

Strengthening Connections with the Petaluma Community: Immigrant and Immigration Rights in Uncertain Times



LUMA

Caitlin Foscett, Kaley Mounts, Nic Rocha, & Molly Scott

California State University, Long Beach

School of Social Work

Project Description

Strengthening Connections with the Petaluma Community

- Designed in response to the current presidential administration's aggressive anti-immigration stance and actions
- A collaborative effort with
 - the City of Petaluma
 - Catholic Charities
 - Housing and Economic Rights Advocates (HERA)
 - Trained community advocate Jose Arturo Ibarra
 - Petaluma Police Department
- Two-day workshop - a virtual and in-person option
- 56-page resource packet for community members and service providers

Information Covered

- Pathways to citizenship
- Immigrants' rights when encountering immigration & other federal law enforcement officials
- Housing rights under federal and California state Fair Housing laws
- State law and local policies for police involvement with immigration

Community Assessment

- Target population: residents and service providers in Petaluma, CA (95952, 95953, 94954). Petaluma has 58,800 residents, excluding the unincorporated areas.
- Petaluma is predominantly White (71.1%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (23.8%), Asian (4.9%), Black (2.2%), American Indian (1%), and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (.3%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).
- Sonoma County has a significant immigrant population, with 16.6% of the population being born outside of the United States (almost 3% higher than the national average). Additionally, 8.6% of the population are not citizens (Data USA, 2023).
- The immigrant community is under increasing threat with the new presidential administration's aggressive and largely unconstitutional deportation operations. Petaluma also lies within the boundaries that Customs and Border Patrol operates (100 miles from any U.S. border).



Freemason Building, Downtown Petaluma



Aerial View of Petaluma River

Community Partners

Presenters



Community Volunteer



Facilitation



The City of
Petaluma



Sponsors



Project Development/Implementation

Project Goal: Increase safety for immigrant community members in Petaluma, California.



Long-Term Outcome Objective: By May 2026, an immigrant rights workshop will be held so annual events happen every year.



Intermediate Outcome Objective: By December 2025, the date for the 2026 event will be established.

Goal #1: Increase knowledge about immigrant rights, including housing rights, among service providers.

Goal #2: Facilitate collaboration/partnership between immigrant rights advocates, City of Petaluma, and local service providers.

**Outcome Objective #1 – Initial/Intermediate
(by April/May 2025)**

An immigrant rights workshop for service providers will be designed to address the urgent need of increased knowledge about immigration and immigration rights.

**Outcome Objective #2 – Long Term
(by April/May 2026)**

The workshop will be held annually with presenters and facilitators to create sustainability.

**Outcome Objective #3 – Initial/Intermediate
(by April/May 2025)**

Engage presenters and facilitators in planning and implementation of the workshop and invite local service providers to attend the workshop.

**Outcome Objective #4 – Long Term
(by April/May 2026)**

Continue to engage presenters, facilitators, and service providers annually.

Methods of Evaluation

Data were collected by developing questions and creating a survey instrument. The survey was provided in English and Spanish. LUMA utilized Google Sheets to share the survey with workshop attendees. The option of a written paper survey was also provided at the in-person workshop. Paper survey responses were later recorded through the online survey for accuracy.

Closed questions

- Project effectiveness (Likert Scale)
- Demographic Information (Multiple Choice)

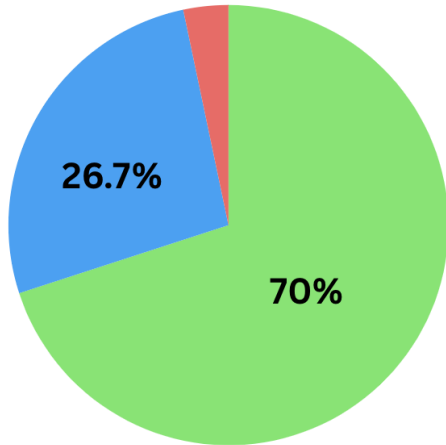
Open-ended questions (short answer)

- Role/Organization
- Where do you primarily serve your clients?
- Suggestions for future workshops

Summary of Key Findings of Evaluation

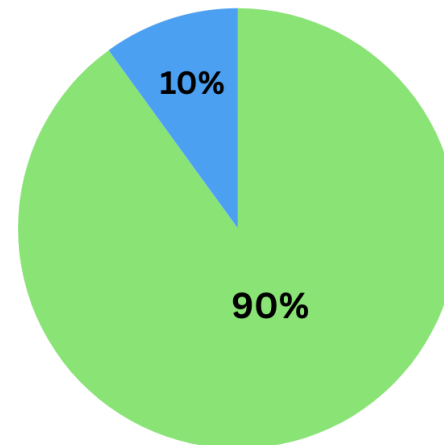
- 30 participants completed the survey
 - **Knowledge:** 97% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed they learned more about immigration or immigrant-related rights
 - **Resource:** 100% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed they learned of one resource they can share with a client
 - **Perception:** 93% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed they perceived the Petaluma community as being more supportive of immigrants.
 - Positive suggestions and ideas were provided by service providers:
 - “Continue this same workshop for others at different venues and/or also record and disperse.”
 - “On-site immigration rights for families at Kids First Family Shelter (KFFS) or COTS shelter.”
 - Attendees of the workshop work for local agencies, including:
 - City of Petaluma
 - First 5 of Sonoma County
 - Sonoma County Library
 - COTS
 - Rebuilding Together Petaluma
 - Petaluma City Schools
 - Family, Youth & Children’s Services
 - VOICES
 - Verity
- ***Petaluma’s largest service provider, Petaluma People Services Center, opted not to attend

Strengthening Connections Results



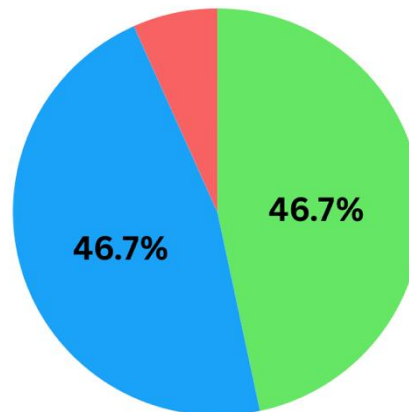
“After attending today's workshop, I learned more about immigration and immigrant-related rights.”

26.7% Agree
70% Strongly Agree



“As a result of attending this event, I know of one resource that I can share with a client.”

10% Agree
90% Strongly Agree



“As a result of attending this event, I perceive the Petaluma community as being more supportive of immigrants.”

46.7% Agree
46.7% Strongly Agree

Future Recommendations & Implications

Recommendations

- Give at least 30 days between invitation date and event date
- Include a greater variety of service providers, i.e. include faith institutions, business owners and individual service providers
- Craft survey response options as multiple choice for data cleanliness
- Have a concurrent community facing version of the workshop (we chose not to do this for the safety of individuals who may become targeted at an event geared toward the immigrant community)
- Ensure access to presentation includes closed captioning
- Record any virtual workshop presentations
- Include a notice in virtual event registration and email confirmation that the event will be recorded and registering and attending is consent to be recorded

Policy, Practice, and Research Implications

- Collaborate with city leadership to mandate immigrant rights trainings for all city and law enforcement staff, and explore incentives for departmental participation and compliance.
- Establish a task force or advisory committee that includes immigrant community members to provide input on city services and training needs.
- Explore the experiences of immigrant community members accessing city services before and after training implementation.

Acknowledgements

We are so grateful to all those who played a part in making this workshop successful. We express deep gratitude to all mentioned below.

The people who helped facilitate and coordinate the workshop:

- Deb Fox, Climate Action Manager with The City of Petaluma City Manager's Office
- Chief Brian Miller with the Petaluma Police Department

Our incredible experts and presenters, without whom our workshop would not have happened:

- Alejandra Torres, Immigration Operations & Education Administrator and DOJ Accredited Representative with Catholic Charities
- Amina Merritt, Attorney with Housing and Economic Rights Advocates (HERA)
- Jose Arturo Ibarra, Know Your Rights/Conozca Sus Derechos Trainer
- Lieutenant Zilverio Rivera with the Petaluma Police Department

Our local sponsors who provided donations to support our event:

- Oliver's Market in Cotati, California
- Petaluma Market in Petaluma, California
- Sprouts Farmers Market in Petaluma, California

Project Team Members



Caitlin Foskett
Kaley Mounts
Nicolas Rocha
Molly Scott

References

U.S. Census Bureau . (2023). U.S. Census Bureau quickfacts: Petaluma City, California. U.S. Census Bureau.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/petalumacitycalifornia/PST045223>

Sonoma County, CA. Data USA. (2023).

<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/sonoma-county-ca#:~:text=Foreign%2DBorn%20Population&text=79.3k%20people-,As%20of%202023%2C%2016.6%25%20of%20Sonoma%20County%2C%20CA%20residents,the%20rate%20has%20been%20increasing>