

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Tepeyac Association Urgent Cases Department**

#### **URGENT SERVICES \ IMMIGRATION ISSUES**

##### **Context:**

Among all of the undocumented immigrants in the United States, Mexicans have the disadvantage of being from the neighboring nation and for this reason serve two basic purposes: a) to stabilize the national economy. They are sought and hired when cheap and plentiful labor is needed and expelled when there is a labor surplus. b) To justify the purpose and budget of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). The deportation of Mexican immigrants does not destabilize the labor force because it is quickly replenished and they join the masses of recent arrivals. Between 1998 and 1999, in the sweeps carried out by the INS in New York City-area factories, 84% of those detained and deported were Mexicans. Likewise, as a group, Mexicans are singled out for detention upon arrival at local airports.

Services. Members of the Association's Immigration Commission are preparing to offer workshops about to undocumented immigrants about their rights in case they are detained by Immigration authorities. They also organize visits to the Immigration Detention Centers. Those detained can call collect to the main offices of the Association to request assistance and, if they are detained from any point along the border, they can request information about the services and shelters available to them. Whenever there are new laws or regulations that affect immigrants or permit them to legalize their migratory status, informational workshops and assistance in filing applications for change of status are offered. Along with all of these activities, we continue with the permanent campaign for legalization, General Unconditional Amnesty, which seeks permanent residency for all undocumented immigrants.

##### **URGENT SERVICES / Labor Advocacy**

Context: Many immigrant workers think that because they are undocumented they do not have labor rights in the United States. They do not know that the Department of Labor defends their rights as workers in the United States regardless of their migratory status. They do not know that in any kind of work they must receive the federal minimum wage of \$5.25 an hour. They do not know that the first 40 hours of work in a week are paid at their normal wage and that any additional hours must be paid as "overtime" at a rate of one and a half times their normal hourly wage. Many employers require their workers to work 70-80 hours a week and only pay for 40 hours, or less. There are even less ethical employers who, after days or weeks of work, fail to recognize their employees and fire them without wages. There are cases of workers that are fired when they suffer a work-related injury and their employers pretend not to know them. More than nine million undocumented workers must obtain and present residency documents and social security numbers (which in many cases are false or borrowed) to comply with the law and in order to work. Services Offered: Members of the Tepeyac Association's Commission on Labor Rights are committed to bettering this situation. They meet once monthly to learn about the process and necessary paperwork to defend the labor rights of undocumented immigrants. Ideally, each member organization of the Association has a representative

who is preparing to offer this service. The main offices of the Association offers labor rights services to undocumented workers from 10 AM to 12 PM, Monday to Friday. We defend the right of workers whose employers refuse to pay them, who suffer work-related injuries and accidents and are unable to access their benefits, who are not paid overtime for hours worked, or who suffer other abuses at the hands of their employers. In cases where demonstrations or boycotts are required to place more pressure on employers, active members of Tepeyac Association do so.

**A little bit of history:**

The Department of Urgent Services formed the Counseling and Orientation Program on October of 2000 to provide new immigrants with the opportunity to achieve better living standards.

Objectives:

The Program has three objectives:

- Prevention: workshops, distribution of literature (posters, pamphlets, flyers, etc.), and information seminars with community leaders on topics such as domestic violence, sexuality, drugs, alcohol, etc.
- Assistance: a team of bilingual health professionals attending the needs of the community through individual counseling and support groups.
- Research and Development: assessing the characteristics and culture of the immigrant community to design and develop special programs.

Problems attended:

Services offered:

- Family and relationship counseling
- Individual Counseling
- Support Groups
- Orientation and formation of prevention groups
- Links to other organizations providing immigrant services

Source: Tepeyac Association Web Site (2002): (<http://www.tepeyac.org>)