GUIDELINES FOR A LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

If you have received this instruction letter you have probably come in contract with a battered immigrant who is seeking relief under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA is an immigrant provision, which has passed as part of the crime bill in 1994. It allows a battered immigrant woman, man or child to file for legal permanent residence status without the help of his/her abuser. This new provision of the law allows a woman to self-petition and obtains status on her own. However, in order to petition she needs to gather evidentiary documentation of the physical and psychological abuse she experienced at the hands of her husband.

The following is a guide for social service providers, i.e. therapist, psychologist or shelter staff, who have been asked to write a letter of support for a client. It is very important for social service providers who have come in contract with battered immigrant women to provide as much information as possible on the applicant and her situation.

You can help this client by preparing a letter, which includes any information pertinent to the abuse, which the client has shared with you. Below is a list of major points which should be included in your letter. You are welcome to add or delete depending on your experience with this client and your expertise. You are also encouraged to read our client’s declaration, if she has prepared one, so that you can get a better idea of your client’s situation.

It may be helpful for you to include specific incidents that you took notes of or remember. Incidents in which the client described the physical or mental abuse, which experienced at the hands of her husband, are particularly helpful.

The letter should be written on your professional letterhead and should be addressed as follows:

Department of Homeland Security
Citizenship & Immigration Service
Vermont Service Center
ATTN: VAWA
75 Lower Welden Street
St. Albans, VT 05479-001

NOTE: After writing the letter, please give it to your client or his/her legal representative because it needs to be submitted in a package with other documents.

Point 1
It is suggested that you begin your letter by including your profession and any titles or experience you may have working with battered immigrant women. It would also be helpful to include a discussion about the cycle of violence.

Point 2
Explain how and when you came in contact with this client and the types of services that you provided for her, i.e. counseling, shelter, obtain a restraining order etc.

If applicable, explain why you believe this client should continue receiving your services and how these services have benefited her. Also, explain how it would affect her if she did not continue receiving your services or comparable services elsewhere.

Point 3
Include any specific incidents of violence that the clients shared with you. Explain how this incident fits in with the cycle of violence and how you think this incident affected her.

Reminder
Please include your name and number where you can be reached for further questions.