# Family Law Attorneys Advocating for Immigrant Survivors: A Community of Practice Overview

**What is our Family Law Attorneys Community of Practice?**

This Community of Practice (CoP), funded by the Office of Violence against Women is designed to facilitate learning between family law practitioners with diverse experiences and national experts to address common challenges and emerging issues encountered in family law cases that involve immigrant survivors and their children of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence. Family law practitioners and expert faculty will come together to share stories, tools, resources, experiences, strategies, problem-solving, and best practices; build relationships that enable participants with varying levels of expertise to learn from each other how to better represent immigrant survivors in family court cases. This CoP is designed to develop and sustain ongoing learning opportunities to gain insights and feedback, access to tools and resources, and build relationships with colleagues in similar roles across the country.

We will cover a range of topics based on group needs, examples include: building relationships with law enforcement, courts, and prosecutors to improve outcomes for survivors and children; creative protection order remedies; VAWA confidentiality and family court discovery; safe court accompaniment under VAWA statute and ICE policies; public benefits updates (H.R. 1); immigration issues that arise in custody; divorce, protection order, and child support cases; immigrant survivors' interactions with child welfare; and custody planning, stand-by guardianship, and the ICE Detained Parent Directive.

**As a member of this Community of Practice, what can you expect?**

- 60-minute conference call conversations with peers are tailored to your practice area and relevant to your daily work, addressing CoP members' family law questions and interests (10 per year).
- Opportunities to build relationships with family law colleagues and experts nationwide who understand your work and to receive peer-to-peer mentoring on a variety of topics, and have access to subject matter experts.
- Ongoing engagement via a private, invitation-only listserv offering access to experts, event updates, summaries, the most recent up-to-date tools and resources, innovative practices, and discussion forums for key family law topics.
- Information from guest speakers, judges, subject matter experts in family law cases involving immigrant victims.

**What else does the Community of Practice include?**

- 24/7 access to NIWAP's resource library, with options to request new materials, connect with CoP members nationwide, join discussions, attend webinars, and network at in-person trainings.
- Regular check-ins with knowledgeable, trained facilitators and staff who want to know what's on your mind, what are your strengths and where you could use help.
- Up to an hour of work per month in preparation for or as a follow-up to our monthly conference calls.

## Join Our NIWAP Community of Practice

- To join our community of practice, sign up here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FamCOP2023
- To learn more about this community, contact NIWAP at info@niwap.org and Nupur Chandna at nchandna@american.edu.
- To learn more about NIWAP visit our web library at http://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/

*This training is supported by Grant No.* **15JOVW-23-GK-05119** *awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in this presentation are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.*

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## Who Manages this Community of Practice?



**Leslye E. Orloff**, is an Adjunct Professor and Director of NIWAP at American University Washington College of Law. Her 38-year career includes working collaboratively with experts across the country to develop and implement immigration relief, public benefits access and family law protections for immigrant women, children and survivors. She was involved in drafting the Protection for Immigrant Victims of Violence Against Women of the Violence Against Women Acts of 1994, 2000, 2005, and 2013, the Trafficking Victims Protection Acts of 2000 and 2008, legal services access for battered immigrants in 1997 and 2005 and welfare access for battered immigrants in 1996. She is a co-founder and co-chair of the National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women (1992-2011).



**Veronica Thronson**, is a Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the Immigration Law Clinic at Michigan State University College of Law, where she teaches immigration, family, and domestic violence law. She previously directed the MSU Law Clinic and was a visiting professor at Penn State Law, leading its Center for Immigrants Rights Clinic. Before academia, she led the Domestic Violence Project at the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada and worked at the New York Immigration Coalition. Thronson trains attorneys and judges, contributes to gender-based violence and immigrant advocacy initiatives, and has received honors including the 2024 Light of Liberty Attorney of the Year and 2023 Champion of Justice Award. She earned her law degree from CUNY School of Law and is admitted to practice in New Jersey, New York, Nevada, and Michigan.



**Patricia Ravenhorst**, is a General Counsel for the SC Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, where she provides legal support, training, and oversees attorney programs. She has over 20 years of experience training legal and community professionals on survivors' legal needs, immigration, and human trafficking. Previously, she led the Immigrant Victim Program at the SC Victim Assistance Network, establishing services and a statewide coalition for immigrant survivors. She also practiced employment and immigration law at the Wyche Law Firm. Ravenhorst holds a JD and MA from Duke University and a BA from Florida State University, and is licensed in South Carolina . She has multiple leadership awards recognizing her work such as the Riley Institute's Diversity Leadership Award for International Diversity and the SC Lawyer's Weekly Leadership in Law Award.



**Nupur Chandna** serves as the Policy Fellow at the National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project (NIWAP) in Washington, D.C. In this role, she is responsible for conducting research, analyzing data, assisting with drafting policy documents, technical assistance, training and leading communities of practice. Prior to NIWAP, Nupur worked at the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, for four years where she worked with domestic violence survivors. She worked with survivors through the economic justice project, and provided direct legal assistance for housing, protection orders, and expungement matters. She earned her master's degree in law (LL.M.) from Northwestern University and is admitted to practice law in the State of New York and Washington D.C.

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