



Annual Report

2025

Reporting Period
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Our Vision

CARECEN envisions Southern California becoming a place where Central Americans and all other communities live in peace and dignity, enjoying economic well-being, social justice, and political empowerment.

Our Mission

CARECEN empowers Central Americans and all immigrants by defending human and civil rights, working for social and economic justice and promoting cultural diversity.



2025 in Context



Ahead of 2025, CARECEN undertook scenario planning for the second Trump administration, anticipating policy and enforcement changes that could affect our communities. Despite that preparation, the scale and intensity of what unfolded far exceeded expectations.

As the year began, CARECEN experienced abrupt federal funding suspensions that immediately placed core programs at risk, including services for unaccompanied children and citizenship instruction. These losses coincided with growing deficits at the state and local levels, narrowing public funding options just as demand for services was accelerating.

In response, CARECEN leadership and staff engaged immediately in sustained advocacy with state and local partners. Through continuous pressure and coordination, we worked to protect critical funding, successfully keeping One California resources intact while also stepping in to support and expand the California Humanitarian Immigration Relief Program (CHIRP) to address gaps created by the loss of federal support. These efforts were not abstract policy work—they were essential to preserving core legal services and maintaining a foundation for emergency response as conditions worsened.

What we soon after witnessed in our communities went far beyond policy changes or fluctuations in enforcement priorities. Federal immigration enforcement escalated rapidly and deliberately, marked by mass raids, detention surges, and the systematic erosion of long-standing protections. These actions were not isolated incidents; they were part of a broader strategy that generated widespread fear, destabilized families, and attempted to sever people from legal support, public institutions, and any sense of collective safety. The harm was both immediate and cumulative, compounding long-standing vulnerabilities while creating new ones almost overnight.

In Los Angeles, the impact was deeply felt; June 6, 2025 marked a clear inflection point, when Los Angeles became the focus of escalated federal immigration enforcement. Targeted raids and apprehensions across the city set off widespread fear and quickly drew national attention. What followed was a visible and unprecedented show of force, including the deployment of the National Guard in public spaces such as MacArthur Park—bringing federal enforcement directly into our backyard and into the daily lives of our communities.

Throughout the summer, CARECEN shifted into a sustained emergency response. This was not a momentary pivot, but a prolonged posture that reshaped how our organization operated day to day. Legal teams, case managers, Know Your Rights educators, organizers, and trained responders worked side by side—often across long hours and under extreme pressure—coordinating in real time with partner organizations, legal allies, and elected offices.

Together, we responded to raids as they unfolded, supported detained individuals and their families through moments of acute crisis, and worked to stabilize communities navigating fear, loss of income, family separation, and legal uncertainty.

Across all areas of our work, CARECEN operates simultaneously at scale and at depth. Tens of thousands of community members were reached through Know Your Rights (KYR) education, emergency response, and direct services, while our legal teams handled some of the most complex and time-sensitive cases in the field—many involving decades-long immigration histories, detention, or rapidly shifting legal terrain. This dual reality defined 2025: the need to move quickly and broadly, while also providing sustained, rigorous, and deeply individualized support.



CARECEN At a Glance



Community Reach

 **17,000+**

Community members reached through legal services, Know Your Rights education, and emergency response

 **11,700+**

Individuals reached through 300+ Know Your Rights presentations and legal education

 **180+**

Individuals and families supported through Migrant Response and Rapid Response efforts



Services delivered across Los Angeles County and San Bernardino County, including neighborhoods most impacted by enforcement activity



Legal Services & Protection



4,300+

legal cases filed



5,500+

legal consultations provided



150+

individuals represented in
removal proceedings



700+

TPS holders served through
renewals, advance parole, and
legal consultations



50+

SIJS petitions filed under
urgent timelines



Workers, Families & Community Power



2,700+

Community members engaged through the Day Labor Center



3,000+

job placements supported



\$43,000+

recovered or protected through wage theft prevention



Disaster response, safety trainings, and environmental clean-up efforts led by worker members

Legal Services: Scale, Complexity, Protection

In 2025, CARECEN's legal services operated under extraordinary pressure. As immigration enforcement escalated and long-standing protections were rolled back, demand for accurate legal guidance, representation, and rapid intervention increased sharply—often with little warning and under shifting legal conditions. CARECEN's legal teams responded by expanding capacity, reprioritizing resources, and adapting service delivery in real time.

Throughout the year, CARECEN provided legal services and legal education to more than **17,000 community members**, combining large-scale outreach with sustained, individualized representation. This included thousands of legal consultations, over **4,300 cases filed**, and representation for individuals facing detention and removal. Services spanned a wide range of immigration relief, including citizenship and naturalization, family-based petitions, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Temporary Protected Status (TPS), asylum, and removal defense.

For many clients, 2025 was not their first encounter with the immigration system—but it was the most precarious. One longtime CARECEN client had lived in the United States for decades under Temporary Protected Status, raising a family and contributing to her community. As TPS protections were rolled back, she suddenly faced the possibility of losing lawful presence altogether. Her case required urgent coordination across multiple filings and careful navigation of rapidly changing federal guidance. After years of uncertainty, CARECEN was able to help her pursue a permanent pathway to legal status during a narrow and unstable window—an outcome that would not have been possible without timely intervention.



Stories like hers were not isolated. Last year, CARECEN handled a significant number of time-sensitive and high-stakes cases. This often included cases involving immigrant youth who had survived abuse or neglect and were eligible for protection only if legal filings were completed before they turned 21—sometimes leaving attorneys with just weeks to act. CARECEN also represented individuals in detention who were subjected to prolonged electronic monitoring, requiring sustained legal advocacy to secure release and prevent family separation.

In many cases, CARECEN attorneys first had to reconstruct a client's immigration history before meaningful relief could even be pursued. This involved requesting records from federal agencies that were decades old, incomplete, or spread across multiple jurisdictions—an essential but time-consuming step for long-term residents who had been navigating the immigration system for 10, 20, or even 30 years. Without this groundwork, many legal options would have remained inaccessible.



Know Your Rights as Infrastructure

Last year, Know Your Rights (KYR) programming cemented itself as a core part of CARECEN's emergency response. As immigration enforcement escalated and fear spread rapidly through communities, access to accurate and timely information became essential to safety. KYR shifted from education alone to a tool for prevention, stabilization, and connection during moments of crisis.

Throughout the year, CARECEN reached more than 11,700 individuals through Know Your Rights workshops, legal clinics, and presentations delivered in person and virtually. Following June 6, demand increased sharply as enforcement intensified, and access to reliable information narrowed. CARECEN responded by rapidly scaling to deliver over 300 multilingual KYR sessions across neighborhoods, schools, community spaces, and online platforms to over—often in direct response to enforcement activity.

For many community members, KYR served as the first point of contact during moments of acute fear or uncertainty. Sessions provided clear guidance on constitutional protections, how to respond during encounters with immigration authorities, and how to avoid misinformation circulating during periods of heightened enforcement.

Just as importantly, KYR connected participants to CARECEN's broader support systems, including legal consultations, case management, and rapid response.

The strength of CARECEN's KYR work lay in its integration across teams. Legal staff ensured information remained accurate amid rapidly shifting federal guidance, while case managers and responders helped translate knowledge into action. This coordination allowed CARECEN to intervene early, reduce harm, and ensure individuals and families were not navigating enforcement alone.



Migrant Response: Presence, Coordination, and Care



In 2025, Migrant Response became essential. When raids and apprehensions occurred, families did not experience them as isolated legal events—they experienced sudden loss of income, family separation, fear of movement, and uncertainty about what to do next. Our Migrant Response team of organizers stepped in at these moments, providing immediate stabilization and connection to support.

Throughout the year, CARECEN supported more than 180 individuals and families through intensive, on-the-ground response. Our team served as first points of contact during enforcement actions—documenting incidents and helping families access emergency assistance, housing and food referrals, transportation, and legal navigation.



In many cases, support continued well after the initial incident, as families worked to regain stability and pursue legal options. A defining feature of CARECEN's response was coordination. Migrant Response did not operate in isolation; it functioned as part of a broader ecosystem that included the Los Angeles Rapid Response Network. Responders shared real-time information, facilitated rapid legal triage, and worked closely with community partners and elected offices to ensure families were not left to navigate enforcement alone.

Organizing, Worker Justice & Community Power (DLC)

Immigrant workers faced not only economic precarity, but the increasing criminalization of everyday survival. CARECEN's Day Labor Center (DLC)—long a trusted space for safety, employment, and community—became a target.

Over the course of the year, the Day Labor Center was raided four times. One of these raids involved a violent and catastrophic show of force. Federal agents entered the Center, forcibly removing a community member who clung to the doorway as he was dragged out. Rubber bullets and pepper spray were deployed inside and around the Center, endangering workers, staff, and bystanders alike. The raid left deep physical and psychological harm and sent shockwaves through a community already living under fear.

Despite this, the Day Labor Center did not close. CARECEN responded by prioritizing the safety of workers while continuing to provide access to dignified work, information, and support. Throughout 2025, CARECEN engaged more than 2,700 workers through the Day Labor Center and facilitated over 3,000 job placements, helping families maintain income at a time when enforcement actions frequently disrupted livelihoods.

Worker justice programming extended beyond job placement. CARECEN supported workers in confronting wage theft, unsafe working conditions, and retaliation, recovering more than \$43,000 in stolen wages. Workers also participated in safety and rights trainings, equipping them with tools to protect themselves in industries where immigrant labor is often exploited and unprotected.

The Day Labor Center also functioned as a site of mutual aid and collective care. Worker members led disaster response efforts, including environmental cleanup and wildfire prevention, demonstrating the essential role immigrant workers play in sustaining Los Angeles. Even as enforcement sought to instill fear and silence, workers continued to organize, support one another, and show up for their neighborhoods.



Youth Programs



Education Leadership and Parent Engagement

During the spring semester (February–May 2025), CARECEN’s East Los Angeles College (ELAC) Dual Enrollment Program worked with 18 students through 124 engagements across workshops, meetings, and program activities. The program supports high school-aged youth in earning college credit while strengthening academic readiness and leadership skills.

Between January and March, staff also facilitated three parent workshops, offered both virtually via Zoom and in West Adams. These sessions reached 10 families and focused on education policy updates, access to resources, and strengthening meaningful parent participation in their children’s academic pathways.

College Head Start Program

Operating year-round (January–December 2025), the College Head Start Program supported 42 students as they navigated key academic transitions. The program provided continuity and guidance amid evolving Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) policies, ensuring students remained supported despite shifting institutional requirements.

During the year, new LAUSD security protocols significantly limited access for community-based organizations to enter school campuses during operating hours. These measures were implemented in response to attempted Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) access to school sites and reduced opportunities for in-class presentations about available programs and services. Despite these barriers, CARECEN continued to support students through milestones such as graduations, which were celebrated by staff and reflected long-term student persistence and achievement.

Youth Development, Arts, and Media Engagement

Through partnerships such as ABC Video International Speakers, CARECEN engaged four youth in media-based programming that built on interviews conducted in 2024. These opportunities centered youth voice, storytelling, and public-facing experience.

In partnership with LA Commons, 24 students from the Westlake/MacArthur Park community participated in an activism mural project in collaboration with the UCLA Labor Center. The project emphasized youth leadership, creative expression, and civic engagement.

Youth also collaborated with day laborers during the May Day Labor Center Art Workshop, contributing to the creation of visual materials for the May Day event. Youth designed and created papier-mâché components, while day laborers supported large-scale production. One youth leader designed the raised-fist imagery, and former alumni volunteered on a Saturday to help papier-mâché and paint the pieces—demonstrating intergenerational collaboration and solidarity.



Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Engagement

CARECEN participated in the 5th Annual LAUSD International Conference, where an attorney from the College Legal Services team presented alongside Youth Program staff. CARECEN regularly provides legal updates at this conference, and these sessions are among the most highly attended. Two workshops—one in the morning and one in the afternoon—reached approximately 30 students per session and focused on higher education pathways and student options.



Community Support and Solidarity

CARECEN's work is sustained not only through policy and legal advocacy, but through a deep commitment to community care. This is the foundation of our work, community relationship building, from neighbors protecting each other, small businesses opening their doors, artists donating their talents, students organizing in solidarity, and faith leaders offering moral and spiritual support. In 2025, this network of community care and support ensured our community had access to trusted information, legal protection, and safe spaces during moments of unrest.

Activism: Art & Activism

CARECEN's own history is deeply connected to the tradition of using art as a vessel for storytelling, memory, and resistance. In 2025, local artists and students donated their talents in solidarity with our work, from school bands hosting benefit concerts to artists curating exhibitions that centered themes of dignity, peace, and belonging. These contributions created spaces of connection and affirmation, reinforcing that art is not separate from activism, but one of its most enduring and powerful expressions.

Small Businesses and Local Partners

Small businesses and local entrepreneurs are pillars of both our economy and community. Throughout the year, neighborhood cafes and restaurants, local vendors, and others have supported CARECEN through benefit events, specialty drinks, and grassroots fundraising efforts.

CARECEN moves forward alongside a community that understands that lasting change is built not only through policy and legal defense, but through culture, care, and collective action. We are powered by community, by those who create, give, organize, and show up, ensuring that our work remains rooted in solidarity and shared responsibility.



Looking Ahead



As CARECEN moves forward, the realities that shaped 2025 continue to unfold across the country. Federal immigration enforcement has expanded in scope and intensity beyond traditional borders, with increasing federal deployments into interior communities and responses that have at times involved violence and loss of life. These developments reflect an authoritarian trajectory in enforcement that affects immigrant families and entire neighborhoods, far beyond any single city or program.

This context underscores the urgency of CARECEN's work. The conditions that demanded emergency response in 2025 are not isolated incidents—they are part of a broader national pattern that requires sustained, coordinated action rooted in community protection, legal advocacy, and collective resistance. CARECEN's experience has shown that fear and force cannot be the long-term answer; what truly strengthens communities is organizing, connection, and people-powered infrastructure that centers dignity and rights.

Looking ahead, CARECEN remains committed to deepening and expanding the systems that allowed us to respond with both scale and care. This includes strengthening integrated legal services, Know Your Rights education, rapid response and case management, worker justice initiatives, and policy advocacy grounded in lived experience. We will continue to build partnerships, advocate for equitable public investment, and create resilient structures that can withstand ongoing volatility and threats to immigrant rights.

Sustaining this work also means investing in the wellbeing of those who carry it out. CARECEN is committed to rebuilding and maintaining staff capacity, supporting frontline responders, and ensuring organizational stability after a period of profound strain. Doing so is not only strategic—it is essential to stewarding the trust and protection our communities rely on.

