



Media Statement

October 2, 2019

Jewish Family Service of San Diego Statement Re: Migrant Protection Protocols Week of Action *From Senior Director of Immigration Services Kate Clark*

The federal government’s Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP, commonly referred to as “Remain in Mexico”) forces asylum seekers to return to and remain in Mexico to await their U.S. court dates, depriving them of resources and assistance in the U.S., including legal aid.

As of Sept. 14, 2019, more than 38,000 asylum seekers have been returned to Mexico under this policy. Only about 1% of these individuals have legal representation for their court hearings, significantly below normal representation rates for immigration court cases.

[Jewish Family Service of San Diego](#) (JFS) believes asylum seekers have a right to due process to receive a “Know Your Rights” presentation and “Friend of the Court” assistance, in which an attorney informally guides an individual through their hearing. Currently, these services are permitted in other immigration courts and detention centers across the country, but not in MPP courts.

JFS, which leads the legal services for and is a core partner of the San Diego Rapid Response Network, requested the ability to provide these services to asylum seekers enrolled in MPP in May 2019 and was **denied** access in June 2019 by the Department of Justice’s Executive Office for Immigration Review.

Now that all local immigration court cases have been postponed from the docket except for MPP and because of the courts’ denial of services, JFS and other San Diego immigration attorneys joined together this week to show up at court and advocate for “Know Your Rights” presentations and “Friend of the Court” assistance for asylum seekers in MPP.

Over three days, JFS conducted critical “Know Your Rights” presentations in six courtrooms, equipping 100 individuals with vital and accurate information about the legal process and MPP-specific proceedings. These presentations have proven to be an invaluable resource to this vulnerable group, who otherwise would have little to no access to legal representation.

Unfortunately, our attempts to serve as a “Friend of the Court” have been declined.

We hope that the Department of Justice will continue to allow “Know Your Rights” presentations and that we are allowed to formally institutionalize a “Friend of the Court” program.

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