

2023 IMPACT REPORT



SDVOICES
FOR PEACE

**OUR MISSION: SOUTH DAKOTA VOICES FOR PEACE
BUILDS POWER AND ENABLES HEALING IN
IMMIGRANT, REFUGEE, AND MUSLIM COMMUNITIES
BY AMPLIFYING THEIR VOICES AND WORKING IN
SOLIDARITY WITH ALL WHO DISMANTLE BIGOTRY
AND RACISM.**

**OUR VISION: WE IMAGINE A SOUTH DAKOTA
THAT IS DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE, AND
ANTI-RACIST.**



LETTER FROM THE CEO

This was the year where South Dakota Voices for Peace grew into solidifying our identity. When we started in 2017, it was just me and a small group of passionate working board members trying to create an organization that was bold and filled critical gaps in our community. Today, we are a staff of twelve and a passionate governing board.

In developing our four programming areas, we have always come back to our mission and vision statement as our guiding star. Our vision is “...to imagine a South Dakota that is diverse, inclusive and anti-racist.” Our mission is “...to build power and enable healing in immigrant, refugee and Muslim communities by amplifying their voices and working in solidarity with all who dismantle bigotry and racism.” Over the last 6 years we have tweaked a couple of words here and there but have stayed true to these ideas.

Some have asked how one organization can provide free legal services but also do community outreach, how we do rapid response but also focus on civic engagement. It really boils down to how we define “enabling healing”, “building power”, and having an “anti-racist” state.

Systemic racism severely impacts access to and trust in services. We know this firsthand through the lived experiences of our staff and board and by working with vulnerable community members and legal clients – victims of violence and children in immigration court. In walking alongside our clients in accessing existing services, we live through the impact of systemic racism our clients deal with on a daily basis. It is a fact that multilingual community members have to first overcome the insurmountable barrier of language access to existing services, before even advocating for being eligible for said services. Unfortunately, we live in a state where language access is not prioritized and there is a severely limited understanding of different immigration statuses and eligibility for services. This is a challenge we are taking head on by gathering data, presenting at conferences, and educating service providers on how it can be easy to fill these gaps. We enable healing in our communities by being an advocate, a live person who takes every step with our client to assure they receive services and benefits. We enable healing by being a trusted source of information, and a physical space where you will be listened to without judgment. We build power by being an example of what self-advocacy can look like, and how education on these issues is what builds true autonomy.

We cannot truly have an anti-racist state – taking action to dismantle systemic racism – without both changing policy and building our communities from the grass roots up. That is why we are committed to finding avenues for clients to receive lawful work permits so they can build a better life, and also emphasize civic engagement to vote on issues that we can change which will have lasting impact on historically unheard communities. We also understand that it will take impacted communities and our allies, working together, to dismantle racism in the state. That is why providing education and tools that assure social change is pivotal to healing and building power.

SD Voices for Peace is excited about the diversification in the demographics in our state and the potential of a rural state to be an example of holistic inclusion and belonging. That takes each one of us. It takes dismantling bigotry and lifting voices.

Thank you for believing in our mission and vision for the last six years. Your support allows us to boldly lead and strategically impact policies and lives in our state. With your continued support, we will make lasting change for years to come.

Sincerely



Taneeza Islam, CEO of South Dakota Voices for Peace



MULTILINGUAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH

We meet communities where they are, in their language. Providing access to in-language information around health equity and digital equity was our focus. Access to information allows multilingual communities to make informed decisions. With a growing team we added a Program Manager, which allowed us to make greater impact at various outreach events in Sioux Falls, Yankton, Huron, and Freeman. Our team consists of multilingual full-time employees, interns, and volunteers.

68 outreach events
attended at
schools, festivals,
and other
community events.



Information distributed in **Sioux Falls, Yankton, Huron, Mitchell, Freeman, and Rapid City.**

Information available in **English, Karen, Nepali, Arabic, and Spanish.**

DIGITAL EQUITY: CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) was a federal government program focused on increasing access to broadband internet and providing qualified households a \$30-\$75 monthly discount toward their internet bill and provided access to internet friendly devices. Lifeline is a program that provides discounts for communications services, such as phone bills. In early 2023, we received pilot funding from a national funder, Community Catalyst and because of the impact made, the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation awarded us \$50,000 to hire a Bilingual Digital Equity Coordinator to enroll members directly into these programs. When we started this project about 8% of eligible households in Sioux Falls were enrolled into ACP. By the end of the year, 21% of eligible households were enrolled!



5,000 flyers distributed at community events

139 people enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program and Lifeline in 2023.

Clients saved an estimated total of over **\$66,000** on their internet bills in a year.



MEDICAID EXPANSION: PRIORITIZING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

After registering voters and working with a statewide coalition to pass Medicaid Expansion in 2022, in 2023 we focused efforts to educate multilingual communities on expanded eligibility. We partnered with CHAD (Community Health Association of the Dakotas) to enroll multilingual community members into Medicaid. Our Community Health Workers (CHWs) attended trainings to assist in the enrollment process as well. Our CHWs assure that community members eligible for programs can overcome language barriers.



9,500 multilingual flyers distributed in South Dakota communities

Community collaborations with:

- Community Healthcare Association of the Dakotas
- Horizon Healthcare
- South Dakota Urban Indian Health
- LEAD South Dakota
- American Cancer Society

EDUCATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

We believe that each one of us has the power to impact change. Through education and trainings, we provide tools to the community on how to disrupt bigotry and racism, and learn factual information to dismantle mis and dis information.



This year, we had over 35 speaking engagements within the community, impacting over 1,000 people.



Speaking Engagements:

- University of South Dakota Center for Disabilities
- Intergroup Dialogues at Brookings Public Library
- South Dakota Education Association Conference
- EmBe Diversity and Inclusion Panel
- Community Catalyst Conference

EDUCATION

We leverage our social media channels to educate the community on the facts of immigration law and policy, facts about Islam and Muslims, facts on interfaith issues, and how to push back on mis and disinformation. Through research and a focus on the facts, we educate the community and dismantle common anti-immigrant myths.

MYTH: IMMIGRANTS DO NOT PAY TAXES.



THE TRUTH:

- U.S. immigrants pay a variety of taxes, regardless of their immigration status.
- No matter their immigration status, immigrants are paying sales tax, and many undocumented immigrants have tax deductions taken from their paychecks (*Adding Up the Billions in Tax Dollars Paid by Undocumented Immigrants*).
- Undocumented immigrants in the U.S. pay an estimated \$31.1 billion in state, local, and federal taxes per year (*Immigrants in the United States of America*).
- U.S. immigrants in total paid \$524.7 billion in taxes in 2021 (*Immigrants in the United States of America*).



MYTH: IMMIGRANTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO COMMIT CRIMES WHEN COMPARED TO U.S.-BORN CITIZENS.



THE TRUTH:

- Research in Texas showed that U.S. born citizens were more likely to be arrested for violent crimes, property crimes, and drug crimes when compared to undocumented immigrants (Light, He & Robey, 2020).
- Additionally, research on sanctuary policies shows that an increased presence of immigrants in a community does not increase the crime rate (Hausman, 2020).



BYSTANDER TO UPSTANDER INTERVENTION TRAINING: DISRUPTING BIGOTRY AND ASSURING BELONGING

Our bystander to UPSTANDER Intervention training is a 60-minute introduction to responding in safe and impactful ways to acts of discrimination, hate, and bigotry, whether in the workplace, a public space, or at home. Participants are trained to assure that the target of hate is brought back into belonging.

We provide these training sessions to educators, community organizations, business professionals, and concerned citizens.



In June, Jen Dreiske, our Chief Operations Officer, was invited to attend the Princeton's Bridging Divides Initiative De-escalation and Community Safety Training.

Jen learned with trainers and mediators from across the nation on the best practices on how to navigate complex and difficult conversations on dismantling bigotry and racism in political and potentially violent situations. Jen shared how SDVFP is doing the work to support our vision of SD becoming a diverse, inclusive and anti-racist state.

COHORTS OF COURAGE: YOUTH ADVOCATES

This summer, we held our annual Cohorts of Courage program! This program provides local BIPOC youth with space for healing and empowers them by providing them with the necessary tools to make social change. Our cohorts are small in number, assuring a brave and safe space where heavy and honest conversations can be had.

Treatment of BIPOC students in our schools, Transracial Adoption, Women's Rights, Sex Education, and LGBTQ2S+ Support are just some of the topics the participants of the 2023 Cohorts of Courage Youth Advocates wanted to talk about.

Community leaders, politicians, professors, and more made space to share their wisdom but most importantly listened, asked questions, validated, and empowered our participants to just be the vibrant people they are.

Thank you to the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation for partnering with us on this impactful program!



7 students in the Cohort of
Courage program

Average age of a Cohort
member: 19

The members of the Cohort
attend school at
Jefferson High School,
Mount Marty University,
and Augustana University.

9 local advocates came to educate,
listen to, and collaborate with the
Cohorts of Courage.

These advocates are
state legislators, journalists,
and professors from South Dakota.



RAPID RESPONSE

October 7, 2023 changed all of our lives. Whether it was the violent taking of hostages by Hamas, the ensuing genocide of Gazans by Israel, or both, we were all struggling with the news of these tragedies.

Though SDVFP does not get involved in international issues, we acknowledged that international issues have an impact on us in South Dakota. The emotionally charged issues around Palestine and Israel has generations of historical context. Our CEO, Taneeza Islam, studied abroad in Palestine in Israel during college and is an American Muslim. Our COO, Jen Dreiske, is an American Jew.

Our leadership came together to have an open discussion with staff on the impact of what we were seeing on the news. From this conversation, we realized that we needed to have a space for healing and hosted an interfaith dinner at the conclusion of the Global Day of Fasting, holding space to talking about Palestine and Israel and to seek a better understanding on what was unfolding.

We also leveraged social media to educate around issues like Zionism vs. Judaism; Statehood of Israel in 1948; History of Palestine; history of the conflict; and ceasefire advocacy.



Our interfaith dinner in October 2023.



Taneeza Islam and Jen Dreiske in our video response.

RAPID RESPONSE ACTION: CEASEFIRE NOW



#CEASEFIRE NOW

ZOOM WEBINAR ON HOW TO ENGAGE WITH YOUR
FEDERAL SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVE IN SOUTH
DAKOTA

MONDAY NOV 13, 7-8PM CST



Civic Engagement is a core programming area. In addition to registering people to vote we educate them on how to take direct action. In November, we hosted a webinar in collaboration with other community organizations where we educated attendees on how to contact South Dakota's US Senators and Representative on the topic of ceasefire. Together, we took action and made nearly 300 calls in 3 weeks.

Step 1

• Call Elected official's Washington DC Office

- **Senator Thune** SD # Toll-Free:
1-(866)-850-3855; (202)224-2321
- **Senator Rounds** SD# Toll Free:
1-(844) 875-5268; (202) 224-5842
- **Rep. Johnson** SD # Toll Free:
1-(855)225-2801; (202)225-2801



www.sdvoicesforpeace.org

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RAPID RESPONSE: HATE HAS NO HOME IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Our Rapid Response also led us to collaborating with other community-based organizations (pictured on the bottom) to take an intersectional stand against the rise of white supremacy in South Dakota. We stood together to condemn the many ways hate has been manifesting itself, whether it's through social media, podcasts, or distribution of antisemitic, transphobic, and racist literature. SD Voices for Peace works in coalition with these organizations to ensure that South Dakota is an inclusive, diverse, and welcoming state, and that any form of hate will not be tolerated.



COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS: HELPING CLIENTS ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS

As SD Voices for Peace has grown, we have come to understand the necessity of having a holistic approach to client services. This, of course, means having legal staff to help our clients through the legal immigration process, but also having Community Health Workers (CHWs) on staff to help our clients in obtaining social and medical resources. Our bilingual (Spanish and English) CHWs are committed to helping our clients achieve their goals and follow their dreams, and are tirelessly advocating for inclusion and welcoming for our immigrant population.



Our Community Health Workers invested over **3000** hours into serving multilingual clients in 2023. This included:

- **917** total referrals, **70** of which were directly related to children
- **42** enrollments in the Affordable Connectivity Program and Lifeline, in addition to the ones completed by our Digital Equity Coordinator
- **46** Instances of helping clients find financial assistance
- **135** Cases of immigration legal services assistance outside of SDVFP's service area
- **218** Instances of helping clients access medical resources
- **52** Instances of helping clients access social services
- **172** Instances of helping clients access basic needs, such as food and clothing
- **92** Instances of helping clients find jobs and navigate the workforce
- **91** Instances of language interpretation for clients

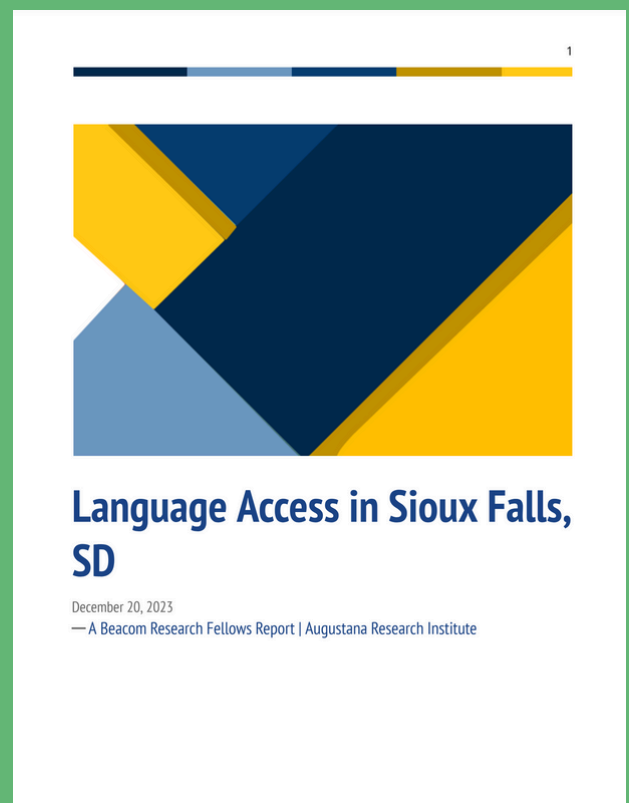
COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS: CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

“After the legal team applied for my work permit, I attempted to get my driver’s license and social security card on my own. Because of language barriers, I had no success. After three attempts on my own, I asked the CHW to help me. She came to the appointment with me and was able to translate. Now I have my driver’s license, social security card, and my fishing license!”

-Unaccompanied Child Client

DATA DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

SDVFP and the Augustana Research Institute collaborated in creating a comprehensive research project concerning multilingual access to basic needs resources in Sioux Falls. In December of 2023, the fellows published the full report, providing some of the first and only available research on the topic. This report allows SDVFP to have a data-driven conversation about how language barriers can impede access to vital community resources and urge our community to come together and create solutions.



LEGAL SERVICES

SDVFP provides the state's only free immigration legal services for victims of crimes and Unaccompanied Children (UCs). We are an active participant with the SD Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault. Any victim that utilizes assistance in the Network can call our office for immigration legal assistance. We also work closely with Victim's Assistants and State's Attorneys offices across our state to help in prosecuting crimes and obtaining legal status. We work closely with immigration court and regional organizations to assure UCs living in South Dakota know that they can access our services.

Building strong cases takes time. It takes...

- **1 hour** to file for a work permit.
- **5 hours** to create a Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJ) application.
- **15 hours** for a state court guardianship, which is needed to file an SIJ application.
- **25 hours** for an asylum application.
- **30 hours** to create a U Visa, T Visa, or VAWA application.

Our hard work has an impact. In 2023 we:

- Had **60 active legal immigration cases**, with **30 more on our waitlist**.
- Filed over **60 different motions to the court and applications** so our clients can get onto a path to citizenship.
- Applied for **26 legal work permits and 21 were approved** so far.
- Filed successful applications for pathways to U.S. citizenship, which included **3 U Visa cases, 1 T Visa case, and 4 SIJ cases**.
- Filed **7 motions** to administratively close immigration court cases. This means that our clients will not have to appear in court until there is a decision on the application that was filed on their behalf.

CASE SPOTLIGHT: JASMELIN

Our client Jasmelin made the dangerous journey to the US Border from Guatemala in October 2020. She was fleeing targeted violence. When an adult applies for asylum after being detained at the border, they have to file this application in immigration court. Because Jasmelin was an unaccompanied child, in October 2021, we were able to file an application for asylum to USCIS – the agency which makes decisions on applications filed. If USCIS does not make a decision within 180 days, the applicant can file for a lawful work permit called an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). In June 2022, we filed an EAD application for her.

The next step in the asylum application process is an interview with an USCIS officer. In June 2022, Taneeza (CEO/supervisory attorney), a legal intern/translator and Jasmelin traveled to the USCIS traveling asylum office near Minneapolis, MN. After the grueling interview was over, we had to wait. There is no timeline on when approvals or denials will be mailed.



In June 2023, we received the incredible news that Jasmelin's asylum application was approved. Currently, approval rates for asylum applications across the nation for people from Guatemala is 8%! (Source: Executive Office for Immigration Review). With this approval she will be eligible for Lawful Permanent Residence or can receive a green card after one year of living in the United States after receiving her asylum approval!

With her approval and work permit in hand, we asked Jasmelin, "What is your dream job?"

She smiled and looked up and said, "Can I do anything I want?"

We said "Yes. Anything!"

Jasmelin is working with our Community Health Worker to find scholarships for beauty school and assistance in applying. Jasmelin told us that she never believed she could follow her dream of being a beautician, but now she can! After one year, Jasmelin will be able to apply for Lawful Permanent Residency or she will receive her green card. After 4 more years, she can apply for US Citizenship.



LEGAL SERVICES: CONGRATS GRADS!

One of our proudest moments this year was four of our legal clients graduating high school in May of 2023! We are amazed by these brave and resilient young adults who are now on their way to following their dreams and discovering who they are! The next steps for these graduates include college, military service, working, and beauty school! We are so proud of our clients, and we are so grateful that they now have the space to be able to dream, explore, and hope! We celebrate their success and the successes of all our incredible clients.



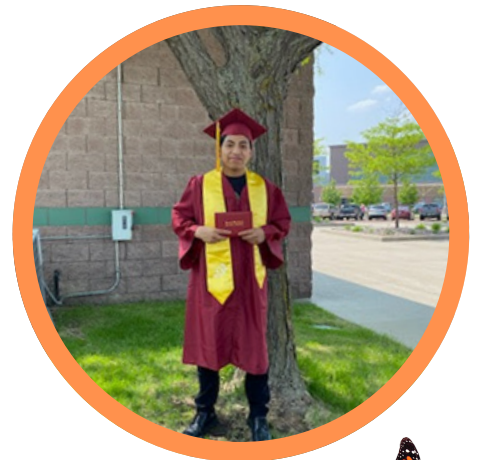
Jose



Ariana



Ivonne



Sergio



SOUTH DAKOTA VOICES FOR PEACE

2023 FINANCIAL REPORT

INCOME	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
GRANTS & CONTRIBUTIONS	\$657,845.00	\$510,480.17	\$537,048.88	\$300,662.16	\$157,933.62	\$117,407.86
OTHER - PPP LOAN	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$27,809.67	\$80.00	\$0.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$657,845.00	\$510,480.17	\$537,048.88	\$328,471.83	\$158,013.62	\$117,407.86

NET ASSETS	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
ASSETS	\$319,786.00	\$405,579.03	\$462,296.67	\$400,265.96	\$230,691.91	\$129,933.60
LIABILITIES	\$0.00	\$2,385.69	\$11,479.11	\$3,861.08	\$1,126.45	\$0.00
NET ASSETS	\$403,193	\$403,193.34	\$450,817.56	\$396,404.88	\$229,565.46	\$129,933.60

EXPENSES	2023	DISTRIBUTION %	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
PROGRAM	\$590,024.00	80%	\$370,489.65	\$529,327.62	\$116,935.49	\$50,595.60	\$7,406.67
SUPPORT	\$150,806.00	20%	\$187,614.74	\$82,322.83	\$22,505.62	\$7,786.16	\$3,574.67
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$746,252	-	\$558,104.39	\$611,650.45	\$139,441.11	\$58,381.76	\$10,981.34

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Taneeza Islam, Esq., ex-officio
Colleen Moran, Esq., board chair
Reverend Jean Morrow
Araceli Hernandez
Kuol Malou



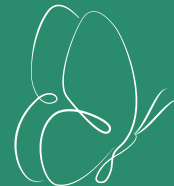
2023 SDVFP STAFF

Taneeza Islam, CEO
Jen Dreiske, COO
Gigi Tavarez, Program Manager
Jon Chapman, Staff Attorney
Lorena Diaz-Martinez, Case Coordinator
Olimpia Justice, Case Coordinator
Lara Hanson, Operations and Creative Projects Coordinator
Aliyah Abdulrahman, Community Health Worker
Erica Aguilar, Community Health Worker
Jessica Walton, Community Health Worker
Ashlyn Himley, Digital Equity Coordinator
Astrid Rosario, Digital Equity Coordinator
Anna Dow, Digital Content Specialist
Melissa McCauley, Grant Manager



2023 SDVFP INTERNS

Areli Cortes
Jessica Dull
Kolby Lintz
Camryn Simmons



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Khorasan Kabob House
John Pagone and volunteers from First Congregational Church



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Presentation Sisters
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Anonymous Donor through Driftwood Dairy
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Sioux Falls Food Co-Op



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Civic Nation
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SD Department of Public Safety
Community Healthcare Association of the Dakotas
VERA Institute of Justice
RWN Foundation
Sanford Immunization Grant (USAgings)





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of your support! Thank you to ALL of
our generous supporters for your
continued belief in
South Dakota Voices for Peace's
mission and vision!**



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continue our impactful work.







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