



ANNUAL
REPORT
2022

NYSYLC

WHO WE ARE

OUR MISSION

The NYSYLC is the first undocumented youth-led organization in New York. We work to empower immigrant youth through leadership development, grassroots organizing, educational advancement, and self-expression. Our goal is to give undocumented youth the tools and space to organize and create change in our communities.

OUR HISTORY

The NYSYLC was established in 2007 by a group of undocumented youth seeking to articulate and advocate for the unique needs of New York undocumented youth, and build undocumented-led spaces for empowerment and expression outside of policy.

We were instrumental in the national push to put undocumented immigrants, and the Dream Act, at the forefront of the immigration debate through an “undocumented and unafraid” organizing model. This model highlights that undocumented people know best what their liberation looks like and are experts on the issues that impact their lives. Through this model we have led campaigns and participated in direct actions.

In 2011, after the failure of the federal Dream Act, the NYSYLC drafted and helped introduce the first version of the New York State Dream Act, which became law in 2019, to allow undocumented students to apply for state financial aid. By focusing on local legislation and organizing, the NYSYLC introduced the concept of Dream Teams – local undocumented and immigrant-friendly hubs in colleges and in high schools in all five boroughs. Since then, Dream Teams have been established in 20 schools, reaching 200 members per year.

Since the pandemic started, we have expanded our efforts to support the mental health of undocumented youth through community-building, art, and emotional support. Today we continue to develop undocumented youth leaders and organize for more immigrant resources from the DOE and CUNY system.

Members of the NYSYLC have leveraged their experiences to start new organizations – including United We Dream, Queens Neighborhood United, Fat Femme Collective, and Undocu Nature – and become leaders in social justice, education, government, art, and more.

LOOKING BACK ON 2022

2022 marked a year of recovery from the worst effects of the pandemic.

Undocumented youth and families, however, continued to deal with many of the pandemic's impacts. Many undocumented students and youth had become the primary earners of their households. They helped their families navigate this health emergency, often while grieving and socially isolated. So many systemic issues were brought to the surface: lack of school support for undocumented students, lack of social safety nets, barriers to employment, and more.

The NYSYLC was founded by undocumented youth as a community space for empowerment, organizing, and advocacy. In 2022, we responded to the growing needs among undocumented youth for social connection, mental health support, and guidance with accessing college and careers.

*Undocu Hike 2022
Photograph by Angy Rivera*

MAKING COLLEGE ACCESSIBLE

NYC schools are woefully underprepared to support undocumented high school students with preparing for life after high school. In 2023, NYSYLC's Undocu Academy provided undocumented high school students with mentorship, leadership development, and 1-on-1 support with accessing college, financial aid, and career paths. Students attended group workshops twice a week and meet 1-on-1 with mentors and facilitators.

We closed out Undocu Academy's Class of 2022 with a networking event and graduation ceremony where students reflected on their growth over the past year. In the fall of 2023, Undocu Academy's Class of 2023 welcomed 9 new students and mentors, and we supported the students with completing CUNY and SUNY applications.

For undocumented youth who cannot commit to a year-long program, we hosted open workshops that anyone could sign up for and attend. In April 2022, we launched a workshop series called College Wednesdays, explaining how to access college as an undocumented student, including tips on researching immigrant-friendly colleges, navigating application requirements relating to immigration status, and applying for the NYS Dream Act and Dream.US scholarship.



EXPANDING SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS

Immigrant Liaison also known as "ImmLiaison" was created through CUNY-IIE's collaboration with the New York State Youth Leadership Council (NYSYLC) and our educator team, Teach Dream, to start the first immigrant liaison program in New York. The hope of this work is to create Immigrant Liaison positions across New York City schools to support the needs of immigrant students, families, and caregivers across the state, especially those who are undocumented. In 2022 the team expanded the pilot program to five NYC public schools.

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

In February we launched our Immigrant Daughters' Support Group, a monthly virtual space for immigrant women to share and support each other through grounding and intentional conversations. Our members range from high school students to mothers and adults. This support group is led not by mental health counselors or specialists, but by directly impacted women who also need a space to share and be supported.

On August 20th, we teamed up with Undocu Nature to host an Undocu Hike at Twin Islands Loop in Pelham Bay Park. Founded by NYSYLC members, Undocu Nature is "a group of undocu and formerly undocu folks who are reclaiming nature through outdoor exploration, reconnecting with ourselves and the world around us."

High school and college can be lonely experiences for undocumented students, who face unique challenges but receive minimal support, and often encounter racism and xenophobia from peers and faculty. On October 28, our Community Organizer Maria – formerly our Dream Team Network Coordinator and president of BMCC Dream Team – organized our first in-person Undocu Student Meetup since the pandemic started. Over 100 undocumented high school and college students across NYC met for the first time after over a year of virtual meetings. Students bonded through crafts, games, and icebreakers, laying the groundwork for future collaboration. This event was organized in partnership with the Immigrant Student Success Center at John Jay College.

Other community events in 2023 included a potluck, a trip to Ellis Island, a tour of a community garden, and marching at NYC Pride.



ARTS & SELF-EXPRESSION

There are few safe spaces built for undocumented youth to express themselves creatively. We created events and spaces, in-person and online, for members to engage with art and tell their stories.

In May, our members learned the principles of photography, reflected on the significance of photos, and practiced with cameras supplied by NYSYLC. This event was organized by Aldo, who is also our Undocu Academy Coordinator and president of John Jay Dreamers. Other workshops involved vision boards, dance, and creative writing, and we frequently collaborated with Minkwon Youth.

Our Media Fellow Shaina created the TikTok series "Undocu Culture," where she highlights undocu folks and culture in the arts, film, business, music, fashion, and beauty industries, and connects art exhibits and pop culture to the immigrant experience.



IMPACT STORIES: SHAINA

When Shaina was 19, she discovered the NYSYLC after having to withdraw from college due to a lack of funding and resources for undocumented students. She was introduced to the organization by an advisor at BMCC. Attending NYSYLC's events helped Shaina navigate her identity, and find community. Shaina volunteered with the Undocu Academy's mentorship program in October 2020, where she worked alongside another member to create the program layout, and co-led the Undocu Junior Academy until early 2022.

In February 2022, Shaina became NYSYLC's media fellow. Her mission is to empower undocumented youth to control their narrative, push back against stereotypes and misinformation about undocumented immigrants, and bridge the gap between entertainment, information, and representation of the undocumented community. To achieve this and with the guidance of our co-executive director Angy, Shaina co-created "Undocu Culture", a video series that highlights the disparate intersectional immigrant identities in an entertaining and educational way.



"My college experience was enhanced by the community, resources, and overall support that the NYSYLC provided even before I became involved as a volunteer and member. They helped me realize that there are other undocumented youth similar to me and that although I am the first in my family to be going through higher education, I am not alone, nor do I have to do it all alone.

"Through my involvement, I am also reminded that my (out) status does not have to determine everything and my potential and worth go beyond. I have also gotten the opportunity and support to grow personally and professionally."

— Shaina, NYSYLC Member

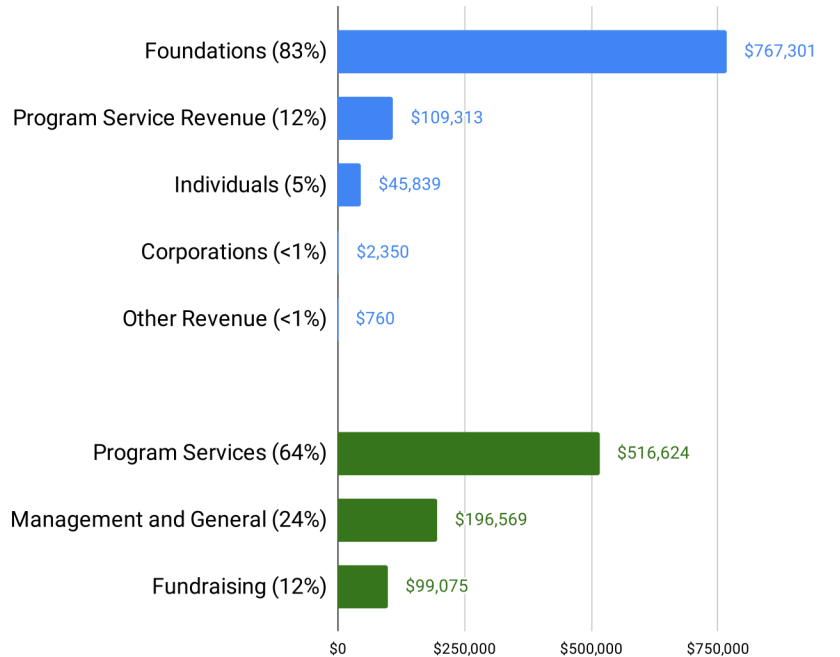
DEVELOPING NEW LEADERS

We expanded our organizing strategy this year by launching an Organizing Team, a team of undocumented youth seeking to organize in their communities and build campaigns for immigrant justice. The Organizing Team includes students and non-students alike, and is an expansion of our Dream Team Network. In March and April, we held Get Active trainings where Organizing Team members learned about community organizing, systems of oppression, advocacy strategies, and ongoing campaigns.

FINANCIALS

Revenues
\$925,563

Expenses
\$812,268



WE THANK YOU
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN
OUR PROGRAMS

WE THANK OUR FOUNDATION PARTNERS

Altman Foundation	Lucius N Littauer Foundation
Brooklyn Community Foundation	New York Foundation
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