



CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Diocese of Arlington

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Catholic Charities' Hogar Immigrant Services Supports Unaccompanied Children with Help from the Community Foundation and the Meyer Foundation

Falls Church, Virginia, June 30, 2015 – Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington received a \$20,000 grant from the Community Foundation and Meyer Foundation's Children Fleeing Violence Fund to strengthen its legal services to Unaccompanied Children.

By providing legal representation to these children, Hogar is helping to protect them from removal to their native countries where they have been facing gang persecution, domestic violence, parental neglect and abandonment, and other hardships.

Fairfax County received the most Unaccompanied Children placements in Virginia – which received the fifth most placements in the country (Office of Refugee Resettlement). In 2014 alone, 1,373 Unaccompanied Children were relocated to Fairfax County to live with sponsor families.

The grant will allow Hogar to see a 25% increase in the amount of children they can serve. This high-quality legal representation is free of charge.

“We are currently providing representation to unaccompanied children, free of charge, but have been at maximum capacity due to the demand in the Northern Virginia area,” says Brooke Hammond Pérez, Director of Hogar Immigrant Services. “These children are coming here oftentimes traumatized and are very vulnerable. Since there is no public defender in Immigration Court and most of these children do not speak English, the need for low-cost legal representation is crucial. We currently have a large waitlist of children waiting to receive services under our current funding. Through the support of the Children Fleeing Violence Fund, we will be able to serve more children off the waitlist.”

In addition to protecting some of our most vulnerable neighbors, permanent legal status for these children will increase their integration and participation in our communities.

Overall, Hogar's goal is to help legal immigrants to achieve self-sufficiency and integrate more fully into their communities. This is achieved through immigration legal consultation and representation, naturalization assistance and citizenship instruction, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes.

Hogar Immigrant Services is one of 15 programs of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington, which seeks to serve our most vulnerable brothers and sisters around us.

Founded in 1947, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington is a non-profit social service agency that serves twenty-one counties and seven independent cities in Virginia. Catholic Charities helps those in need regardless of their race or creed. For more information or press inquiries, please contact Morgan McKean at 703.841.3833.

###