The Diocese of Brownsville Immigration Services Department was initiated in 1999 to provide legal advice and processing of immigration application/petitions for those who are seeking legal status in the United States of America. Since its inception, the Department has provided services to over 10,000 individuals in petitions such as I-485 Adjustment of Status, I-751 Remove Conditions/Green Card, I-90 Green Card Renewal, I-130 Family Green Card Petition, N-600 Citizenship through U.S. Parents, N-400 Citizenship through Permanent Residence and I-821D Renewal of DACA work permits (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

Additionally those who are undocumented and have been victims of serious crime or Domestic Violence are also served by this Department through the U-Visas (victims of crime assisting law enforcement in prosecution of the crime) and VAWA (Violence against Women Act) Visas respectively.

Between 2011 and 2018, this Department has processed 782 U-Visas.

The present staffing levels are 1 director, 1 accredited representative/supervisor, 3 case workers, 1 receptionist and 1 immigration clerk.

In 2006 the Bishop in an effort to expand the services due to increased demand, allowed the Department to begin charging minimal fees for the processing of the various petitions mentioned above. Waivers were still made available to those requesting financial assistance. The operation has grown into a self-sustaining office and today reports a yearly revenue that exceeds its budgeted expenses.

Networking opportunities with other area agencies that serve the poor continue and have increased to include the following: South Texas Civil Rights Project, Mujeres Unidas, Proyecto Libertad, Proyecto Juan Diego, L.U.P.E., Immigration Coalition, Hidalgo Family Violence Task Force, and La Red de Voces.

Outreach to the Public has included staff presentations at public schools and parishes within the Diocese. Also staff members attend town hall sessions with La Red de Voces disseminating information to the immigrant population in the peripheries of the Diocese. As frequent speakers on local Spanish radio stations, staff members inform about the latest news affecting immigrants and publicize the services of the Department.

The Immigration Services Department of the Diocese of Brownsville is an excellent witness of the tangible manifestation of the local church’s response to the material needs of the immigrant population. It is also evidence that the church is meeting the challenge to make a “preferential option for the poor.”

Because our Diocese borders Mexico, all staff members of the Immigration Department are bilingual in both the English and Spanish language.