

Immigration Evaluations

INTRODUCTORY WEBINAR

with Georgia King, LCSW





Goals

- Provide an overview of conducting immigration evaluations
- Describe how evaluations support the most common kinds of cases:
 - * **Asylum Cases**
 - * **Extreme Hardship Waivers**
 - * **VAWA Cases**
- Demonstrate how you can create a successful business model and how to get started



What You Should Know...

Info is as accurate & up-to-date as possible, however:

- Immigration laws change
- Information is based on my experience, not formal training (I haven't been to law school)
- It's up to you to verify all information

This is **NOT detailed training**, only an introduction

- No time for critical nuances or strategies
- Please don't use this workshop as basis for writing evaluations bc you'll be missing crucial information

If you decide to pursue this work, **please seek out in-depth training** so you can make the strongest, most meaningful impact for your clients and your business



What Is an Immigration Evaluation?

A mental health assessment provided for an immigrant to submit as part of their legal case

For example:

- If an asylum seeker experienced trauma in their home country
- A mental health assessment can document PTSD symptoms
- This provides evidence for their case

IMMIGRATION EVALUATIONS

What It's Not

- Court participation (minor aspect, optional)
- Therapy
- Blind advocacy
- Restricted to therapists with a doctorate degree
- Different for every state in the U.S.

What It Is

- Meeting with client and writing the report
- 2 sessions to assess
- Sense of objectivity
- Open to therapists with master's degrees
- Consistent everywhere, regulations are federal



Common Myths

I would need to be bilingual...

Fantastic but not necessary. You can work with amazing interpreters.

There's probably not a need in my area...

Immigrants & immigration lawyers are everywhere. You can do telehealth evals with clients anywhere in the state where you're licensed.

I need to be the best writer in the world...

Nope. Strong templates do most of the work for you. Plus, it's easy to get help with editing and proofreading.



Are Pre-Licensed Therapists Eligible?

General Guideline:

Only independently licensed therapists should provide evals

(therapists who can do clinical work and provide diagnoses without supervision)

But Some Conflicting Reports:

- Some therapists say, “Absolutely,” as long as a supervisor also signs off on the report
- Some say, “Absolutely not.” Because they’ve seen reports by pre-licensed therapists denied by courts
- AVOID Asylum cases bc the therapist’s credentials may be more scrutinized
- May depend on location; could ask local therapists abt their experiences

As an Alternative:

A pre-licensed therapist could partner with an experienced independently licensed clinician and do work “behind the scenes,” sitting in on interviews, writing up notes & filling in the template. Then, experienced clinician would be the one to diagnose, review and sign their name to the assessment. (They would be the only one signing their name to report.)





What I've Learned...

1. These evaluations are VERY different from those done at an agency.
Legal context is critical.
2. The assessment must **address the needs of each case.**
3. It is essential to **humanize** the client.
4. You are a **translator** between the clinical and legal fields.





Value & Impact

The evaluation is often the **DEALBREAKER** and decides:

- Whether someone is deported to life-threatening circumstances
- Whether a family is split apart

Lawyers rely on us to:

- Provide evidence for the case
- Elicit the trauma history for cases w/ focus on trauma





The Three Most Common Immigration Cases

Asylum
Cases

Extreme
Hardship
Waivers

VAWA
Cases





Asylum Cases

Asylum seeker must prove

- Well-founded fear of persecution if they return to home country
- Part of targeted social group (ie race, nationality, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, political views, etc)

Generally, clients have been persecuted, but rarely have physical scars

- Often there's no evidence for their case

Clinical eval documents “invisible scars”

- Documenting PTSD symptoms provides evidence that client is telling the truth about past trauma
- Therapists can address other psychological needs of the case



CASE EXAMPLE:

Trans Immigrant
From El Salvador

“A lot of the transgender people I knew in El Salvador have been killed, and no one does anything about it. The police don’t really care. Sometimes the body would just be found out on the street, sometimes their throats were cut... Over three years, I can think of maybe twenty people in my community who were killed. People like me would get hurt or killed all the time.”





Petitions for Extreme Hardship Waivers

Family living in the United States

- One family member is US citizen (USC)
- Another is undocumented

For waiver, USC must prove it would cause them “extreme hardship” if they:

1. Were separated from family member
2. Or relocated abroad with their family member

Therapist assesses USC’s psychological hardship if either situation occurred

Eval highlights factors contributing to “extreme hardship” & assesses psychological impact of factors





VAWA: Violence Against Women Act

- Applies to individuals of any gender, not only women
- An undocumented immigrant is victim of domestic violence and is married to a US Citizen
- Esp. dangerous because immigrant depends on abuser for citizenship
- With VAWA, immigrant can “self-petition” for citizenship, independent of spouse
- Clt must prove they’re victim of DV
- Therapist assesses for signs of DV (ie trauma-related symptoms; dynamics of power/control, etc)



CLINICAL EVALUATIONS

- Document the client's history (Help make their story heard)
- Address psychological needs of the case
- Assess client's symptoms and provide diagnoses
- Offer recommendations for the future



Assessment Methodology

Therapists conduct assessments in accordance with their training and experience

- No official requirements or certifications

Most therapists include:

- Clinical interviewing
- Mental Status Exam
- Self-assessment scales

Psychologists often use psych testing, not always (up to individual psychologist)



Approach To Immigration Evaluations

Meet with client twice

- Approx. 1.5 hours each time
- Video chat or in-person

The written assessment

- In-depth, length varies

(Note: A good template pre-populates much of the info & does a lot of the work for you)

Timeframe often up to therapist
(common, around 3 or 4 weeks)

Therapist's fee

- Wide range, \$500 to \$1,500+
- Most around \$1000



Creating a Successful Business Model





What
Draws
Clinicians
To this Work?



Creating Referral Streams

- There's a HUGE need for these assessments
- Immigration lawyers love to refer to us
Our assessments make their jobs easier
- With the right script, sending out “cold” emails to lawyers can be highly effective for networking
- 3 or 4 lawyers who like your work = as many assessments as you'd like to be doing



Which Immigrants Can Afford This?

Clients come from a wide range of countries, educational backgrounds and financial means

- Including Thailand, Iran, Kenya, India and China
- Client may have PhD or be married to an engineer

Therapists typically charge around \$1,000 per eval
to cover the hours for the sessions & write-up

Clients referred by lawyers have access to resources

- Some clients easily afford full fee
- For others, it's workable with a payment plan
- Therapists can balance pro bono & full-fee work

Great Way to Start Your Private Practice

- Totally compatible with working at an agency full or part-time
- Way more flexible than meeting with private therapy clients
(You can write when you have a free moment)
- You don't even need an office
(You can use Zoom, or the lawyer's office)



This work isn't
for everyone
But it's perfect if...



You're passionate about social justice
and making a powerful impact



You need work that's totally flexible,
that you can do from anywhere



You want to work with clients from
around the world



You're ready to create a new
and reliable stream of income



You're committed to advocating
for immigrants & their families



YOU CAN DO THIS!

- You don't need to be best writer in world
(You don't even need to love grammar)
- You've already done a ton of assessments
This is just a new context
- Detailed templates do much of the work for you
- Strong training can make it easy & give you:
 - **A simple roadmap**
 - **Confidence to get started**
 - **Support as you build your practice**





Words
From the
Community

GEORGIA'S TRAINING INCLUDES...

- **6.5 Hours Live Training**
(Or view recording of recent training to start sooner)
- **Clinical Tools** *(Templates, sample evals, assessment scales)*
- **Business Strategies** *(Email script for networking, expert tips)*
- **Ongoing Support** *(Facebook Group; 3 Monthly Consult Groups)*
- **6.5 CEUS approved by NASW**

For more info, go to:

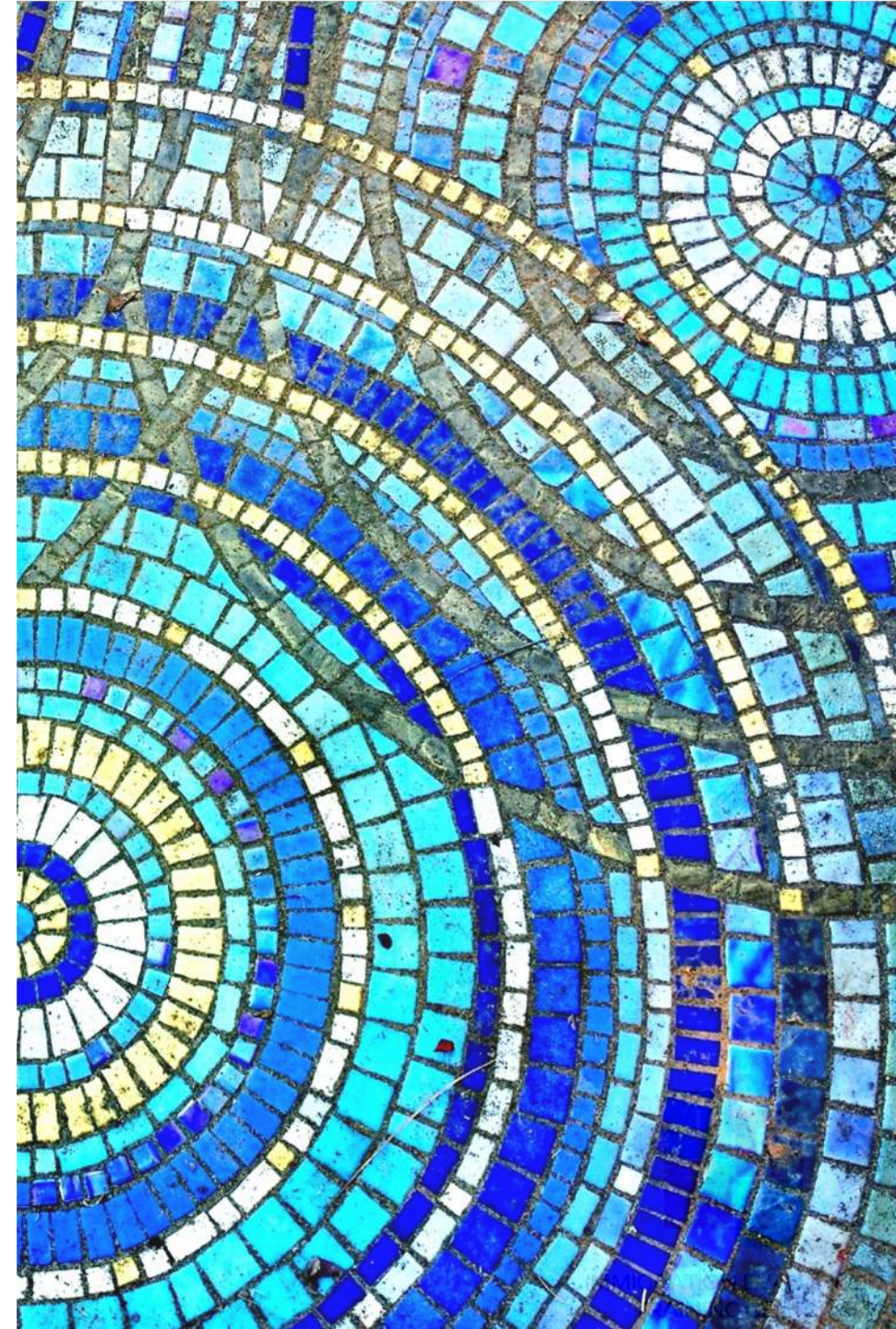
www.therapistimmigrationtraining.com/signup



If You Feel Inspired to Move
Forward...

*I'd be honored to support
you in doing this work!*

-Georgia



Immigration Evaluations

INTRODUCTORY WEBINAR

with Georgia King, LCSW

