



PROTECT YOURSELF FROM IMMIGRATION SCAMS

If you need help applying for immigration relief, be careful who you hire. Watch out for immigration scams that can cost you thousands of dollars and/or harm your immigration status! Here are some tips and resources to help:

DO

Go to a legitimate legal aid organization for free legal help. Many nonprofit organizations provide free immigration help to low-income individuals, such as those found through the resources below. To find a legal aid organization near you, go to lawhelpca.org.

Access information from “.gov” websites. These are government affiliated. Information on websites that end with “.com”, “.net”, or other domains may be untrustworthy.

Keep your original documents in a safe place. Don't give your original documents to anyone unless you see proof that the government requires the original document. If you give someone an original, they may lose it or refuse to return it unless you pay them.

Keep copies of all documents associated with your immigration matter, including copies of the immigration documents filed and correspondence from the government regarding your immigration status.

Confirm that anyone helping you with your case is licensed or accredited. Only lawyers, accredited representatives, and recognized organizations can give you legal advice or represent you in immigration court. Some immigration consultants may fraudulently call themselves immigration lawyers. If someone claims they are licensed in California or another state and can therefore practice immigration law, confirm they are licensed and in good standing in that particular state, visit www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_services/flh-home/flh-lawyer-licensing/. If someone claims to be an accredited representative or recognized organization, visit justice.gov/eoir/recognition-accreditation-roster-reports to confirm that information.

DON'T

Do not hire an immigration consultant or a notary. Only lawyers, accredited representatives, and recognized organizations can give you legal advice or represent you in immigration court. Immigration consultants – who may call themselves immigration experts, notarios, notaries public, or paralegals – cannot do so. They cannot provide legal advice or direction with immigration forms, help you fill out forms, or assess your eligibility for different types of immigration relief. They also cannot speak to the government on your behalf. They can only do non-legal, clerical tasks, like translating information on forms.

Do not be persuaded by false promises or pressured to pay for immigration services. Do not trust anyone who claims to be able to get special favors from the government or guarantees you a work permit or any other immigration benefit. Do not trust anyone who wants you to act immediately.

Do not sign anything until you understand what you are signing. Do not agree to anything that is not put in writing and in a language you understand. If you are not fluent in the language the contract is in, ask that it be translated. You are entitled to a contract that lists all the services that will be provided and how much each service costs. Keep a copy of the contract and all receipts of your payments.

Do not pay for immigration forms. These forms can be accessed for free by visiting the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website at uscis.gov/forms or (800) 870-3676.

Do not sign an immigration form that includes incorrect information or blanks. Before you sign any immigration forms, be sure that the forms are fully and accurately filled out. Don't let anyone convince you to lie on a form or sign a blank form. Never sign anything until you understand what it says.



Do not give money or personal information to anyone who calls, texts, or emails you claiming that there is a problem with your immigration matter. No federal or state agency, including USCIS, will ever ask for your personal information or payment over the phone, by email, or text.

RESOURCES

If you are the victim of an immigration scam:

- Contact your local District Attorney or county department of consumer affairs.
- Report the scam to the Federal Trade Commission at <https://reportfraud.ftc.gov/>.
- Contact the U.S. Department of Justice’s FraudAbuse Prevention Program through their email at EOIR.Fraud.Program@usdoj.gov or phone number at (703) 305-0470.
- Report it to the California Department of Justice at oag.ca.gov/report.
- Get help from a legitimate legal aid organization at <https://www.lawhelpca.org/>.

Learn more about immigration scams:

- Learn about tools to help you avoid immigrationscams at uscis.gov/avoid-scams.

Access free immigration help:

- U.S. Department of Justice: justice.gov/eoir/list-pro-bono-legal-service-providers (legal services providers) or justice.gov/eoir/recognized-organizations-and-accredited-representatives-ros-ter-state-and-city (accredited representatives)
- Law Help CA: lawhelpca.org
- Immigration Law Help: immigrationlawhelp.org
- California Department of Social Services: cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/immigration/contractor-contact-information