

Expanding Immigration Legal Capacity: The DOJ Recognition & Accreditation Program

May 2026

The Department of Justice R&A Program was established in 1958 to increase the number of qualified legal representatives available for low income and indigent communities. The program permits DOJ-Recognized Organizations and their non-attorney Accredited Representatives to represent clients in immigration cases.

The DOJ R&A Program helps:

- Close the gap in the shortage of immigration representatives by building or maintaining capacity within local immigration legal services programs;
- Expand attorney capacity by providing qualified legal counsel for less complex cases before the US Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) so that attorneys can focus on cases before the immigration court;
- Protect immigrants from "notario" fraud and unscrupulous practitioners by authorizing trained and vetted individuals to provide legal advice;
- Provide services in rural or "legal deserts" where there are fewer licensed immigration attorneys; and
- Colocate immigration legal services at community-based nonprofits with strong cultural competence, language skills, and social support services.

To obtain Recognition, an organization must be a nonprofit religious, charitable or social service organization that provides services primarily to low income and indigent clients. These organizations are required to have written policies around fees, including options for those who can't afford to pay. Recognized organizations must have access to experienced immigration attorneys who can provide technical assistance and support. Accredited Representatives must have knowledge, information, and experience in immigration law and procedure.



Levels of Accreditation

The majority of accredited representatives in the U.S. have **partial accreditation**, which allows them to advise and represent clients in matters before USCIS and DHS. A small number of highly experienced accredited representatives have **full accreditation**, which allows them to advise and represent clients before USCIS as well as the immigration courts.

DOJ R&A Program in Massachusetts

- There are **41 recognized organizations**, 2 of which have held that status since the late 1990s and 16 of which have been recognized for more than a decade.
- 99% of MA's **75 DOJ accredited representatives** are partially accredited, and limit their practice to matters before USCIS.
- The vast majority of accredited representatives in MA focus their practices on cases involving naturalization and family-based immigration.

DOJ R&A Program Nationally

- There are **900 non-profit organizations** nationwide that have been recognized by the DOJ.
- There are **more than 2600 accredited representatives** in the US as of 2026.
- 86% of accredited representatives nationwide are partially accredited, and limit their practice to matters before USCIS.
- In states with severe shortages of free or low-cost attorneys serving indigent communities, accredited representatives are a lifeline to immigration legal assistance.