

# HERE TO STAY: CENTRO DE LOS TRABAJADORES COLORADO'S BIENVENIDOS A DENVER PROGRAM

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Photo Credit: Centro de los Trabajadores Colorado

## BACKGROUND

Since late 2022, Denver has become a top reception site among cities hosting newly arrived immigrants, or “newcomers.” As of late spring of 2024, the City of Denver had reportedly served over 42,000 newcomers, mostly from Venezuela, but also from Colombia, Peru, Mexico, and beyond ([City of Denver Newcomer Sheltering and Support Dataset](#)).

Centro de los Trabajadores Colorado (Centro), Denver’s worker center, has occupied an important space in Denver’s immigrant worker landscape since the early 2000s. As part of wider efforts to assist newcomers, Centro had served nearly 100 new arrivals through its Bienvenidos a Denver (Welcome to Denver) program. The program, launched in May of 2022, conducted intakes with new arrivals to orient them and assess their needs and resources, including navigation with school enrollment, employment, food and housing, and legal support. It also served as a referral system for Centro’s other workshops and programs in Wellness, Wage Theft, Employment, Entrepreneurship, and Organizing and Leadership.

A team at the University of Denver conducted a formative evaluation of

Centro’s first 100 newcomer intakes to assess needs, challenges, and accomplishments. Results appear below.

## COMPOSITION OF NEW ARRIVALS

89% of newly arrived families participating in intakes with the Bienvenidos program were from Venezuela. Because the vast majority arrived after July 31, 2023, only 7.3% were either eligible for or held TPS.

Table 1. Composition Sociodemographic

Total Individuals	295
Total Intakes	102
Avg. intake size	2.9
Venezuela	89.2%
Colombia	6.9%
Ecuador	2.0%
Peru	2.0%
Some Secondary Education	79.1%
Some University Education	20.9%

## SOCIAL INCORPORATION

Table 2 summarizes challenges in social integration. More than half (54%) of families were residing in shelters at the time of the intake, and these families often expressed uncertainty about their next steps. About 70% of school-aged children were reportedly enrolled in school, and many parents struggled to navigate the school system.

**Table 2. Socioeconomic incorporation**

Avg. Days in US	53.81
Plan to Stay in CO	97.8%
Has support network	39.4%
Residence - Shelter	54.0%
Residence - Renting	37.0%
Residence - Hosted	7.0%
Residence - Other	2.0%

61% reported no or weak social networks in the United States. Nearly a quarter (22%) initially intended to go elsewhere. However, nearly all (98%) expressed the plan to stay long term, underscoring the importance of addressing socioeconomic incorporation.

## WORK

Fewer than 4% of intake respondents reported being employed. Some had found temporary jobs, but 100% responded that they were actively seeking employment.

Primary employment obstacles were lack of work authorization or a work permit. Respondents also noted the inability to transfer skills and credentials, and lack of English.

## LEGAL, HOUSING & OTHER SERVICE NEEDS

Figure 2 summarizes the most frequently occurring needs that newcomers identified, demonstrating the primacy of employment.

Employment was often interconnected with requests for legal assistance and with asylum claims, which could provide a path to work authorization.

Most (88%) respondents were interested in making an asylum claim, but, of these, only 5% of respondents had spoken to someone about their asylum case. Just 16.2% had received any legal services. Lack of knowledge yet strong interest in asylum reflect the need for legal outreach and support.

**Figure 2. Top family needs (proportion of intakes)**



**Figure 1. Top employment challenges (proportion of intakes)**

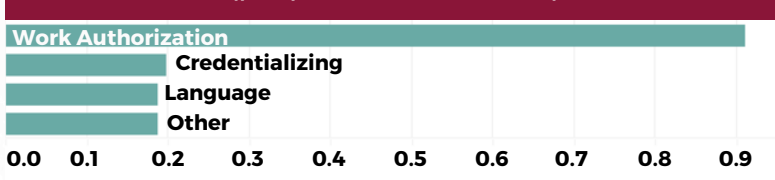


Photo Credit: Centro de los Trabajadores Colorado



## CENTRO RESOURCES & FOLLOW-UP

Every single respondent (100%) expressed an interest in becoming a member of Centro and agreed to follow-up. Churches comprised over three-quarters (75.5%) of referral sources to Centro. Social media has also been an important referral mode, as Centro noted that many newcomers contact them via Facebook, WhatsApp, and other social media. Newcomers were very interested in programs and trainings offered by Centro, with strong enthusiasm for its employment program. For trainings, newcomers were most excited to learn about immigrant rights, rights in the U.S., labor rights, and English.



Photo Credit: Centro de los Trabajadores Colorado

Table 3. Interest in other programs at Centro (percentage of intakes)

Employment	98.0%
Entrepreneurship	13.0%
Wage theft	5.0%
Wellness	5.0%
Leadership	1.0%

## CONCLUSION

This report underscores the need for data driven approaches to understanding the interests, challenges, and needs of newcomers to help Centro, city programs, and other stakeholders develop comprehensive and sustainable newcomer reception and integration strategies. Housing and food, work, social and spiritual integration, legal needs and asylum, education, language, healthcare, and mental health and psychosocial support access may appear to be discrete needs as one may be immediately more pressing than others. Yet these needs are all interconnected and often compounding, critical to ensuring newcomers can build dignity, community and power amongst themselves and with the broader community—these are Centro’s core tenets.

## STAY CONNECTED AND INVOLVED

### Centro de los Trabajadores Colorado



Located in St. Catherine of Siena Parish and School  
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### Websites for more information:

<https://centrodelostrabajadores.org/>

<https://cipr.du.edu/>

### Centro Social Media



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