

The Georgia Human Rights Clinic 2020 Year End Update


GHRC ANNUAL REVIEW

Message from the GHRC Board

Despite the challenges of 2020 it has been one of growth at The Georgia Human Rights Clinic (GHRC). We expanded our base of active medical providers, developed our online and social media presence, created our rapidly growing expert declarations program, published articles, embarked on new research endeavors, branched out into new realms of advocacy and solidified partnerships with numerous local and national organizations. We would like to extend a sincere thank you to our partners as well as our numerous student, resident, and clinician volunteers, all of whom made this growth possible. In 2021, we will remain dedicated to our mission of providing pro bono asylum evaluations and expert declarations to anyone in need, using our unique medicolegal partnerships to advance immigrant rights and justice through research and advocacy efforts.

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GHRC Mission Statement

GHRC's mission is to ensure all residents of Georgia, regardless of legal status, have access to basic rights including but not limited to: healthcare, legal representation, and personal and familial support. This mission is accomplished through working with legal organizations to conduct asylum evaluations, review medical records and write accompanying bond letters for detained individuals and advocating for the provision of adequate medical care in detention facilities. Through grassroots organizing and collaborations with community partners across the state, GHRC is committed to ensuring immigrant rights are protected and advanced.

Year End Highlights



In 2020 GRHC...

- Established a Memorandum of Understanding with Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and Emory School of Medicine, recognizing the GHRC as an official partner of PHR.
- Expanded collaborations with colleagues at Morehouse, Georgia State, Emory Law, Medical University of South Carolina, and Mercer School of Medicine. Students from our Emory PHR chapter presented at the PHR national Student Conference.
- Adapted safe protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to continue to offer asylum evaluations virtually and in person.
- Created an expert declarations program to advocate for the release of individuals in detention with unmet medical needs and who may be more at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Increased our base of providers who conduct asylum evaluations, now with 13 attending physicians. Simultaneously increased providers involved in expert declarations with over 28 faculty and 24 residents/advanced practice providers representing over four specialties between Emory and Morehouse.
- Worked with the Atlanta Asylum Network (AAN) to develop qualitative research projects using our declarations and affidavits.
- Created an organizational website:
emoryphr.wixsite.com/gahumanrights
- Published numerous Op Eds and digital scholarship focused on asylum seeking populations.

Programmatic Updates

Asylum Evaluations and Affidavits

- Our Asylum Clinic is composed of providers trained in physical and psychiatric asylum evaluations. We receive referrals from our community partners, provide a one-time evaluation to document evidence of trauma/torture, and subsequently write an affidavit to accompany the client's case.
- Our provider network expanded over the past year, and now includes 13 asylum trained providers.
- We received 25 requests for forensic evaluations and completed 13 evaluations (11 asylum cases, 1 U visa case, and 1 VAWA case).
- The need for more evaluators remains high- so please contact us if interested.
- Note the outcome of most cases are still pending

Expert Declarations

- Expert Declarations are legal documents written by medical providers on behalf of clients in detention. GHRC receives medical records for review on behalf of people currently in detention suffering from physical or mental health conditions. The GHRC medical team then uses records provided by the detention center to document cases of medical neglect and mismanagement to facilitate release of the clients due to unmet medical needs.
- Our provider network increased to 28 attending physicians and 24 residents/advanced practice providers.
- Our provider network completed over 34 expert declarations.
- Our expert declarations have facilitated the release of at least four clients from detention.
- Note outcome of most cases are still pending.

Research

- Connected with asylum clinics throughout the Southeast to develop research projects focused on differences in asylum grant rates in the Southeast. Asylum grant rates in the Southeast are notoriously abysmal, with grant rates of approximately two percent, compared to the national average of 30-50%.
- Selected for the Emory Global Health Institute FieldScholars Awards Program in collaboration with AAN to conduct a research project titled, “Assessing the Legal Need for Medical Evaluations of Asylum Seekers in Metropolitan Atlanta”. Drs. Zeidan & Evans led a team of five Emory graduate and undergraduate students to carry out this important work. This project was presented at the National PHR Student Conference in November, 2020.
- Presented a poster at the National PHR Student Conference highlighting the work of the GHRC: “Combating the 2% Asylum Grant Rate: Creation of an Asylum Clinic in Georgia,”
- Partnered with the Community Health Assessment (CHA) course at Rollins School of Public Health to focus CHA’s on asylum seeking populations. Public health students worked directly with the GHRC to conduct two CHA’s: “COVID-19 Among Vulnerable Populations Living in Metro Atlanta, Georgia” and “A Rapid Community Health Assessment Report & Intimate Partner Violence Resources for the Asylum-Seeking Community in the Metro-Atlanta Area.”

Published Works

- **Why Some People Can't Avoid Mass Gathering - Detention**
- **ICE is Guilty of Unsafe Practices in Detention Centers Causing COVID-19 to Spread**
- **Immigrants and COVID-19**
- **Nightmare on Peach Street: The Horrendous State of Georgia's Detention Centers**

Upcoming Projects

GHRC created a task force of students to identify and enhance resources for victims of Intimate Partner Violence/Gender Based Violence seeking asylum, expanding the work and recommendations provided by the public health students' CHA.

Upcoming Narrative Based Advocacy Projects

Asylum Testimonial Project

As part of a new project aimed at better understanding the experience of asylum seekers, GHRC will gather testimonials from individuals who have been through or are currently navigating the asylum-seeking process. The testimonials will be posted on GHRC's website and social media platforms, and will be disseminated widely through our community partners, medical communities, and national PHR networks. We will collaborate primarily with GAIN to gather stories from clients, with the hopes of expanding the project to additional sites in the future.

Medical Case Against Detention (MCAD): A Narrative Based Project

The MCAD project is a multimedia project combining expert medical testimony with firsthand narratives shared by people currently or formerly detained in immigrant detention centers in Georgia. Detention facilities in Georgia are particularly harsh with widespread evidence of medical mismanagement, neglect, and abuse. There are four main goals of the project: 1) To share the experiences of people in detention with the medical and public health communities and local and national policy makers; 2) To correlate aspects of individual narratives with medical research to elucidate the ways in which detention negatively impacts both physical and mental health ;3) To strengthen the case for immediate overhaul and eventual abolishment of the immigrant detention complex with the United States; 4) If abolishment is not possible, develop standards for medical care in detention facilities and accountability measures.

GHRC's Community Partners

Center for Victims of Torture, Project South, Catholic Charities, Atlanta Asylum Network, Clarkston Community Health Center, Grace Village, El Refugio, PHR, Tahirih Justice Center, Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network, Georgia State University Immigration Clinic, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, Kids in Need of Defense, Prison Praxis/Heath Students Taking Action Together, SPLC, Surlegal