



Finding Immigration Help

Warning: Notario públicos (or immigration consultants) *cannot* give immigration advice.

In the U.S., notario públicos (or immigration consultants) are *not* lawyers. They do *not* have formal training in immigration law. And, they are *not* authorized by the U.S. government to represent you in your immigration case. They may certify your identity and your signature, but they are *not* qualified to give immigration advice or help with an immigration application.

Are there other immigration services I should avoid?

- Avoid immigration consultants and visa consultants.
- Avoid travel agencies and real estate offices that offer immigration advice.
- Do *not* believe anyone who tells you that there is a secret new immigration law or an amnesty.
- Do *not* believe anyone who says he or she has a special connection with any U.S. government agency.

Notario públicos and immigration consultants harm immigrants.

Since notario públicos and immigration consultants do not have formal training in immigration law, they often file the wrong immigration applications and miss important filing deadlines. These mistakes can prevent you from getting legal immigration status in the future. Some notario públicos and immigration consultants just take your money and never file your immigration application.

About this Guide

This guide was created by the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York in partnership with the New York LawHelp Consortium and Pro Bono Net, with support from the Legal Services Corporation Technology Initiative Grant program.

To read all of the guides in this series, visit NYLawHelp.org or LawHelp.org.

I have been harmed by a notario público or immigration consultant. What can I do?

Notario públicos and immigration consultants remain in business because immigrants are afraid to complain about them. If you have been harmed by a notario public or immigration consultant, go to www.stopnotariofraud.org or call (202) 442-3363 for a list of agencies that can help you.

Where can I get immigration advice?

You should only get immigration advice from (1) *a licensed lawyer* or (2) *an accredited representative* of a not-for-profit agency recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) of the U.S. government.

What is a licensed lawyer?

A licensed lawyer is a person who has a valid license from a particular state to practice law. To find out if a lawyer has a valid license and is allowed to represent you before U.S. Immigration officials:

- Ask the lawyer, "In what state are you licensed to practice law?" You can also ask to see the license and write down the license number.
- Then, contact the "state bar association" or the state court system to find out how to check if the license is valid and if the lawyer is in "good standing." For a list of state bar associations, go to www.americanbar.org/groups/bar_services/resources/state_local_bar_associations.html
- Do *not* use a lawyer on this list: www.justice.gov/eoir/discipline.htm. Lawyers on this list are not allowed to practice before U.S. Immigration officials.

What is an accredited representative?

An accredited representative is a person who works for a not-for-profit agency recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) of the U.S. government.

For a list of accredited representatives in your area, go to www.justice.gov/eoir/ra.html

Finding immigration help

Many not-for-profit agencies across the U.S. provide free or low-cost immigration help. To find free or low-cost immigration help in your area, go to:

- LawHelp - www.LawHelp.org and select the state where you live.
- Immigration Law Help – www.immigrationlawhelp.org
- Catholic Charities
www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/page.aspx?pid=292

If you do not qualify for free or low-cost immigration help, contact the American Immigration Lawyers Association at www.aialawyer.com for a referral to a licensed immigration lawyer.

For More Information

Looking for more information on this topic? Visit LawHelp.org and select your state to find other self-help resources and information about free and low-cost legal aid providers in your area.

Disclaimer

This guide was prepared for general information purposes only. The information it contains is not legal advice. Legal advice is dependent upon the specific circumstances of each situation. Also, the law may vary from state to state. Some information in this guide may not be correct for your state. To find local resources, visit LawHelp.org and select your state.