

How Can You Avoid Fraud?

Use common sense. Many people hear what they want to hear—be smart! If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

- Don't believe it if someone tells you about a secret law or claims to have connections or special influence with any agency.
- Don't pay money to someone to refer you to a lawyer.
- Walk away if a lawyer doesn't have a license.
- Never sign an application that contains false information, and try to avoid signing blank forms. If you must sign a blank form, make sure you get a copy of the completed form and review it for accuracy before it is filed.
- Always get proof of filing—a copy or government filing receipt—when anything is submitted in your case.
- Insist on a written contract that details all fees and expenses and make sure you receive a receipt, especially if you pay cash. If terms change, get a written explanation.
- Don't let anyone "find" you a sponsor or spouse to get you a green card—it's illegal.

Take Action if You Fall Victim!

If a consultant or even an attorney commits fraud or otherwise makes a serious error that hurts your case, you may be able to fix the problem by reporting their misconduct.

If you have a complaint about a notario or immigration consultant, contact your local bar association, consumer advocate, or prosecutor for advice.

If you have a complaint about your attorney, contact your local state bar association to make a complaint.

For both attorneys and accredited representatives, you also can file a complaint with DHS or the Immigration Court. For details, see www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/00/profcondfaks.htm.

About the American Immigration Lawyers Association

The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) is the national bar association of more than 9,000 attorneys and law professors who practice and teach immigration law. Founded in 1946, AILA is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that provides continuing legal education, publications, and information, professional services, and expertise through its 35 chapters and over 50 national committees. AILA is an affiliated organization of the American Bar Association and is represented in the ABA House of Delegates. For more information about AILA, please visit our website at www.aila.org.

American Immigration Lawyers Association

1946 ◆ 2006

60 Years of Service ... 60 Years of Excellence

AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

918 F Street, NW • Washington, DC 20004
tel: 202-216-2400 • fax: 202-783-7853 • www.aila.org

Don't Be a Victim! Protect Yourself and Your Family

Get the right immigration advice
from a licensed professional



AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

Protect Your Family's Dreams

Many noncitizens who would otherwise qualify for immigration benefits discover they will never be successful because an immigration “consultant” destroyed their dreams. Don’t let this happen to you.

While many legitimate community and religious organizations provide immigration-related services, non-lawyers who advertise as legal “consultants” or “notarios” are not authorized or qualified to help with immigration matters.

By promising too much—and knowing too little—unauthorized consultants often shatter immigrants’ dreams. Many are little better than scam artists, taking their client’s trust—and money—and never having to answer for the results.

It is against the law for “public notaries” or even foreign lawyers who are not licensed in the United States to provide immigration advice—even “just” filling out forms is something that only a licensed, properly trained lawyer or accredited representative should do.



Who Can Help with Your Immigration Questions?

Only a U.S. licensed lawyer or accredited representative is authorized and qualified to assist with your immigration case. Unlike consultants, lawyers have completed extensive education and training before being licensed to represent clients. You can verify whether a lawyer is in good standing and licensed to help you by contacting your state bar association.

Lawyers are also required to maintain high ethical standards—and if they don’t, you can contact your local bar association for action. When a consultant promises to help—but doesn’t deliver—the damage may not be fixable, and there may be no one to turn to.

If you need help finding a qualified immigration attorney in your area, you can contact the American Immigration Lawyers Association toll free at 1-800-954-0254 or online at www.aila.org/ILRS.

An accredited representative works with a nonprofit community or religious organization that has been recognized as having the skill and training to assist people with their immigration matters. You can find a list of accredited representatives at www.usdoj.gov/eoir/statspub/raroster.htm.

Don’t be fooled! If you consult a lawyer, make sure the lawyer is licensed. If you work with an accredited representative, ask to see the accreditation.

Can’t Afford a Lawyer?

Unfortunately, the government does not provide free lawyers in immigration cases; generally, you must hire your own lawyer or represent yourself. Certain people may qualify for help from an accredited nonprofit organization for a small fee or even free of charge. In some areas, there may even be referrals available for a “pro bono” (“free”) lawyer.

Neither the Department of Homeland Security nor the Immigration Court can provide you with legal advice or representation. For more information on low fee or pro bono help, visit www.usdoj.gov/eoir/probono/probono.htm.

What Rights Do Clients Have?

If you work with a lawyer or accredited representative, you have certain rights.

- You have the right to a written CONTRACT, explaining the scope of representation and fees.
- You have the right to be kept INFORMED about your case status and what has been filed.
- You have the right to a complete COPY of any forms or documents submitted in your case.
- You have the right to an ACCOUNTING of your case, detailing the total costs, as well as receipts for payments.



Be Smart.
If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.