

# Border crisis reaching into Nevada

By Tovin Lapan, Las Vegas Sun

Every time the phone rings these days, Rosa Molina steels herself for a heart-wrenching story.

She has been taking far more calls than usual from immigrants, and many of them are sharing tales of abuse and violence. This week, she has already taken a call from a mother who says she paid a smuggler \$7,000 to escort her children from El Salvador to the United States, only to be contacted and asked for an additional \$5,000 if she ever wants to see her children again.

“The problem started last year, but nobody was paying attention,” said Molina, director of the citizenship and immigration program for the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada in Reno. She connects immigrants with pro bono attorneys, a high-demand service in the area.

The surge of immigrants, mostly children and families from Central America, only recently became fodder for newscasts but has been building for years. Apprehensions of unaccompanied children increased from 16,067 in fiscal year 2011 to 24,481 in FY 2012 and 38,833 in FY 2013, according to Customs and Border Patrol.

The numbers have spiked this year, with 57,525 picked up by Border Patrol in the first nine months of FY 2014. If the increased rate holds, the federal government estimates 90,000 children may arrive before the fiscal year ends Sept. 30.

Molina’s phone was ringing at 10 times the normal rate last year, and she noticed a lot more calls pertaining to recently arrived children and families. Then the flood hit at the end of spring. The office received more than 120 calls in June

alone – a 260 percent increase from normal traffic.

Nevada is not home to any of the government-contracted shelters or other facilities being used for the recently arrived immigrants, but it has not been untouched by the influx.

“Last year, we were seeing more kids traveling alone, mostly between 10 and 14 years old, that were being sent here by immigration authorities because they had family in the area,” Molina said. “Now, we are seeing a lot of women and children together, with the kids as young as 5 years old.”

Typically, the immigrants who show up in Northern Nevada and the Lake Tahoe area have been detained near the Mexican border by immigration authorities and released with a notice to appear in court for deportation proceedings. In Nevada, most end up staying with friends and family.

**Read the whole story**