

Through Six Comprehensive Programs in 2023 and the first half of 2024

VIA Empowers Nearly 20,000 Migrants

New York, NY – Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA) is proud to announce that between 2023 and the first half of 2024, it has successfully served nearly 20,000 people through its various support and outreach programs. This milestone underscores VIA’s unwavering dedication to helping displaced individuals and asylum seekers integrate into the United States. It’s essential to note that these numbers do not account for the extensive reach and engagement we achieve through our social media channels.

Significant Growth in 2024

In the first half of 2024 alone, VIA significantly expanded its efforts, reaching 6,500 individuals through 106 events. These events span a diverse range of activities designed to support and empower displaced individuals. Highlights from the first half of 2024 include 24 Legal Orientations, which provided critical legal information and assistance to help individuals navigate the complexities of immigration law.

Also, the migrants benefitted through 15 Educational Webinars that offered valuable knowledge and skills to support personal and professional development; 17 Community Peer Support Activities where they fostered a sense of community and mutual support among displaced individuals; 29 English Online Sessions that enhanced their language skills for successful integration and employment; and six Cultural and Recreational Events that promoted cultural exchange and recreational activities to support well-being and social integration.



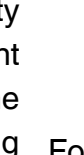
The 2023 Achievements

In 2023, VIA reached 13,008 individuals through 210 events, demonstrating consistent and impactful engagement with the community. These events have been pivotal in providing essential services and fostering a supportive environment for those seeking humanitarian protection in the United States.

Commitment to Empowerment

Hector Arguinzones, VIA’s founder and director, expressed pride and a profound happiness in these accomplishments, stating, “Our diverse range of programs and events underscores our commitment to empowering displaced individuals. We remain dedicated to our mission and look forward to continuing our efforts to support and uplift those in need.”

As VIA continues to expand its reach and impact, it remains committed to its mission of providing humanitarian protection and support to displaced individuals from Venezuela and around the world.

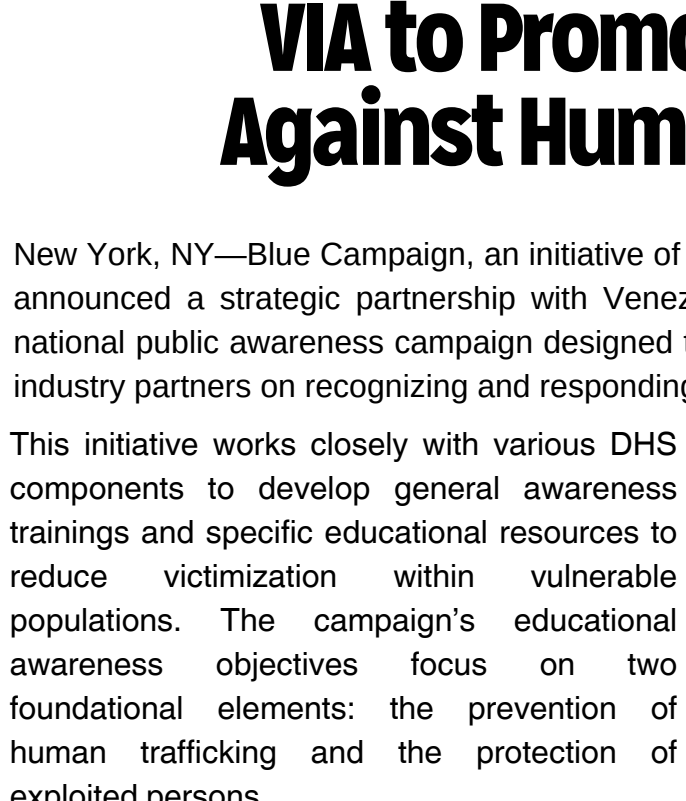


Venezuelan Leaders in NYC Attend Roundtable with Mayor Eric Adams

New York, NY—For the first time in his administration, Mayor Eric Adams invited a group of Venezuelan leaders, including members from Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA), to discuss their challenges and needs as part of the growing Venezuelan community in New York City.

Ana Almanzar, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives, opened the meeting by welcoming the Venezuelan attendees. She emphasized that the purpose of the encounter was to bring together different communities to better understand their situation and improve city services for their benefit. “As an immigrant myself, I understand the challenges and the sadness of leaving our homelands and starting from nothing,” Almanzar said.

“The idea is to think about how we can collaborate and send a message to our leaders across the country that we, as Latinos who came to this country, are doing great work. We need to change the negative narrative,” Almanzar added.



Mayor Eric Adams remarked, “This has been an amazing journey for me. This meeting represents a historic step for our city. As Venezuelans, I want to ask you: how are you? Because your country has been in the newspapers, you have been demonized across the country. People have focused only on immigrants and asylum seekers and not on the contributions your community has made to this country. I encourage you to change the narrative and be leaders in shaping the future of this country.”

Precisely, the concern expressed by the Mayor, was addressed in a statement released by VIA early this year: “In light of recent concerns about

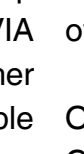
Venezuelan citizens involved in criminal acts in NYC, VIA reaffirms its commitment to the many displaced people from our country who are working diligently towards a better future. We emphatically reject any criminal activity and those who commit it. The individuals involved in these incidents do not represent the values and principles of the Venezuelan community.”

“This has been an amazing journey for me. This meeting represents a historic step for our city.”

—Mayor Eric Adams

Following the Mayor’s remarks, some guests had the opportunity to share their concerns and ask questions about mental health, employment, access to education, childcare, and other initiatives. Due to time constraints, additional questions previously submitted to the Mayor’s office will be addressed by City Hall authorities who attended the meeting. Similar roundtables have been held with Mexican and Ecuadorian leaders.

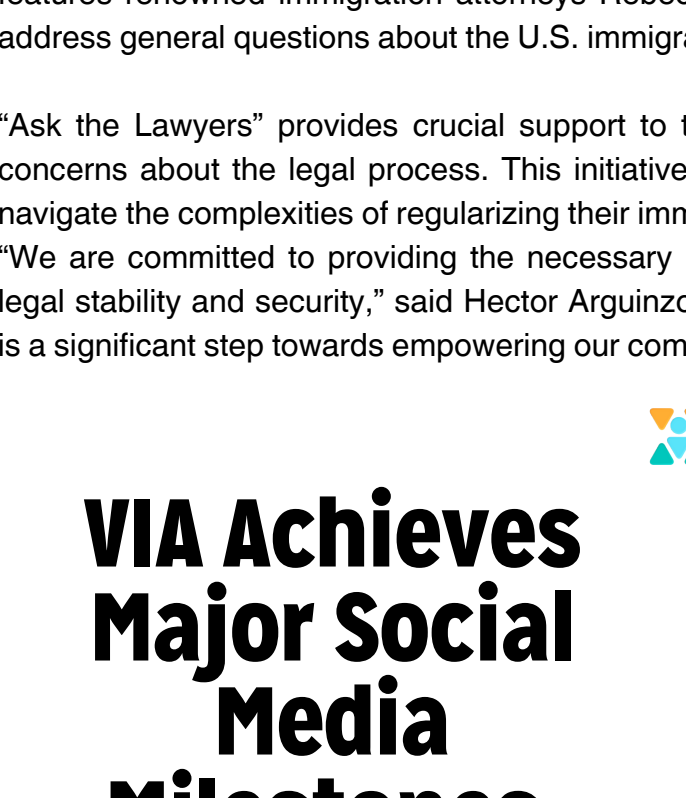
Other members of Mayor Adams’ team who attended the first roundtable with Venezuelan leaders included: Socrates Solano (Latino Liaison-Community Affairs Unit), Manuel Castro (Commissioner - MOA), Annabel Palma (Commissioner & Chair-CCHR), Tania Kinsella (First Deputy Commissioner - NYPD), Eva Wong (Executive Director - OCMH), Fred Kreizman (Commissioner - CAU), Molly Shaeffer (Director - Office of Asylum Seekers), Anne Williams (Deputy Mayor - Health & Human Services), and Dynishal Gross (Acting Commissioner - SBS).



Blue Campaign (DHS) Partners with VIA to Promote Initiative Against Human Trafficking

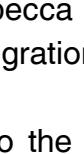
New York, NY—Blue Campaign, an initiative of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has announced a strategic partnership with Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA) to promote a national public awareness campaign designed to educate the public, law enforcement, and other industry partners on recognizing and responding to indicators of human trafficking.

This initiative works closely with various DHS components to develop general awareness trainings and specific educational resources to reduce victimization within vulnerable populations. The campaign’s educational awareness objectives focus on two foundational elements: the prevention of human trafficking and the protection of exploited persons.



As part of this partnership, VIA’s Director Hector Arguinzones has announced that Diego Luque, a Blue Campaign Specialist, hosted the first informative webinar for the community. Titled “Diferencia entre la trata de personas y el tráfico” (“Difference Between Human Trafficking and Smuggling”), the webinar was held on July 31 at 6:30 PM and was conducted entirely in Spanish.

The webinar aims to provide the Spanish-speaking community with crucial information to help distinguish between human trafficking and human smuggling, understand the indicators of trafficking, and learn how to respond to possible cases appropriately. By empowering communities with knowledge, the Blue Campaign and VIA strive to prevent human trafficking and protect those at risk of exploitation.



USCIS Hosts Roundtable with VIA and Other Organizations to Address Immigrant Concerns

New York, NY – The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) invited VIA (Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid) and other vital organizations to participate in a roundtable discussion on the pressing issues facing immigrants in the US.

The roundtable provided a platform for addressing critical questions and concerns from the immigrant community. Hector Arguinzones, Director of VIA, raised a crucial question: “When the P4CHNV program ends in October 2024, what will happen to those not eligible for TPS? What will happen to those who came two years ago and don’t have an asylum case to file?”

In response, Samantha Enokian, Policy Advisor from the Office of Policy & Strategy, provided insights, stating, “I will do my best to answer this question. As long as they reside in the US before July 31, 2023, they should be eligible for TPS. This is probably half of the Venezuelan population under the parole process. Family-based adjustment, asylum claims—we don’t know what will happen politically in the following months. We recommend that this population analyze their legal possibilities.”

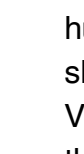
Jesse Rylander, VIA’s Communication Coordinator, highlighted the challenges immigrants face. “In our experience, many asylum seekers find misinformation and misconceptions about their immigration process, struggle to find legal representation or a way to pay for it, and face the complexity of the process

because, among other problems, it can be overwhelming due to language barriers.”

Other critical participants from USCIS included Carrie Selbie (External Affairs Directorate), Tamika Gray (District Director), Scott Velez (Deputy District Director), Eva Millona (Chief of External Affairs Directorate), and Laura DeMayo (Chief of Staff). Representatives from VIA also included Liliana Torella, who is the Leadership Coordinator.

The roundtable underscored USCIS’s commitment to engaging with non-profit organizations and community leaders to understand better and address the challenges faced by the growing migrant community. The dialogue emphasized the importance of accurate information, accessible legal representation, and ongoing support for those navigating the complex immigration process.

The event occurred on Wednesday, July 17, 2024, from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM at the USCIS Field Office in the Jacob Javits Federal Building, 26 Federal Plaza, New York, NY.



VIA Launches Virtual Space in Collaboration with Co-Counsel NYC

New York, NY – In March, Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA), in collaboration with Co-Counsel NYC, launched a new 60-minute virtual initiative called “Ask the Lawyers.” This platform features renowned immigration attorneys Rebecca Press and Terry Lawson and is designed to address general questions about the U.S. immigration system and humanitarian programs.

“Ask the Lawyers” provides crucial support to the migrant community by clarifying doubts and concerns about the legal process. This initiative empowers individuals to better understand and navigate the complexities of regularizing their immigration status in the United States.

“We are committed to providing the necessary resources and support to help migrants achieve legal stability and security,” said Hector Arguinzones, Founder and Director of VIA. “This initiative is a significant step towards empowering our community with the knowledge they need.”



VIA Achieves Major Social Media Milestones in 2024

New York, NY – Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA) is proud to announce significant milestones in our social media efforts for the first half of 2024, reflecting our unwavering commitment to empowering displaced individuals and asylum seekers.

VIA’s Instagram Growth Hits the Numbers

Niurka Melendez, VIA’s Director, expressed: “In the first half of 2024, our Instagram account reached an impressive three-quarters of a million accounts. This achievement underscores our dedication to empathy and empowerment, showcased through our 50 posts, 52 reels, and four live videos. Instagram has become VIA’s primary channel for sharing informative content and keeping our community well-informed”.

YouTube Expansion: A Steady Growth in Live and On-Demand Views

Melendez also highlighted that VIA’s YouTube channel has seen remarkable growth, with 3,271 subscribers and 938 new subscribers in the past weeks. “With 68,787 content views—a staggering 400% increase compared to the 17,179 views in the same period of 2023—our reach is expanding rapidly. We’ve uploaded seven new videos and conducted eight live-streaming webinars, all aligning with our mission to provide valuable content and support”, Melendez said.

Niurka Melendez also stated, “These milestones highlight our commitment to leveraging social media as a powerful tool for sharing our mission and supporting our community. Our strategy centers on providing valuable, engaging content that empowers and informs.”

VIA Co-Founder Niurka Meléndez Speaks at OAS Inaugural Summit “Hispanic Voices for Human Rights”

New York, NY – In March 2024, VIA co-founder Niurka Meléndez participated in the Inaugural Summit “Hispanic Voices for Human Rights” at the Organization of American States (OAS), marking a significant milestone for the organization and its mission.

The summit focused on pressing issues such as Human Trafficking and Refugee challenges. Niurka Meléndez delivered a powerful address on “The Impact of the Migration Crisis on the Southern Border” and shared insights on “Good Practices and Collaboration in the Care of Refugees.” She highlighted VIA’s nearly eight years of dedicated work in supporting displaced individuals and asylum seekers.

“Our commitment to supporting the migrant community remains unwavering,” said Meléndez. “We are dedicated to ensuring their goal of building a better future becomes a reality.”

