

Protect Yourself from Immigration Scams

When it comes to immigration, the wrong help can hurt. Mistakes cost time and money, and they jeopardize your ability to remain in the U.S. Know who you can trust, and take steps to protect yourself against common scams.

Who can give me legal advice about my immigration case?



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



An accredited representative who works for a nonprofit organization and has special authorization from the U.S. government to provide immigration legal services.



Notary publics (or “notarios”) are not lawyers in the U.S. and cannot provide legal advice unless they are also attorneys or accredited representatives.



Interpreters, tax preparers, clergy members, immigration consultants, case managers, social workers and document preparers can provide limited non-legal help, but they cannot give immigration legal advice or prepare forms unless they are also attorneys or accredited representatives.

Protect yourself before accepting immigration help

- Check that a lawyer has an active law license or that an accredited representative is listed in the government’s directory.
- Ask questions about the person’s experience and what they will do for you. If it sounds too good to be true, get a second opinion.
- A lawyer or accredited representative should explain your options, tell you what services they will provide and what they will charge, and give you receipts and copies of documents filed in your case. Reputable providers do not guarantee results.

Beware of people pretending to be lawyers or government officials.

Scammers may contact immigrants or their families and pretend to be lawyers, immigration officers, court officials, or judges. They may say you must pay money to continue your application or to get a loved one released from detention.

These scams can look very real. Scammers may:

- know your name or private information about your immigration case;
- use the name of a real lawyer or organization;
- send official-looking court or immigration documents;
- invite you to an online meeting that looks like a real court hearing; or
- tell you to send money immediately using payment information they provide.

BEFORE YOU SEND MONEY, STOP AND VERIFY

Do not rely on the phone number, email, link, or payment instructions the person gave you without making sure that it is coming from a legitimate source.

Contact a lawyer or local legal services organization directly and get expert advice on how to proceed.

- For a directory of legal services in Massachusetts, visit masslrf.org or masslegalhelp.org.
- For immigration legal assistance in other states, visit immigrationadvocates.org/legaldirectory/.
- For information and referrals, call the MIRA Helpline at (508) 293-1871 or visit us at miracoalition.org/news/immigration-helpline/.

If you are not sure whether something is real, do not pay until you have talked to someone you trust.

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 may help protect others and improve your situation.

- Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office: (617) 963-2917
- Massachusetts Board of Bar Overseers: massbbo.org/s/complaints
- EOIR Fraud and Abuse Prevention Program: (703) 305-0470 or EOIR.Fraud.Program@usdoj.gov