

MASSACHUSETTS IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE ADVOCACY COALITION:

Information on Preventing Immigration Scams

Finding help with an immigration application or case can feel overwhelming! There are many unscrupulous people who offer to help but who are not qualified to provide immigration legal assistance. **Getting the wrong help can hurt!** Make sure you know who can provide legal advice and how to report scams.

Who can give me advice and represent me in an immigration application or case?



An **attorney (lawyer)** with a valid license to practice law.



An **“accredited representative”** working for a nonprofit organization who has received training and special authorization from the US government to help people with immigration cases. You can look for the organization and the individual on the government’s [listing](#) of accredited representatives.



Notary publics (or “notarios”) are not lawyers in the US and cannot provide legal advice.



Other people like interpreters or tax preparers. Interpreters can help translate important documents sometimes needed for immigration cases and preparers can fill out the form with only the information provided by the applicant, but they cannot provide legal advice.

How can I find out if the person helping me is a lawyer or accredited representative?

- If the person is an attorney you can ask to see proof that they have an active license. For some states you can also look up their name on the website of the state licensing authority and see if they have been subject to any discipline. In Massachusetts, you can look up an attorney by name on the website of the [Board of Bar Overseers](#). Immigration attorneys with an office in Massachusetts, however, may also be licensed in a different state.
- If the person is an accredited representative you can confirm that they are currently accredited by checking the government’s directory.
- Feel free to ask questions! You can ask if they have represented individuals with similar cases before and what outcomes they have seen, about the timeline for your case, whether they are connected with resources or mentorship if they need it, and anything else you’d like to know!



What can I expect from my lawyer or accredited representative?

- They should explain the law and any option you may have to help you make decisions about your case.
- Provide you with a written agreement explaining what services they are agreeing to provide and the fee, if any.
- Enter an appearance in the case and sign all the applications they prepare on your behalf
- Provide you a receipt for any payment you've made.
- Give you a full copy of your records, including a complete copy of any documents sent to immigration.
- Provide you with updates about your case, including proof that your application has been submitted, and promptly respond to your calls or emails.

What should I do if I have been the victim of fraud?

If you have been the victim of fraud, you can make a report. This might help protect others and may also help address your situation. You can make reports to:

- The Massachusetts Attorney General's Office: (617) 963-2917 or [online](#).
- The Massachusetts Board of Bar Overseers: <https://www.massbbo.org/s/complaints>
- The immigration court EOIR Fraud and Abuse Prevention Program: (703) 305-0470 or EOIR.Fraud.Program@usdoj.gov
- The Federal Trade Commission: <https://reportfraud.ftc.gov>

Where can I find reputable immigration legal services?

- For a directory of legal services in Massachusetts (including immigration) visit www.masslrf.org or [Mass Legal Help](#)
- If you are seeking immigration legal assistance in other states, the [Immigration Advocates Network legal directory](#) provides a fully searchable directory.
- If you are in need of information and referrals, you can call the MIRA Helpline at (508) 293-1871.