



## PROTECT YOURSELF FROM IMMIGRATION SCAMS

If you need help with immigration relief, or if your loved one has been detained, be careful who you hire. Watch out for immigration scams that can cost you thousands of dollars and harm your immigration status! Here are some tips and resources to help:

### DO

**Go to a legitimate legal aid organization for free legal help.** Many nonprofit organizations provide free immigration help to low-income individuals, such as those found through the resources below. To find a legal aid organization near you, go to [lawhelpca.org](http://lawhelpca.org).

**Confirm that anyone helping you with your case is licensed or accredited.** Only lawyers, accredited representatives, and recognized organizations can give you legal advice or represent you in immigration court. Some immigration consultants may fraudulently call themselves immigration lawyers. If someone claims they are licensed in California or another state and can therefore practice immigration law, confirm they are licensed and in good standing in that particular state, visit [americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_services/flh-home/flh-lawyer-licensing/](http://americanbar.org/groups/legal_services/flh-home/flh-lawyer-licensing/). If someone claims to be an accredited representative or recognized organization, visit [justice.gov/eoir/recognition-accreditation-roster-reports](http://justice.gov/eoir/recognition-accreditation-roster-reports) to confirm that information.

**Keep your documents in a safe place.** Don't give your original documents to anyone unless you see proof that the government requires the original document. If you give someone an original, they may lose it or refuse to return it unless you pay them. Make sure you have a trusted emergency contact who can access these documents. Keep copies of all immigration-related documents, including copies of documents filed with the government and communications with the government, in a safe place.

**Access information from ".gov" websites.** These are government affiliated. Information on websites that end with ".com", ".net", or other domains may be untrustworthy.

**Learn how to locate detained loved ones.** Try to find your loved one's Alien Registration number (A-Number), which is on their immigration documents. If someone has not previously had contact with immigration authorities, or otherwise applied for an immigration benefit, they will not have an A number but will be assigned one if detained. To find someone in detention, search [locator.ice.gov](http://locator.ice.gov) by their A-Number or biographical information. Once you identify the detention center, go to [ice.gov/detention-facilities](http://ice.gov/detention-facilities) for location, visiting, and other information. Using the A-Number, you can look up immigration court hearing information at [acis.eoir.justice.gov](http://acis.eoir.justice.gov). For more information, go to [www.nilc.org/resources](http://www.nilc.org/resources).

### DON'T

**Do not hire an immigration consultant or a notary.** Only lawyers, accredited representatives, and recognized organizations can give you legal advice or represent you in immigration court. Immigration consultants – who may call themselves immigration experts, notarios, notaries public, or paralegals – cannot do so. They cannot provide legal advice or direction with immigration forms, help you fill out forms, or assess your eligibility for different types of immigration relief. They also cannot speak to the government on your behalf. They can only do non-legal, clerical tasks, like translating information on forms.

**Do not be persuaded by false promises or pressured to pay for immigration services.** Do not trust anyone who claims to be able to get special favors from the government or guarantees you a work permit or any other immigration benefit. Do not trust anyone who wants you to act immediately. Be skeptical of social media or other ads promising new or quick immigration help.



**Do not sign anything until you understand what you are signing.** Do not agree to anything that is not put in writing and in a language you understand. If you are not fluent in the language the contract is in, ask that it be translated. You are entitled to a contract that lists all the services that will be provided and how much each service costs. Keep a copy of the contract and all receipts of your payments.

**Do not pay for immigration forms.** These forms can be accessed for free by visiting the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website at [uscis.gov/forms](https://uscis.gov/forms) or (800) 870-3676.

**Do not sign an immigration form that includes incorrect information or blanks.** Before you sign any immigration forms, be sure that the forms are fully and accurately filled out. Don't let anyone convince you to lie on a form or sign a blank form. Never sign anything until you understand what it says.

**Do not give money or personal information to anyone who calls, texts, or emails you claiming that there is a problem with your immigration matter.** No federal or state agency, including USCIS, will ever ask for your personal information or payment over the phone, by email, or text.

## RESOURCES

If you are the victim of an immigration scam:

- Contact your local District Attorney or county department of consumer affairs.
- Report it to the California Department of Justice at [oag.ca.gov/report](https://oag.ca.gov/report).
- Get help from a legitimate legal aid organization at [lawhelpca.org](https://lawhelpca.org).

Access free immigration help:

- U.S. Department of Justice: [justice.gov/eoir/list-pro-bono-legal-service-providers](https://justice.gov/eoir/list-pro-bono-legal-service-providers) (legal services providers) or [justice.gov/eoir/recognition-accreditation-roster-reports](https://justice.gov/eoir/recognition-accreditation-roster-reports) (accredited representatives)
- Law Help CA: [lawhelpca.org](https://lawhelpca.org)
- Immigration Law Help: [immigrationlawhelp.org](https://immigrationlawhelp.org)
- California Department of Social Services: [cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/immigration/contractor-contact-information](https://cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/immigration/contractor-contact-information)
- For more information about your rights, including what to do if a loved one has been detained, visit [www.nilc.org/resources](https://www.nilc.org/resources).