



Venezuelans and
Immigrants Aid

A Decade On The Ground:

ACTION, HUMANITY, AND TRUTH



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



A Decade On The Ground: Action, Humanity, and Truth

OFFICIAL MESSAGE from the Directors

In 2016, VIA was born out of a deeply personal experience. It did not emerge from a strategic plan or an established institutional framework. It emerged from the experience of facing the fact that returning to a lawless country was not a choice; from fear of persecution from a regime intolerant of dissent; from migratory grief once out of Venezuela; from legal limbo once in the U.S. All that, in addition to the uncertainty we went through with our search for regularization of immigration status, gave us the courage and unwavering determination to ensure that others would not have to navigate the same maze alone as we did as asylum seekers.

Nearly ten years later, we remain on the frontlines.

In 2025 alone, VIA directly reached 11,345 individuals through more than 200 community-based activities, including 90 legal orientation sessions, 16 peer-support meetings, 30 English sessions, and six cultural and recreational gatherings. Behind every number is a person: a mother preparing her asylum case, a young adult facing court without an attorney, a family trying to understand their legal options amid confusion and misinformation.

The U.S. immigration system continues to operate under historic pressure. Court backlogs are growing, access to pro bono representation remains limited, and uncertainty can stretch for years. Against this backdrop, our mission has become even clearer: accurate information is protection.

This year, more than 4,132 individuals joined our live legal orientation sessions, where complex immigration procedures were explained with clarity, neutrality, and responsibility. All sessions were recorded and made publicly available, generating more than 4,633,000 views on Instagram and 33,524 views on YouTube. This ensured that the information reached communities far beyond those who could attend in real time.

But we have also learned that trustworthy, timely information alone is not enough to guarantee humanitarian protection. Immigration limbo is not only a legal process but also an overwhelming emotional burden. VIA responded to the community's needs by creating the Peer Support Program in 2018, offering facilitated connection and guidance sessions. This year, 16 Peer Support gatherings, reaching more than 740 participants, offered spaces for resilience, dignity restoration, and collective strength.

This year was also historic in a new way: out of thousands of submissions from over 42 countries, VIA was chosen to receive two Anthem Awards: we won Gold in the “Humanitarian Action & Services: Emerging Company or Organization” category, and received the Anthem Community Voice Award, which was selected entirely through public vote. These recognitions mark a significant global milestone for VIA as an independent, migrant-led, volunteer-run organization.

These awards tell a clear story: a community-rooted organization led by people with lived experience can achieve international recognition for its social impact. They affirm that empathy and solidarity are not abstract ideals; they drive measurable change and serve as the motor that propels the accomplishment of one of our most important goals: providing unrestricted access to vital information.

VIA is not simply an organization that works “with migrants.” VIA is an organization composed largely of displaced people, many of whom are still actively navigating immigration processes. Our lived experiences, rather than being symbolic, are structural and allow all of us to understand the urgency, detect misinformation quickly, and build trust organically with the community.

We do not promote migration.

We do not operate within partisan agendas.

We do not function through polarization.

We operate on the principle of ethics, objectivity, and a steadfast commitment to human dignity.

After almost ten years of steady volunteer work, we have shown that grassroots organizations are not on the sidelines. We are a vital resource for displaced communities and an important partner for bigger organizations, researchers, and government agencies that want to connect with community members. Lived experience is not just a story—it is practical knowledge that shapes everything we do for our community.

In a system that delays decisions, we foreground humanity.

We will continue informing with clarity.

We will continue accompanying with respect.

We will continue acting with integrity, gratitude, and conviction.

Niurka Meléndez & Héctor Arguinzones
Directors & Co-Founders



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1. Introduction: Nearly a Decade of Consistency

Founded in 2016 by asylum seekers, Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid (VIA) operates as a volunteer-driven, community-rooted organization committed to informing, empowering, and accompanying individuals seeking humanitarian protection in the United States.

In 2025, VIA consolidated nearly ten years of consistent frontline work, combining in-person engagement with strategic digital expansion.

2. The 2025 Context: A System Under Strain

The immigration system remains under historic pressure:

- Growing immigration court backlogs
- Both limited access and limited availability of pro bono assistance to pro bono legal representation
- Rapid spread of digital misinformation
- Polarized public discourse
- Prolonged uncertainty for asylum seekers

In this context, access to accurate, verified, and neutral information becomes a critical form of protection.





3. 2025 Impact Overview

In 2025, VIA directly reached 11,345 individuals in more than 200 community activities with three-quarters participating in our legal orientation and mental wellness seminars and webinars.

Direct impact reflects real-time interaction, immediate guidance, and live community engagement.

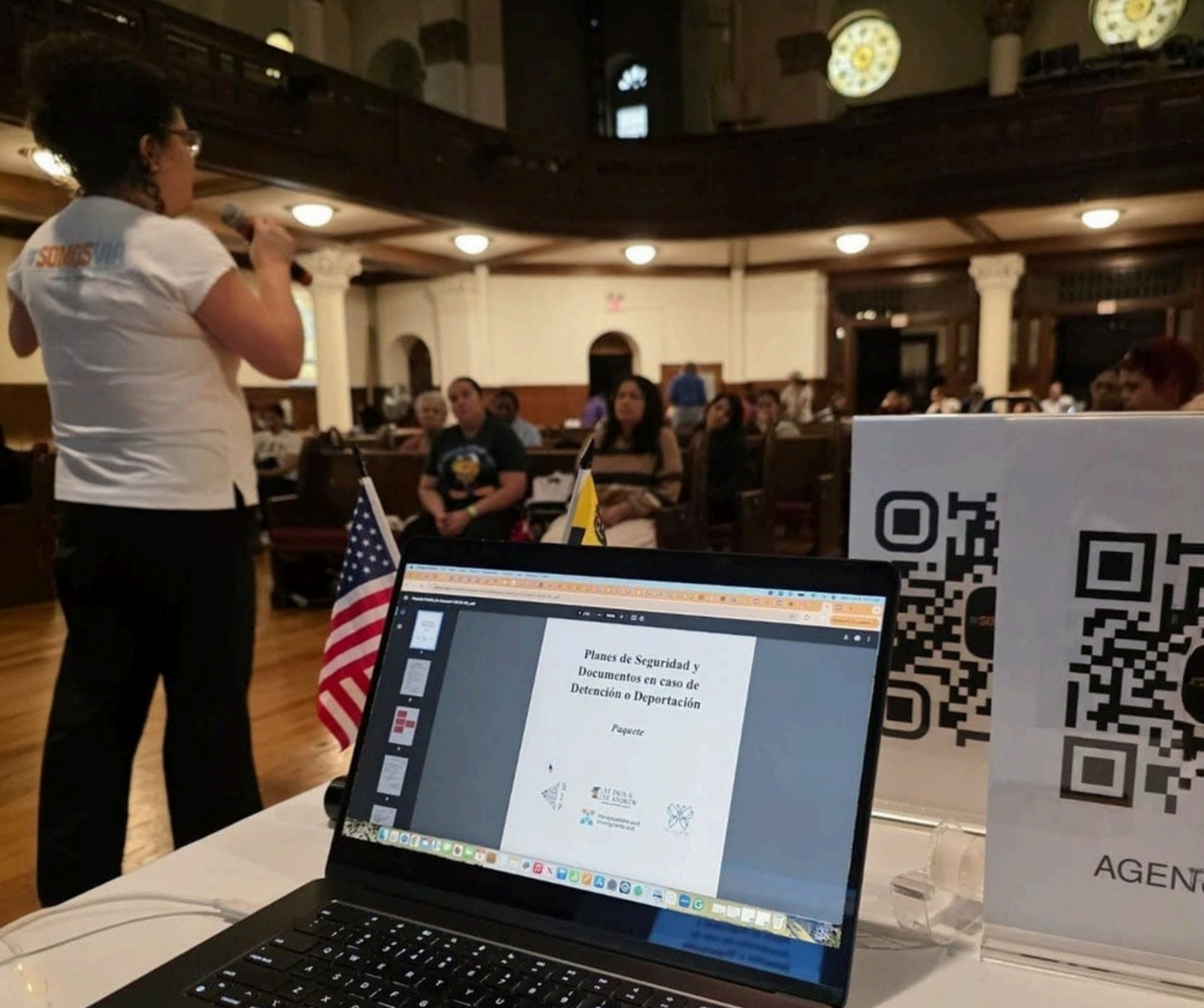
Indirect Impact (Digital Reach)

VIA's digital dissemination significantly amplified its work:

- 4,633,000 views on Instagram
- 33,524 YouTube views
- 90% of legal sessions recorded and published
- Infographics, short videos, and livestreams shared across platforms

Indirect impact ensures equitable access to information beyond geography and time constraints.





4. Legal Orientation: Pro Se Empowerment

Topics covered in 2025 included:

- Affirmative and defensive asylum
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- Employment authorization
- Pro Se or auto representation
- Immigration court procedures (EOIR)
- ICE check-ins
- Change-of-address compliance
- Court/hearing preparation
- Juvenile visa

VIA's pro se education model does not replace legal representation, but it reduces vulnerability, helps prevent fraud, and empowers informed decision-making.

5. Mental Health & Community Resilience

The emotional toll of prolonged immigration limbo extends far beyond asylum case outcome uncertainty. Anxiety, isolation, fear of court proceedings, family separation, and economic instability create sustained psychological strain, adding to the trauma of forced displacement.

In 2025, VIA hosted 16 Peer Support sessions, reaching 740 participants through structured psychosocial spaces designed to restore dignity, foster resilience, and strengthen community bonds.

These sessions recognize a fundamental truth: legal clarity alone is not enough. Migrants navigating complex systems must also feel seen, heard, and supported.





A. In-Person Community Integration Activities

Beyond virtual accompaniment, *Soporte Entre Pares* organizes at least six in-person community gatherings annually in New York.

These in-person encounters serve three essential purposes:

- To combat social isolation and strengthen community cohesion.
- To promote integration and collective mental well-being through recreational and artistic spaces.
- To reinforce peer support networks, making tangible the message: “We are not alone.”

These gatherings transform support from an abstract concept into lived community experience.

B. The “Granny Square” Crochet Workshop

One of the most meaningful initiatives within the mental health and community resilience focus area is the “Granny Square” crochet workshop, launched in March 2023 with the invaluable support of the Jame Cohan Gallery.

Today, more than 90 families from South and Central America gather weekly for two hours to “weave community” together.

The community reports that art and handicraft workshops are a therapeutic tool for:

- * Self-care
- * Emotional expression
- * Stress relief
- * Collective healing
- * Intergenerational bonding

The repetitive rhythm of crochet becomes grounding. The shared table becomes a connection. The act of creating becomes symbolic: piece by piece, square by square, community is rebuilt.

The purpose is simple yet profound — to create a space where people can simply be, share, and heal together.

The integration of psychosocial support into legal education strengthens migrants’ confidence and decision-making capacity.

Information guides.
Community sustains.





6. Technology as Democratized Access

With three-quarters participating in our legal orientation and mental wellness seminars and webinars.

VIA strategically leverages digital platforms to meet the community in the space with three-quarters participating in our legal orientation and mental wellness seminars and webinars. s and forums where it already seeks information—through mobile devices.

We prioritize:

- Clear, accessible, and culturally-competent language
- Verified sources
- Neutral tone
- Consistent weekly messaging

Social media is not used for political positioning, but for educational clarity. Accurate information reduces vulnerability.

Consistency builds trust.

7. Leadership with Lived Experience

VIA is led and largely operated by migrants, including individuals who have personally navigated asylum systems.

Lived experience strengthens:

- Cultural humility and competence
- Immediate responsiveness
- Detection of misinformation
- Organic credibility
- Ethical accountability

Grassroots leadership rooted in lived experience is not symbolic, it is strategic.





8. Lessons from 2025

Key learnings this year include:

- Misinformation functions as structural harm.
- Pro se legal education is preventative protection.
- Mental health must be integrated into resettlement support.
- Sustainable impact requires structurally integrating grassroots leadership into public systems and the nonprofit sector at all levels.
- Consistency contributes to building institutional legitimacy within a broader, holistic approach.

9. Nearly Ten Years of Volunteer-Driven Work

Since 2016, VIA has operated with:

- Political neutrality
- Ethical transparency
- Volunteer leadership
- Community-rooted engagement

In 2025 alone, over 11,345 individuals directly accessed VIA's services.

Yet the true impact extends beyond service volume:

- Individuals are better prepared to navigate court and asylum proceedings—arriving with accurate information, organized documentation, and a clearer understanding of procedural requirements, strengthening their ability to advance their cases effectively.
- Migrants are safeguarded against fraudulent legal schemes, exploitation, and misinformation that can undermine due process, financial stability, and long-term immigration outcomes.
- Volunteers leverage lived experience to deliver culturally responsive, community-rooted support—reinforcing trust, expanding access, and sustaining VIA's peer-led service model.





10. Amplifying Our Voice: Strategic Advocacy and Digital Reach

Beyond direct service, 2025 was defined by a strong commitment to public engagement and public policy influence, ensuring our mission resonates across broader society and digital platforms.

Advocacy, interviews, and panels were a significant focus, with 16 events. Opportunities to share subject-matter expertise and thought leadership reflect our growing role as a leading voice in public discourse, driving the conversation and collaborating with media and external partners and stakeholders to influence policy and public perception.

Digital engagement through strategically organized “Live” sessions resulted in 32 virtual events in 2025. By leveraging social media platforms to host real-time legal updates, informational briefings, and community Q&A sessions, VIA expanded equitable access to accurate, timely information. These Lives played a critical role in countering misinformation, increasing understanding of immigration processes, and reducing community vulnerability to fraudulent or misleading guidance—particularly for individuals unable to access in-person services.

11. Investing in VIA's Future: Strengthening the Organizational Core

Reflecting on all 2025 events, leads us to an inspirational commitment to the future of our organization that will continue to prioritize the growth and cohesion of our dedicated team and volunteer network, a true investment in human capital.

We held a total of 16 internal-facing events in 2025, six Volunteer Trainings and ten Volunteer Meetings, representing a 25% increase compared to 2024. This growth reflects a deliberate institutional investment in volunteer capacity-building. Through structured training and ongoing coordination meetings, volunteers were equipped with updated legal information, case navigation tools, fraud prevention guidance, and community outreach strategies, strengthening service quality, consistency, and organizational readiness.





12. Looking Ahead to 2026

VIA's strategic priorities include:

- Advance institutional sustainability through diversified funding and strengthened governance.
- Expand and systematize volunteer training and onboarding processes.
- Strengthen and modernize VIA's digital infrastructure.
- Expand legal orientation sessions in partnership with legal service firms.
- Increase the reach and impact of the Peer Support Program.
- Sustain and optimize a hybrid service model that integrates in-person and digital delivery.

As immigration systems grow increasingly complex and strained, VIA remains committed to a fact-based, impartial service model grounded in human dignity. For VIA, dignity is not aspirational, it is a standard of institutional responsibility. It informs how services are designed, how volunteers are trained, and how information is delivered: with accuracy, transparency, and respect.

We believe that dignity means access to accurate information, protection from exploitation, and the ability to make informed decisions about one's future. It means building systems of support that restore trust and reinforce community resilience.

In moments of uncertainty, VIA's role is not only to provide services, but to uphold the fundamental dignity of those navigating immigration processes, ensuring that every interaction affirms humanity, transparency, and care.