

Avoid Immigration Fraud

If you need legal services beyond the free assistance provided by CUNY Citizenship Now!, you can find an experienced immigration attorney by calling the New York City Bar Association Legal Referral Panel at (212) 626-7373.

If you cannot afford to pay a private attorney, you can get help from an agency recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) to provide free or low-cost immigration legal services. For a list of these immigration legal services providers, call “311” to request an immigration legal services provider in your area. You can call “311” seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Assistance is available in over 170 languages.


By law, the only people who may give you legal advice or represent you before USCIS are attorneys or non-attorney representatives who are BIA accredited. Some individuals provide and/or charge for immigration legal advice in violation of the law. Legal advice may include advising you on how to answer certain questions on your immigration forms or telling you what immigration options you may have. These individuals often refer to themselves as immigration consultants or “notarios.” They may file false or inaccurate applications with the USCIS on your behalf which may have severe consequences – you may end up in removal (deportation) proceedings.

To learn more about how to avoid being a victim of immigration services providers who practice law illegally, visit our website at www.cuny.edu/citizenshipnow. If you or someone you know has been the victim of an immigration scam or has been victimized by an immigration legal services provider, there are several different resources available to assist immigrants.

You can report immigration scams confidentially to the NY County District Attorney’s Office, Immigrant Affairs Program at 212-335-3600 so they may take action against the unlawful service provider. The NY County District Attorney’s office will also assist immigrants who have been victims of other crimes regardless of your immigration status. You may also report immigration scams to the NY State Attorney General’s Consumer Helpline at 1-800-771-7755 to try and recover the money you paid for unlawful immigration advice. Information provided to the District Attorney’s and the Attorney General’s offices is confidential and not reported to federal government. You may also report a scam anonymously to USCIS by calling 1-800-375-5283 or at www.uscis.gov/avoidscams. The website also offers information on how to avoid scams.

Connect with CUNY Citizenship Now!

 cuny.edu/citizenshipnow

 facebook.com/citizenshipnow

 @CUNYCitizenship

CUNY Citizenship Now! Immigration Centers

All Services are FREE



For directions, hours of service and more, call the numbers below, visit www.cuny.edu/citizenshipnow or snap the QR code to the left with your smart phone. Note: all centers require an appointment to see you.

BROOKLYN

Medgar Evers Immigration Center†
(718) 270-6292

MANHATTAN

City College Immigration Center†
(212) 650-6620

CUNY Express Immigration Center†
(212) 568-4692

QUEENS

Flushing Immigration Center†
(718) 640-9223
York College Immigration Center†
(718) 262-2983

STATEN ISLAND

College of Staten Island, El Centro, and Project Hospitality Help Center*
(718) 273-6773

THE BRONX

Hostos Community College Immigration Center†
(718) 518-4395

† Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) Recognized

* Part-time center

HOW TO BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN




**CUNY
CITIZENSHIP NOW!**

FREE Immigration Services for the People of New York
www.cuny.edu/citizenshipnow

NATURALIZATION

This brochure was prepared by CUNY Citizenship Now! to provide general information to permanent residents on the process of becoming a U.S. citizen, known as naturalization. The naturalization process can be complicated, and this brochure is not a substitute for legal advice in a particular case. For free legal assistance at one of the CUNY Citizenship Now! centers, call the numbers listed on the back of this brochure or visit www.cuny.edu/citizenshipnow.

Requirements

If you are a permanent resident, you can apply to become a U.S. citizen, if you meet all of the following requirements:

- You have resided in the United States as a permanent resident continuously for five years. (You can qualify after only three years of permanent residence if you have been married to and living with the same U.S. citizen for the past three years and your spouse has been a U.S. citizen for the past three years);
- You have been physically present in the United States for at least half of the five (or three) years;
- You have resided for at least three months in the state in which the naturalization application will be filed;
- You are a person of good moral character;
- You have a basic knowledge of U.S. government and history (with exceptions for some disabled permanent residents);
- You are able to read, write, and speak basic English (with exceptions for some older and long-time permanent residents, and for some disabled permanent residents);
- You are at least 18 years old and legally competent to take an oath of allegiance to the United States;
- You express your allegiance to the United States.

Attention

As part of the application process, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will review your immigration history and criminal history. If you have any reason to believe that USCIS may question your right to become a U.S. citizen, you should see an immigration law expert. USCIS may question your right to become a U.S. citizen if **any** of the following apply to you:

- You have ever been arrested or convicted of a crime.

- You have ever lied to an immigration officer, consular official, or government official.
- You have ever failed to support your dependents or to pay alimony.
- You are a male who lived in the United States at any time between your 18th and 26th birthdays and failed to register with the Selective Service.
- You married solely to obtain permanent residence.
- Since becoming a lawful permanent resident you have been absent from the United States for long periods of time, especially periods over six months.
- Since becoming a lawful permanent resident you have ever failed to file an income tax return.
- One of your parents became a U.S. citizen before you turned 18. You may already be a U.S. citizen.

The Naturalization Process

1. Application for Naturalization

To obtain Form N-400, Application for Naturalization, and verify current fees and mailing information, go to www.uscis.gov or call (800) 870-3676. Speak with an immigration law expert to find out about additional documents that are required to support your application.

At our centers we can provide you with a consultation on your eligibility for citizenship, assistance filling out form N-400, advice on the application process, a guide on how to complete Form N-400 (the guide includes materials to prepare for the English and civics test, and referrals to free or low cost civics and English classes), and free photographs required to be sent with your application.

2. Biometrics Appointment

After mailing your application, USCIS will send you a receipt notice and notification advising you to appear for fingerprinting and photographs. After this biometrics appointment, you will receive a notice for an interview with a USCIS officer.

3. The USCIS Interview

At this interview you must demonstrate your eligibility for naturalization and you will be tested on your basic knowledge of English and United States civics. If you fail the English exam or the civics exam at the interview, the USCIS officer, on that same day, will give you an appointment for a second interview.

4. Notification

After the interview, you will receive either an invitation to attend your swearing in ceremony, at which you will become a citizen of the United States, or a letter stating the reason for the denial of your citizenship request.

Benefits of Citizenship

The Constitution and laws of the United States give some rights only to U.S. citizens, including:

- Voting for the politician of your choice and fully participating in U.S. democracy.
- Holding any public office, except President and Vice President.
- Becoming eligible for state and federal jobs, and other jobs where U.S. citizenship is required.
- Obtaining government benefits available for U.S. citizens only.
- Traveling with a U.S. passport. You have the privilege of traveling in and out of the United States and getting assistance from the U.S. consulate overseas.
- Obtaining citizenship for children born abroad. If you become a citizen before your lawful permanent resident child turns 18, and your child is residing in the United States, in most cases he/she becomes a citizen and receives benefits that all citizens are entitled to.
- Bringing family members to the United States and getting priority when petitioning for your family members' green cards.

Responsibilities of Citizenship

When you decide to become a U.S. citizen, you must be willing to fulfill the responsibilities of citizenship. Many of these responsibilities are included in the Oath of Allegiance, which each person takes when they naturalize:

- Give up all prior allegiance to any other nation or sovereignty;
- Swear allegiance to the United States and support and defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States;
- Serve the country when required;
- Register and vote in elections;
- Serve on a jury.