



VILLANOVA
UNIVERSITY

College of Professional Studies

VIISTA



Online

VILLANOVA INTERDISCIPLINARY IMMIGRATION STUDIES TRAINING FOR ADVOCATES

100% ONLINE, the VIISTA certificate program trains students to become immigrant advocates ready to serve migrants and refugees. It can also prepare you to become a Department of Justice “accredited representative.”

Are you passionate about advocating for immigrants?

We know that access to legal representation is the primary determinant in obtaining a just immigration outcome. The Vera Institute found that migrants are 10 times more likely to obtain available relief when they have an advocate. Unlike criminal proceedings in which defendants have constitutional rights to representation, in the United States migrants are not entitled to court appointed lawyers. Six out of 10 migrants confront the immigration system without a lawyer, and many of these migrants are children. After taking VIISTA, you will be ready to help migrant families in meaningful, life-changing ways.

Three Modules Offer Three Pathways

Each Module in VIISTA’s curriculum is designed so that upon completion you will be able to add value to the community. Modules build upon one another, and students have the flexibility to choose whether to complete Module 1, 1 and 2, or all three.

PATH 1
(Complete Module 1)
Certificate in
Immigrant Accompaniment

PATH 2
(Complete Module 1 + 2)
Certificate in
Immigrant Advocacy

PATH 3
(Complete Module 1 + 2 + 3)
Certificate in
Immigration Trial Advocacy

MODULE 1
How to successfully work
with immigrants.

MODULE 2
Immigration law and practice.
Train to become a **partially**
accredited representative.

MODULE 3
Immigration law and practice.
Train to become a **fully**
accredited representative.

FULL PROGRAM
Certificate in Interdisciplinary
Immigration Studies Training
for Advocates



Students in the pilot
program report working
10-15 hours per week.

Bridging the Gap

The VIISTA curriculum is holistic and teaches relevant and immediately applicable tools needed to become an effective advocate for the immigrant community. This impactful program bridges the gap between passionate advocates who desire to become part of the solution and the immigrant community that needs support. Course content is learned in the context of what you will do to help migrants and refugees, whether on the job or in volunteer positions.

Course topics include:

- Immigration law
- Interviewing
- Case analysis and planning
- Working with interpreters
- Representing migrant children
- The factors that push people to migrate
- Providing trauma-informed care
- Trial advocacy
- Self- and communal- care
- Professional development
- The immigration ecosystem
- Legal research and writing
- Ethics
- Cultural sensitivity

“ I joined VIISTA to deepen my commitment as an immigrant advocate. At the Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project, I have the honor of standing alongside asylum-seeking families seeking the right to protection and safety in the U.S. My day to day work has shown me the huge gaps in access to legal representation across the country and the drastic disparity in outcome, when asylum-seeking families do not have access to an attorney. VIISTA is an innovative model that removes traditional barriers to law school through its’ remote, self-paced classroom model, allowing people like me to gain a comprehensive understanding of immigration law and advocacy. I truly believe VIISTA is the future direction of the immigrant rights movement, to respond to the huge need for legal representation and to give every immigrant family their day in court. ”



Nicole Tan
Asylum Seeker
Advocacy Project (ASAP)
VIISTA Pilot Student

Your Investment

Module Cost = \$1,270 | Full Program = \$3,810 | Books = approximately \$250.

Founder and Faculty Director of VIISTA



Michele Pistone, JD, LLM

Professor of Law at Villanova University’s Charles Widger School of Law
Founder and Faculty Director of VIISTA

“ I envision a future where we have additional layers in the legal services ecosystem—like immigrant advocates—who are able to provide limited legal services and address the access to justice gap. ”

Faculty

VIISTA is designed in consultation with an interdisciplinary team of renowned faculty and lawyers, all of whom are accomplished practitioners and scholars in their fields, including lawyers from Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), Catholic Relief Services, Tahirih Justice Center, Immigrant Justice Corps, and HIAS PA.

Visit the VIISTA website faculty page to view the full list of our renowned design faculty.

Learn more at immigrantadvocate.villanova.edu or
call 610- 519-4300 for more information.