



Other people may offer to help you complete your forms and may have good intentions, but are not qualified to provide advice on immigration law or procedures.

### Tips To Remember

- ✓ **DO** get immigration information from official government websites. Web addresses for federal government agencies include “.gov,” not “.com.”
- ✓ **DO** get a receipt when you pay someone to help you complete your immigration forms.
- ✓ **DO** verify that the person giving you legal advice and representing you before USCIS is an attorney or BIA-accredited representative.
- ✓ **DO** keep all letters from USCIS in a safe place. Always get copies of all documents that were prepared or submitted for you and keep a copy of your USCIS receipt notice. This receipt is proof that your application or petition has been received by USCIS.
- ✓ **DO** check USCIS form instructions for filing fees and other requirements.
- ✓ **DO** check the status of your case for free at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) or by calling 1-800-375-5283.
- ✓ **DO** report unlawful activity or immigration scams to the FTC, your state attorney general's office or your state bar association.
- ✓ **DO NOT** pay for blank USCIS forms. All USCIS forms are free and available at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) or at your local USCIS office.
- ✓ **DO NOT** sign blank forms. Be sure all forms are complete before you sign them.
- ✓ **DO NOT** sign forms that contain false information. Be sure that all the information is true and accurate before you sign them.
- ✓ **DO NOT** let anyone keep your original documents.
- ✓ **DO NOT** sign documents that you cannot understand. Before you sign any immigration forms, read them carefully and be sure you understand them.

When looking for immigration help, the wrong help can hurt.

Learn the facts and find legal help at [www.uscis.gov/avoidscams](http://www.uscis.gov/avoidscams) or by calling USCIS at 1-800-375-5283.



# THE WRONG HELP CAN HURT

BEWARE OF IMMIGRATION SCAMS



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

M-712 (05/11)

Sometimes, people pretend to be “immigration experts” to deceive you and take your money. This is against the law.





### Who can help me with my USCIS case?

You can always represent yourself before USCIS. Many people, including family members, may be willing to help you fill out USCIS forms with the information you provide. These people may do this for free or charge a small fee. However, only certain qualified individuals can give you legal advice or represent you before USCIS.

Legal advice may include:

- How to answer questions on your immigration forms; and
- What immigration options you may have.

By law, the only people who may give you legal advice or represent you before USCIS are:

- Attorneys; and
- Non-attorney representatives who are accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA).

For more information on attorneys and BIA-accredited representatives, visit [www.uscis.gov/avoidscams](http://www.uscis.gov/avoidscams).

With the direct supervision of an attorney, accredited representative, or faculty member in some cases, certain law students and law school graduates of accredited U.S. law schools may give you legal advice on immigration issues. These students and graduates may not receive compensation for their services. Visit [www.uscis.gov/avoidscams](http://www.uscis.gov/avoidscams) for more information.

“Notarios,” notary publics, and immigration consultants may NOT provide legal advice or represent you before USCIS. In some countries, all “notarios” are attorneys. This is not true in the United States. Notary publics in the United States do not have to be attorneys and do not have the same authority to give legal advice as “notarios” in other countries.

### How do I find a free or low-cost licensed attorney or BIA-accredited representative?

For a list of free or low-cost legal services, visit [www.uscis.gov/avoidscams](http://www.uscis.gov/avoidscams) or call USCIS at 1-800-375-5283.

### How can I find out if the person helping me is authorized to provide legal advice?

For information on how to verify if an attorney or BIA-accredited representative is eligible to represent you before USCIS, visit [www.uscis.gov/avoidscams](http://www.uscis.gov/avoidscams). To find out if someone is a BIA-accredited representative, you may also visit your local USCIS office or check the list of currently accredited individuals on the BIA website at [www.justice.gov/eoir/statspub/raroster.htm](http://www.justice.gov/eoir/statspub/raroster.htm).

### What are some common immigration scams?

Scammers often make promises that sound too good to be true. They may tell you that they have a special relationship with the government, or can get you an immigration benefit like a green card or work permit very quickly, or that they can help you get benefits for which you do not qualify.

Sometimes websites that look very professional can lead you to a scam. Scammers also advertise in phone books, fliers and on signs in stores. They may take advantage of radio stations and newspapers to advertise through the media. They may also be recommended by someone you know. Be careful. Before going to someone selling immigration advice, find out first if he or she is an attorney or a BIA-accredited representative.

### What can I do if I am a victim of an immigration scam?

If you or someone you know is the victim of an immigration scam, consider notifying the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at [www.ftc.gov/complaint](http://www.ftc.gov/complaint) or 1-877-382-4357. You can also report immigration scams to your state attorney general’s office, other state agencies or the appropriate state bar association.

There are laws that prohibit immigration scams. Learn about the law in your state and how to report scams at [www.uscis.gov/avoidscams](http://www.uscis.gov/avoidscams).

**Protect yourself and your family from immigration scams. Learn the facts and find legal help at [www.uscis.gov/avoidscams](http://www.uscis.gov/avoidscams) or by calling USCIS at 1-800-375-5283.**

You can always communicate with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) about your case.

If you choose to have someone represent you, please be aware that only certain individuals may give legal advice on immigration issues or represent you before USCIS.

