

# RIAC General Information

## ILS Regional Immigration Assistance Centers

The Sixth Amendment requires defense counsel to provide clients with specific advice about clear immigration consequences of a plea bargain. See *Padilla v Kentucky*, 599 US 386 (2010). The failure of counsel to meet that constitutional duty can have profound consequences for noncitizen clients. But giving competent advice requires knowledge of immigration laws that are complex and constantly in flux, and many defender offices and ACPs cannot hire in-house experts. Fortunately, free expert advice is available to defenders.

To ensure that counsel has access to the support needed to provide effective assistance to noncitizens, in 2016, ILS created a statewide network of Regional Immigration Assistance Centers (RIACs or Centers), staffed by attorneys with extensive expertise in immigration law. This innovative program was the first of its kind in the nation. In 2020, ILS initiated a new three-year contract period, offering grants to continue to fully fund the RIACs.

The extensive services provided by RIAC attorneys include immigration advisals in criminal, appellate, and post-conviction matters, as well as in Family Court cases carrying potential immigration consequences. The Centers also offer extensive trainings to counsel and courts.

In 2020, the Centers collectively responded to more than 2,000 requests for assistance. Defense counsel and the RIACs joined forces to protect noncitizens because they understand that the consequences of a plea bargain regarding even a minor offense may mean the difference between the client maintaining a life in the United States or being permanently separated from family and banished from a country long considered home. Often a RIAC can help counsel persuade a prosecutor to use an alternative plea deal providing for a conviction of the same level for the same jail time, while avoiding an inequitable penalty of deportation or inadmissibility. To find the Center serving your county, please see the information below.

# Our Statewide Network

## **Region 1: Western NY**

### ***Counties:***

Allegany, Cattaraugus, Cayuga, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates.

### ***Supervising Attorney:***

Sophie Feal

Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo

290 Main Street, Suite 400

Buffalo, NY 14202

(716) 853-9555 ext. 269

[sfeal@labbuffalo.org](mailto:sfeal@labbuffalo.org)

### ***Links:***

#### **RIAC Website**

<https://legalaidbuffalo.org/regional-immigration-assistance-center>

#### **RIAC Brochure**

[Western NY - Legal Aid Bureau Buffalo/Ontario](#)

#### **RIAC Recent Newsletters & Articles**

[Western NY Newsletter - January 2021](#)

[Western NY Newsletter - February 2021](#)

[Western NY Newsletter - March 2021](#)

[Western NY Newsletter - July 2021](#)

[Western NY Newsletter - August 2021](#)

[Western NY Newsletter - September 2021](#)

[Western NY Newsletter - October 2021](#)

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[Western NY Newsletter - March 2025](#)

[Western NY Newsletter - April 2025](#)

[New York Law Journal - Understanding Your Foreign-Born Client: Perspectives of Immigrants and Refugees](#)

## **Region 2: Central NY**

### ***Counties:***

Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, Otsego, Schuyler, Tioga, Tompkins.

### ***Immigration Law Director:***

Sharon L. Ames

109 South Warren Street, Suite 220

Syracuse, NY 13202

(315)356-5794

[RIAC2@ocbaacp.org](mailto:RIAC2@ocbaacp.org)

***Links:***

**RIAC Brochure**

[Central NY - Onondaga County](#)

**RIAC Intake Form**

[Central NY - Intake Form](#)

**RIAC Recent Newsletters**

[Central NY Newsletter - January 2021](#)

[Central NY Newsletter - February 2021](#)

[Central NY Newsletter - March 2021](#)

[Central NY Newsletter - April 2021](#)

[Central NY Newsletter - May 2021](#)

[Central NY Newsletter - June 2021](#)

[Central NY Newsletter - September 2021](#)

[Central NY Newsletter - October 2021](#)

[Central NY Newsletter - November 2021](#)

[Central NY Newsletter - December 2021](#)

**Region 3: Northern NY**

***Counties:***

Albany, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Montgomery, Rensselaer, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren, Washington.

***Supervising Attorney:***

Evelyn A. Kinnah, Esq.

112 State Street, Suite 900

Albany, NY 12207

(518) 447-4890

[Evelyn.kinnah@albanycountyny.gov](mailto:Evelyn.kinnah@albanycountyny.gov)

***Links:*****RIAC Website**

<https://www.albanycounty.com/government/immigration-services>

**RIAC Brochure**

[Northern NY - Albany County](#)

**RIAC Intake Form**

[Northern NY - Intake Form](#)

**Region 4: Hudson Valley*****Counties:***

Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, Westchester.

***Supervising Attorney***

Robert Horne

Legal Aid Society of Westchester County

50 Grand Street

White Plains, NY 10601

(914) 286-3408

[rhorne@laswest.org](mailto:rhorne@laswest.org)

***Links:***

**RIAC Website**

<https://www.hudsonvalleyriac.com>

**RIAC Brochure**

**[Hudson Valley - Westchester County](#)**

**RIAC Intake Form**

<https://www.hudsonvalleyriac.com/intake-form>

**Region 5: NYC**

***Counties:***

Bronx, Kings, NY, Queens, Richmond.

***Immigrant Defense Project***

Padilla Support Center

(212) 725-6422

[attorneyadvice@immdefense.org](mailto:attorneyadvice@immdefense.org)

***Links:***

**RIAC Website**

<https://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org/what-we-do/padilla-support-center/>

**RIAC Brochure**

**[New York City - Immigrant Defense Project](#)**

**RIAC Intake Forms**

<https://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org/what-we-do/legal-advice/lawline-web-form/>

## **Region 6: Long Island**

### ***Counties:***

Nassau and Suffolk.

### ***Supervising Attorneys:***

Donna Zak

Legal Aid Society of Nassau County

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Christina Gaudio

Legal Aid Society of Suffolk County

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Central Islip, NY 11722x

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[cgaudio@sclas.org](mailto:cgaudio@sclas.org)

### ***Links:***

#### **RIAC Website**

<http://www.longislandriac.com/>

#### **RIAC Brochure and Intake Forms**

<http://www.longislandriac.com/resources.html>

#### **RIAC Newsletter**

<http://www.longislandriac.com/newsletter.html>

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