Law Enforcement and Prosecution Virtual Roundtable

U and T Visa Certification: Lessons from Hennepin County

October 9, 2024

NIWAP

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NTWAP

HENNEPIN COUNTY
ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

U & T Visa Certification Policy

Presented by

Nicki Slick, Administrative Coordinator
Travis Sigafoos, Victim Services Supervisor
Eder Castillo, Immigration Policy Attorney

Agenda

Prior practices

What assumptions and customs guided our prior U & T visa practices?

Our policy's story

Why and how did we enact our new policy?

Impact and challenges

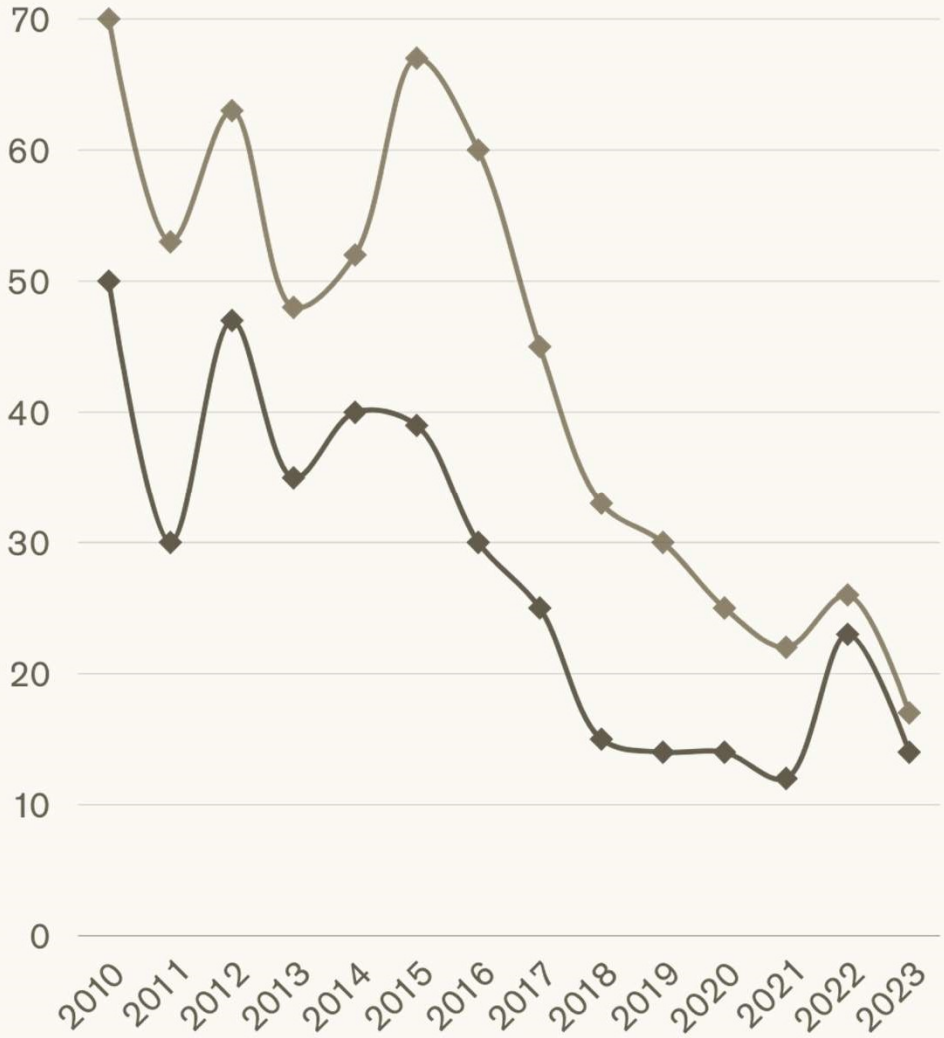
How has our new policy impacted our county's immigrant community and what challenges have we faced?

www.HennepinAttorney.org/visa

Prior practices

2008-2022

- ONLY CERTIFIED ON OUR CLOSED CASES
- INCONSISTENT TURNAROUND TIMES
- VICTIMS HAD TO BE VERY HELPFUL
- SCRUTINIZED VICTIMS' CRIMINAL HISTORIES
- T VISA CERTS WERE EXTREMELY RARE



The results of prior practices

Certification requests as a proxy for trust

Our office built a reputation by denying a large swath of requests. That reputation led to a steep drop in requests. The lesson we learned: Don’t take requests for granted.

In early 2023, County Attorney Mary Moriarty gave us the green light to write our dream U & T visa policy. The results defied expectations.



COUNTY ATTORNEY
MARY MORIARTY:

“Is this your dream policy?”

www.HennepinAttorney.org/visa

The Pillars of Our Policy

www.HennepinAttorney.org/visa

Safety for all

Safety is the product of trust. By repairing relationships and building trust, we make our community safer.

Victim-centered

Everything we do is guided by our North Star: serving our victims.

Trauma-Informed

We recognize the vulnerability of our victims and honor the courage it takes to come forward.

10 Key Components

Eligibility & Process

- CERTIFYING WHEN THERE'S A "NEXUS"
- NO STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS
- CERTIFY IN ACTIVE CASES
- SUPER SIMPLE REQUEST PROCESS
- 30 OR 7 DAYS TO PROCESS

10 Key Components

Victim-Centered Standards

- WE ONLY ANSWER 2 QUESTIONS
- TRAUMA-INFORMED HELPFULNESS
- DO NOT CONSIDER CRIMINAL HISTORY
- REVIEW U REQUESTS FOR T VISA ELIGIBILITY
- MAKE DECLINING DIFFICULT

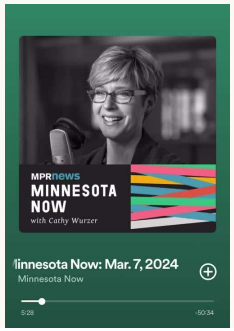
The roll-out

Don’t do good things quietly









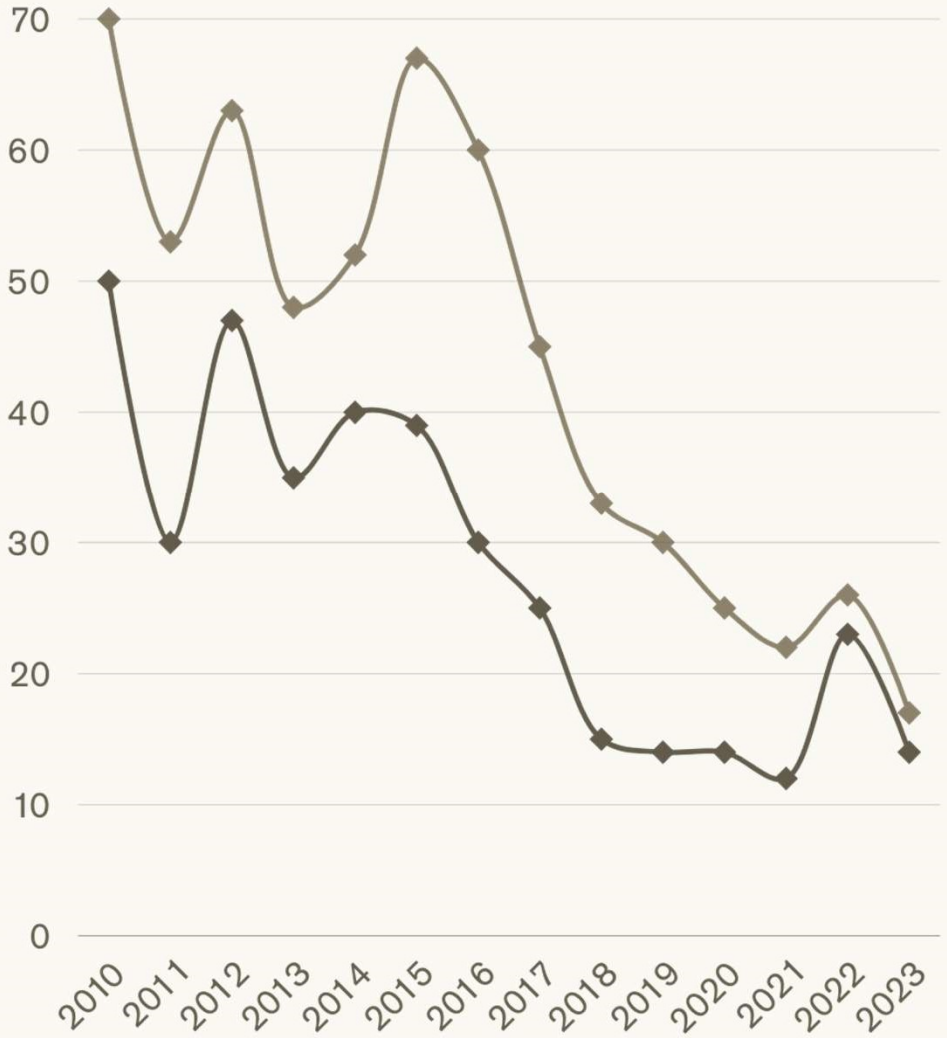



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PaHoua Vang
Interim Executive Director
MNCASA
New U and T Visa Policy Helps Increase Crime Reporting
Hennepin County Attorney's Office Press Conference
March 6, 2024
Watch on YouTube

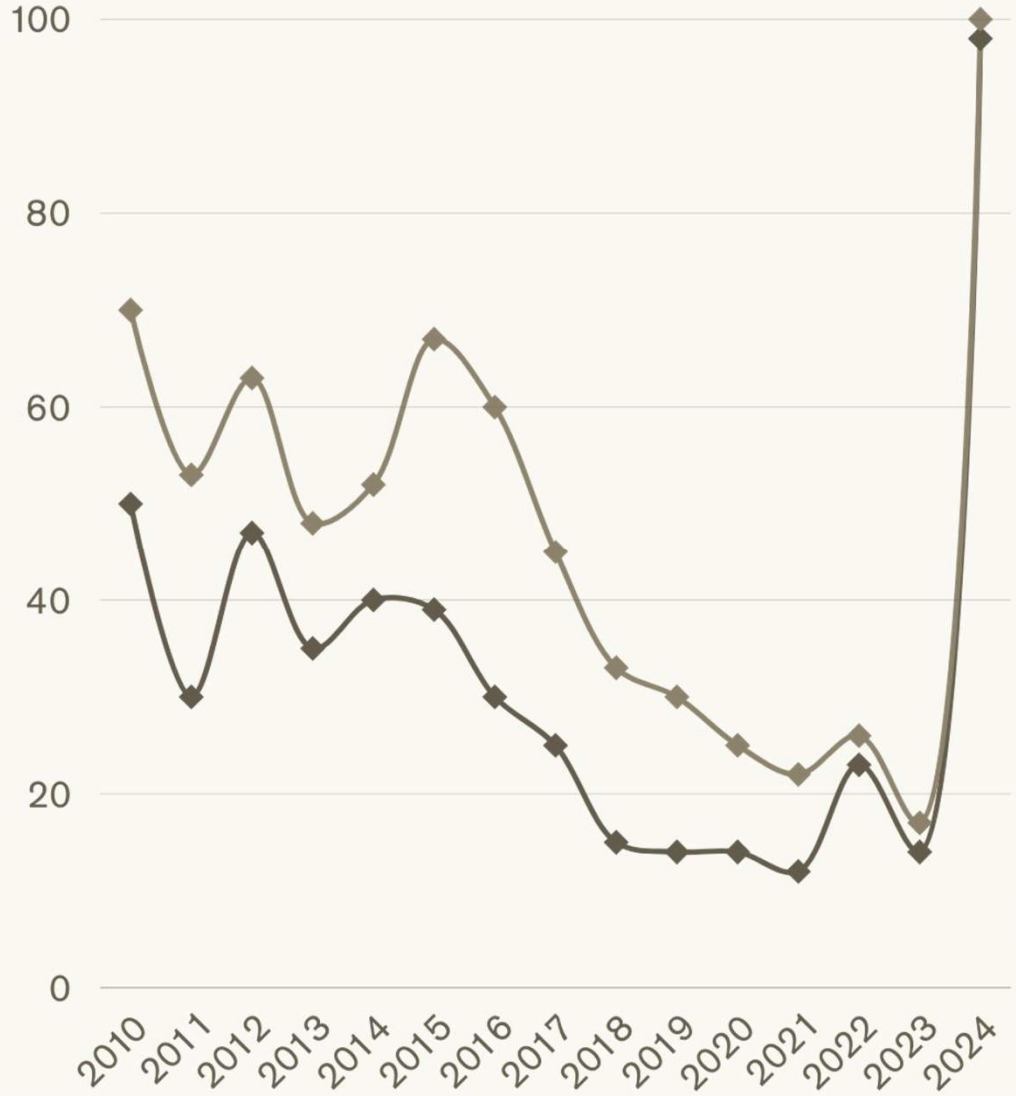

Explica: Política de visas U y T - Oficina del Fiscal del Condado de Hennepin
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Hennepin County Attorney's New U and T Visa Policy Community Conversati...
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Hennepin County Attorney's Office
U and T Visa Community Event: Hennepin County Attorney's Office
Midtown Global Market, Minneapolis
March 12, 2024
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Fiscalía del Condado de Hennepin
25.04.24
Para más información, llama (612) 596-0550
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Before our policy



After our policy

Certification requests as a proxy for trust

Our office is rebuilding its reputation through a new policy. Our victim-centered policy combined with our public outreach led to a shocking increase in requests. The lesson we learned: Policy matters.

U & T Visa Myths

www.HennepinAttorney.org/visa

They ruin prosecutions

Since enacting this policy, none of our U & T visa cases have ended in a dismissal or acquittal.

You will lose credibility

We are now seen as leaders in this space by both victims and law enforcement.

Policy doesn’t matter

The result of complacency is that victims go unserved, and trust is lost. Noncitizens should not live in the shadows.

The Challenges

Training out old habits

Our victim services specialists and attorneys had been coached to approach U & T visa requests with caution.

Roles and responsibilities

When requests started pouring in, our team had to streamline our process and play new roles.

Complying with *Brady*

Certifying in active cases within and outside of our jurisdiction meant we had more constitutional responsibilities.

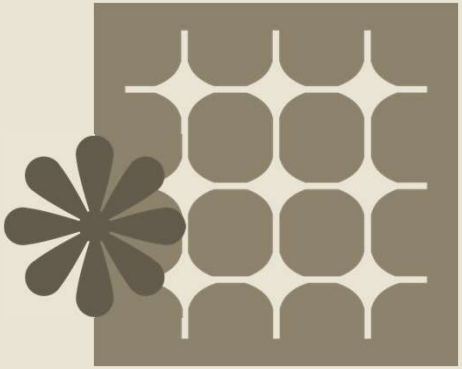
“Too good to be true”

Building trust takes time and we strive to build trust with the immigration bar every day.

"I applaud the Hennepin County Attorney's Office on their U and T visa policy which serves as a model for the country."

- Leslye Orloff, NIWAP Director

www.HennepinAttorney.org/visa





Let's Connect About Immigration Policies

www.HennepinAttorney.org/visa (612) 596-0550 visa@hennepin.us

Technical Assistance

NIWAP

- Call: 202.274.4457
- Email: info@niwap.org

Contact NIWAP for training for your department or agency

Training Materials & Thank You!

Law Enforcement and Prosecutor Roundtables: https://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/law-enforcement-and-prosecutor-roundtables/

Upcoming Roundtable: Tuesday, November 19, 2024
10:00 am PT / 1:00 pm ET