

How to Protect Yourself from Immigration Fraud

Who Can Help You with Your Immigration Case?

- **Only two groups of people may provide legal advice and services on your immigration case:** (1) attorneys and (2) accredited representatives of non-profit religious, charitable, or social service organizations established in the U.S. and recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA).
- **A notary public, *notario*, or a *notario público* is NOT an attorney or an accredited representative and CANNOT provide legal advice or services** on your immigration case unless he has been accredited by the BIA and works for an organization recognized by the BIA.
 - In the U.S., a notary public is a public officer who is authorized by law to certify documents, take affidavits, and administer oaths.
- **Immigration consultants and immigration assistance providers are not attorneys and cannot give legal advice or provide legal services.** This means that they:
 - CANNOT tell you what forms to use or what answers to put on the forms
 - CANNOT keep your original documents
 - CANNOT do special favors for you
 - CANNOT claim to know of secret laws or have special connections to government agencies

What Should You Do To Protect Yourself from Fraud?

- **Before you pay any money, educate yourself about who may help you with your immigration case**
 - Do not trust people who claim to have a special relationship with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) or who guarantee results.
 - Beware of anyone who advertises that he is a notary, *notario* or a *notario público* and can represent you in immigration proceedings.
 - Beware of consultants, travel agencies, and real estate offices that offer legal services in immigration matters.
 - Beware of anyone working in the United States who claims to be an attorney in a foreign country and who is not a licensed attorney in the United States.
 - Ask to see copies of attorney bar certificates issued by a state in the United States or BIA accreditation letters before accepting legal advice or services.
- **Follow Some Precautions**
 - If you decide to use professional services for help with your case, get and keep a written contract.
 - Do not pay cash for professional immigration services. If you can, use a check or credit card instead, and get and keep a receipt.
 - Never give your original documents (birth certificates, passports, or other documents) to anyone who is helping you with immigration matters.
 - Never sign a blank form, application, or petition.
 - Do not sign any forms, applications, or papers containing false statements or inaccurate information.
 - Beware of anyone who offers to file a legalization application for you as they may be putting you in danger of removal or deportation.

What Should You Do if You Have Been the Victim of Fraud?

- Contact a non-profit law office, immigrant rights group, or other trusted community organization for advice.

This information sheet was prepared by the EOIR Legal Orientation Program