**From the Community of Practice applications, here are the things participants listed as learning topics relating to the dynamics of DV & SA for Immigrant Survivors:**

* Facing resistance from judges about how domestic violence should impact determinations about custody and visitation. I've also encountered judges not believing victims about the history of domestic violence in the relationship.
* Unfortunately, there are still judges who allow a party's lack of legal status to affect whether they are awarded primary or even joint custody of their child or children. Also, I continue to face the stigma that some judges, attorneys, caseworkers, and others place on victims of domestic violence, including the stigma that victims are somehow improperly using the abuse perpetrated against them as an excuse, or "weapon" against the other side in custody and other disputes. To my knowledge, there is no mandatory training that judges in my jurisdiction must complete before hearing family law cases involving domestic violence issues, so I feel obligated to present my client's case in a way that educates and informs the court. I look forward to hearing how other practitioners approach these challenges with their clients.
* It is sometimes difficult to balance the "best interest of the child" standard, which allows a finder of fact to inquire about previous criminal actions, and a client's undocumented status, which often results in a client working with false documents. In several instances, we have had to have the client plead the fifth, rather than answer questions about her previous work history, which can lead to a negative inference by the finder of fact. This seems patently unjust.
* I have difficulty educating judges on the UCCJEA and custody jurisdiction in DV cases.
* I am also encountering challenges with judges who do not see domestic violence as a factor in custody/visitation matters. There is a very strong focus on having children reunite with the other parent and many times the judge does not remember the DV history.
* Explaining domestic violence when there is no outside evidence (e.g. no medical evidence or police reports of violence.)
* Courts considering immigration status in custody hearings.
* Judges need more training on immigration law.
* I find that many judges don't understand immigration law and take some of their misunderstandings into consideration when making custody and visitation orders. I find that judges consider factors which are not relevant or should not be considered in domestic violence cases (such as whether a protective order will affect a domestic violence perpetrator's job) and judges don't take into consideration factors which better explain an undocumented victim's situation (such as she's undocumented because the perpetrator has not petitioned for her, that she hasn't worked because she does not have legal status, etc.).
* Judges willing to sign U Visa Law Certifications after findings of abuse in protective order context
* It has been difficult in my jurisdiction to educate the courts on the dynamics of domestic violence. If a victim didn't contact the police or receive some sort of physical injury, the domestic violence is discounted. There are so many forms that domestic violence can take. There is emotional abuse, financial abuse and immigration abuse, where the abuser constantly threatens to call immigration and refuses to petition for the victim's status. In my experience, some of the other forms of abuse can be more damaging than the physical abuse.