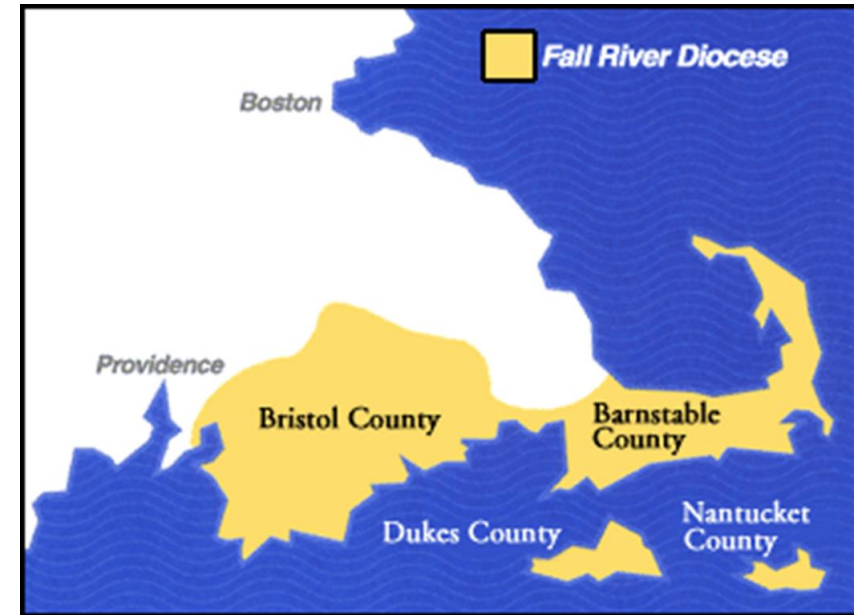
MATTHEW 25:35



Catholic Social Services
Diocese of Fall River

- Service Area: Southeastern MA (Bristol County, Barnstable County, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard, and parts of Plymouth County)
- Types of Services: Temporary Shelters, Housing Support, Food Pantry, Disability Services, Immigration Services

*For more, visit our website, at www.cssdioc.org, or call our Fall River Office at (508) 674-4681 to have your call directed.



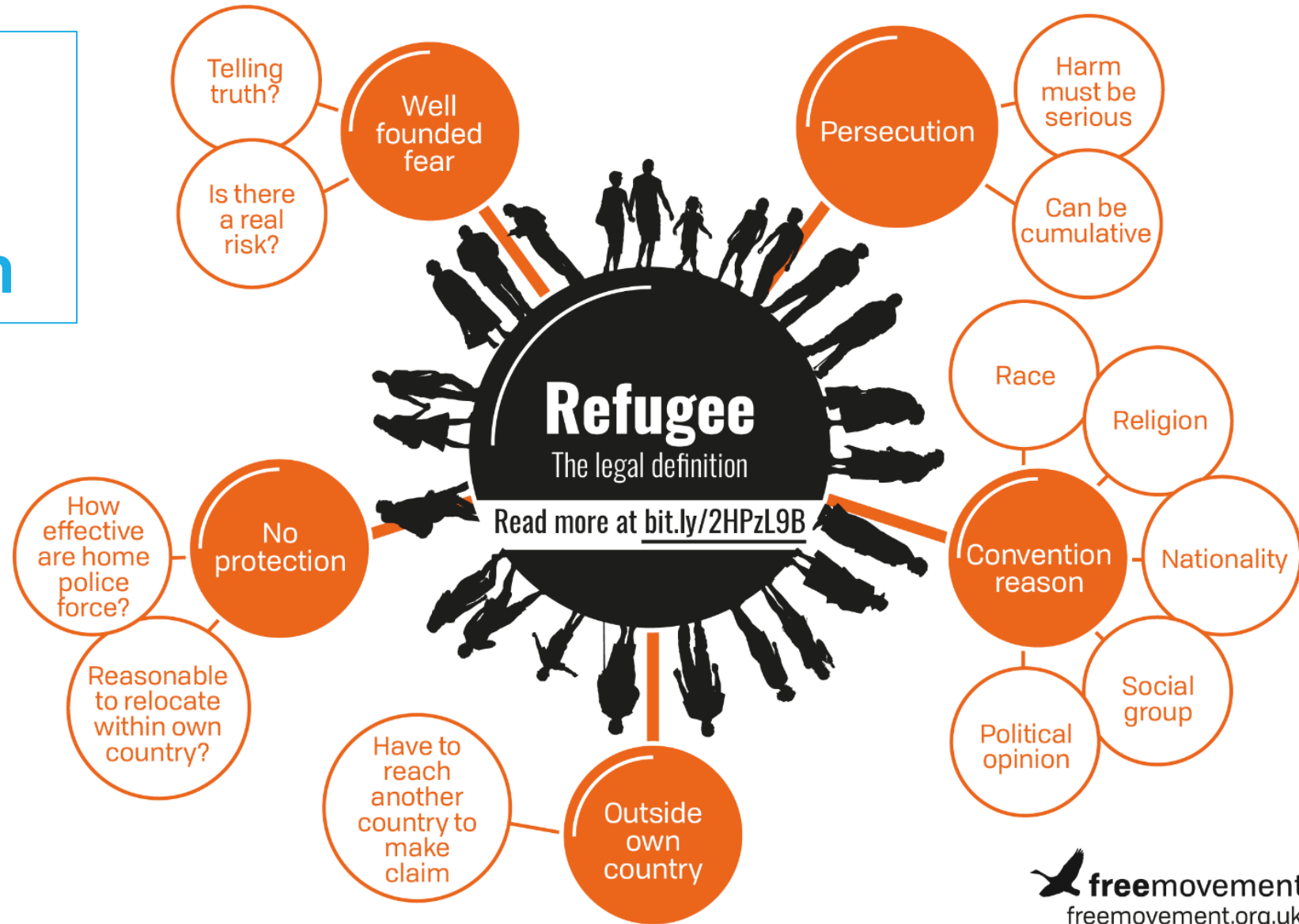
Immigration Services

- Immigration Law Education and Advocacy Project (ILEAP)
 - Three attorneys and three support staff (paralegals/admin staff)
 - Provides free or minimal cost immigrations services
 - Removal Defense, Asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJ), DACA, TPS, Family-based petitions, Citizenship
- Immigrant Victim Representation Project (IVRP)
 - One attorney and two support staff
 - Provides free immigration services
 - Represents Victims of Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence, and other serious crimes

What we are going to cover:

- Who applies for asylum?
- What does the process look like?
- What is going on at the border?
- What are common barriers asylum seekers face?
- How can we help?

The Technical Definition



What countries are people coming from?

- Guatemala
- Honduras
- El Salvador
- Mexico
- Haiti
- Brazil



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Client Stories



The Journey to Get Here

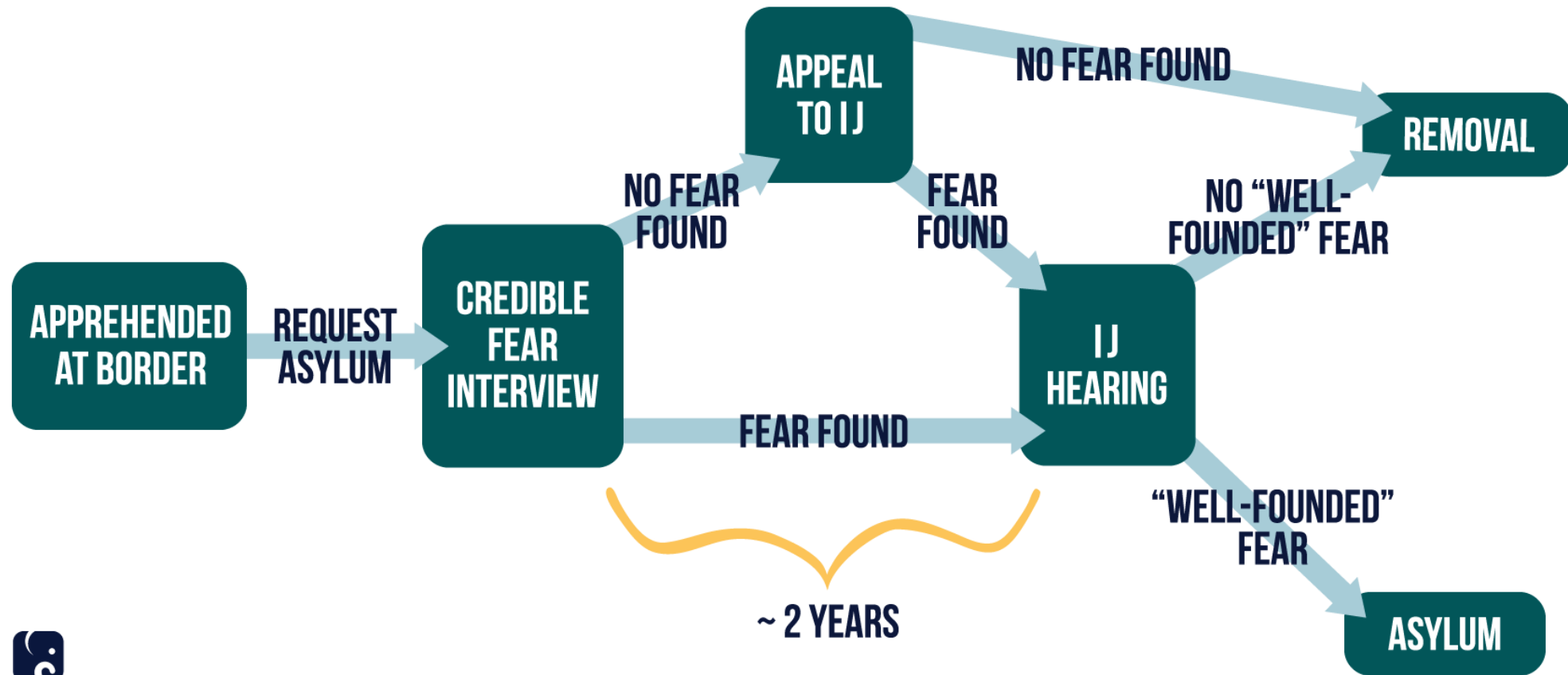


- Pay thousands of dollars for a guide/coyote
- Trip takes 1-4 weeks on average
- Various forms of transportation
- Little to no communication with family
- Often ends crossing the Rio Grande
- Robbery, kidnapping, extortion common

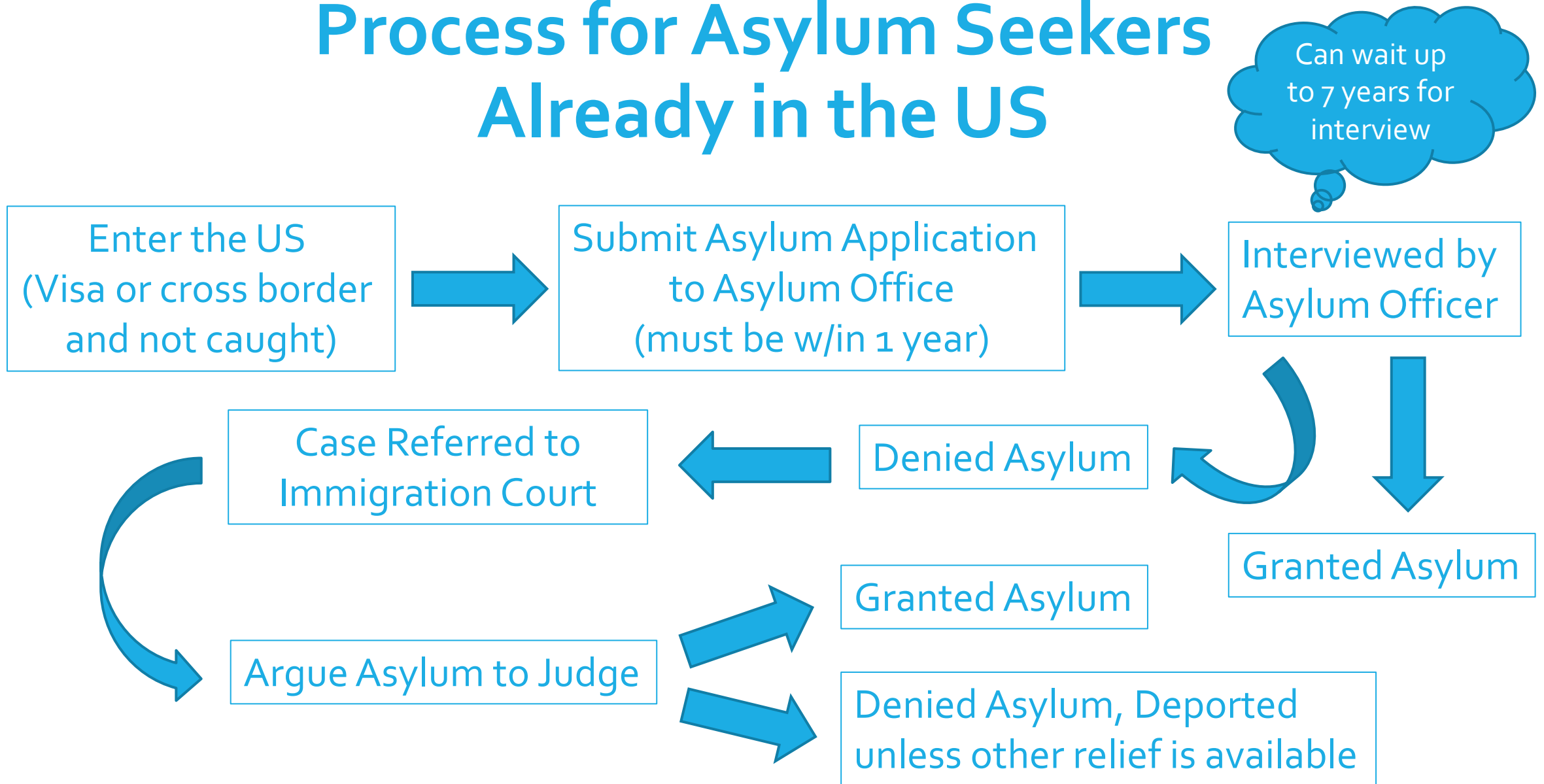
Same Definition, Two Different Processes

Refugees	Asylum Seekers/Asylees
Flee home country	Flee home country
Temporary third country (usually refugee camp)	Enter the US
Apply for Refugee status through UNHCR	Apply for Asylum through US Immigration
Extremely Thorough Background Check	Extremely Thorough Background Check
Wait for US approval	Wait for a Decision
Come to US	If approved, stay in US with option to apply for Green Card
Apply for Green Card after 1 year	If denied, ordered deported unless qualifies for other relief

Process for Asylum Seekers Arriving at the Border



Process for Asylum Seekers Already in the US



What is going on at the border?

Some Background:

- Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP or “Remain in Mexico”)
 - 1/25/19: Enrollments began
 - 3/23/20: Hearing suspended due to COVID-19 concerns
 - 1/20/21: New enrollments ended
 - 2/11/21: DHS announces plan to unwind MPP
- COVID-19/Title 42 Expulsions
 - 3/20/20: Asylum seekers and unaccompanied children excluded for public health reasons
 - 11/18/20: No longer expelled unaccompanied children



What is happening now?

- Most people are still being turned away based on COVID exception
- Highest number of border “apprehensions” since early 2000
 - Many of those are people attempting to re-cross after being turned away due to COVID
 - Seasonal increase is normal
- Large numbers of unaccompanied children
 - Initially, insufficient facilities
 - ~75% ages 15-17
 - Most released to parent or guardian within 72 hours
 - Numbers are starting to go down
- Families and children primarily turn themselves in to border agents



Common Barriers

- Finding an Attorney

- Private attorneys are expensive
- Nonprofit attorneys have limited resources

- Employment

- Not eligible for a work card until 180 days after filing asylum application, 365 days in some circumstances

- Housing

- Especially difficult if no community ties

- Medical and Mental Health services

- Often needed due to trauma experienced
- Lack of insurance
- Language barriers

- Public Participation

- Ineligible for Loans
- Fear of ICE
- Not eligible for Driver's License until receive work card
- Language barriers
- Literacy and Technology

What can we do to help?

- Educate others on the realities of seeking asylum
- Help families get settled in the community
 - Find stable housing
 - Teach how to get to nearest grocery store
 - Help get kids enrolled in school
- Assist in the search for an attorney
 - May need to call nonprofits multiple times
- Help find suitable employment
- Help enroll in MassHealth Limited
- Introduce them to the local immigrant community

What public benefits to asylum seekers qualify for?

- Asylum seekers are generally not considered as “qualified” immigrants, therefore they do not qualify for:
 - Food Stamps
 - Subsidized Housing
 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
 - Medicare/Medicaid
- Exceptions:
 - Emergency Medicaid (MassHealth Limited)
 - Medicaid Standard for children asylum seekers under 21
 - Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Benefits
 - Emergency Homeless Shelters
 - Immunizations/Treatment for Communicable Diseases
 - COVID Vaccine and Treatment

Questions?

- Books

- *What is the What*, by Dave Eggers
- *Bean Trees*, by Barbara Kingsolver
- *The Joy Luck Club*, by Amy Tan
- *The Devil's Highway*, by Luis Alberto Urrea

- Movies

- Human Flow
- Well-Founded Fear
- Maria Llena de Gracia (Maria Full of Grace)
- The Good Lie

Thank you!

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Catholic Social Services

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(call and ask for immigration intake line)

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www.cssdioc.org

This project was partially supported by the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance through a Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA) grant from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.