



**Volunteer Corps Guide
2011**

CUNY/NYC Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps

Contents

I.	Overview and Purpose of the Corps Manual	4
II.	About CUNY Citizenship Now!	4
	A. Mission	4
III.	About the CUNY/NYC Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps	4
	A. Our Volunteers	4
	B. Some Benefits of Volunteering.....	5
	C. Expectations of Volunteers	5
	1. Familiarity with N-400 form	5
	2. Dress Code/ Attire.....	6
	3. Pledge to Maintain Confidentiality.....	6
	4. Handling Referrals.....	6
	5. Pledge Not to Engage in Unauthorized Practice of Law.....	6
	6. Handling Media Representatives	6
IV.	Day of the Event.....	7
	A. Important Information for Volunteers.....	7
	1. Basic Eligibility Requirements for Naturalization	7
	2. Red Flags	8
	B. Citizenship Now! Event Walk-Through	8
	1. Station 1: Registration	8
	2. Station 2: Waiting Area	9
	3. Station 3: Screening.....	9
	4. Station 4: Fee Waiver.....	10
	5. Station 5: N-400 Application Assistance	10
	6. Station 6: Camera/Photocopies	11
	7. Station 7: Checkout.....	11
	8. General Observations	11
V.	Appendices.....	14



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Dear CUNY/ NYC Citizenship Now! Corps Volunteer:

Thank you for volunteering with the CUNY/ NYC Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps. As a volunteer you will enjoy working face-to-face with immigrant families, helping them become Americans. The satisfaction that comes from volunteering is only one of the benefits that you will obtain from participating in our events. You will also obtain hands-on immigration experience filling out immigration forms under the supervision of our staff attorneys and you will meet others with the same interests as yours.

This Guide offers you general information about our Citizenship Application Events and your duties at the event when assigned to the different stations. Before each event, you will receive your volunteer assignment for the event. Please check this guide and read about the station that has been assigned to you to learn about the role you will play. This will help you come to the event ready with any questions you may have.

We have also included in this Guide information about some resources for volunteers such as the Member Network, a website with various resources for those interested in immigration, and about Citizenship Now! Monthly, our volunteer newsletter.

For further information on the CUNY/NYC Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps, please contact the Special Projects Coordinator, Kymete Gashi at kymete.gashi@mail.cuny.edu.

We appreciate your joining the CUNY/NYC Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps, and we thank you for your commitment and dedication in helping immigrants obtain their citizenship.

Sincerely,

Allan Wernick
Director
CUNY Citizenship Now!

CUNY Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps Manual

I. Overview and Purpose of the Corps Manual

CUNY Citizenship Now! is pleased to offer you this guide to introduce you to our mission, goals, policies and procedures. As a new member of our Volunteer Corps, we aim to provide you with a basic introduction to the dynamics of our Citizenship Now! application assistance events to clarify expectations and procedures before your first day of volunteering. We are excited to have you as a new member of our growing volunteer network and hope that your experience serving fellow New Yorkers will be gratifying.

II. About CUNY Citizenship Now!

A. Mission

CUNY Citizenship Now! provides free, high quality, and confidential immigration law services to help Participants (individuals and families who receive our services) on their path to U.S. citizenship. Our attorneys and paralegals offer one-on-one consultations to assess Participants' eligibility for legal benefits and assist them in applying when qualified. We also coordinate community, educational, and volunteer initiatives to help expand opportunities for New York City's immigrant population. As a volunteer member you play a significant role in achieving this goal.

III. About the CUNY/NYC Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps

The Corps was created by CUNY Citizenship Now! and the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) to assist New Yorkers in becoming U.S. citizens. Citizenship Now! partners with local not-for-profit organizations, schools, libraries and elected officials to provide legal permanent residents with comprehensive assistance in completing their naturalization applications. The Corps works with CUNY Citizenship Now! staff to provide free naturalization application assistance at Citizenship Now! Events throughout New York City. Most Citizenship Now! events are held on Saturdays. These events are an exciting opportunity for volunteers to make a contribution to our society, to empower New York City's immigrant communities, to learn about immigration law and to network.

A. Our Volunteers

What our volunteers have been saying:

"CUNY Citizenship Now! provides us with many learning opportunities through the monthly webinars, application assistance events, and most recently, the annual Daily News Call-In training. As volunteers, these opportunities allow us to stay abreast on the information. This organization is truly dedicated not only to its participants, but also to its volunteers, making sure both are equipped with updated information concerning immigration."

Cezanne Lyte (Corps Member since 2009)

"Volunteering with CUNY Citizenship Now! gave me the opportunity to meet people from all over the world with very interesting stories. I think the events

reaffirm my own identification as being a part of the immigrant community. Even though I am American-born, I speak Spanish, am proud of my heritage, and try to keep some of my family's culture. Because of this, I sometimes do not feel accepted as a "real" American. When I connect with the applicants, I see how similar we are, despite country of origin, and I know that the immigrant community is MY community."

Venus Bermudez (Corps Member since 2010)

"All it takes is being able to help one person. [CUNY Citizenship Now!] events allow me to help a lot of people in a short amount of time. It also provides me some hands on experience in immigration matters, which is what I wish to specialize in when I graduate from law school."

Jorge Rodriguez (Corps Member since 2010)

B. Some Benefits of Volunteering

In addition to hands-on experience, our volunteers are invited to all our immigration webinars and trainings. They also receive Citizenship Now! Monthly, our newsletter exclusively for volunteers. Active volunteers are eligible to be chosen for our Volunteer of the Month section of our website. In addition, we are constantly working on ways to reward our most loyal and committed volunteers. So, don't wait to come to our events. Sign up by responding to our event announcements and make sure that you don't miss out on this very rewarding experience.

C. Expectations of Volunteers

At CUNY Citizenship Now! we strive to deliver high quality services to our Participants. We also look forward to ensuring a working environment that is comfortable, friendly and pleasant for everyone. For this reason, we have a few guidelines to ensure a great experience for staff, volunteers, and Participants. We ask all volunteers to abide by these rules and to let us know if they observe anyone who is not following them.

1. Familiarity with N-400 form

As a CUNY Citizenship Now! Volunteer, we expect you to review the Citizenship Now! Guide which contains step by step instructions for filling out the N-400 Application for Naturalization. The Guide will provide you with the information necessary to help Participants fill out all sections of the form and will enable you to deal with challenging questions. This Guide may be found on our website (<http://www.cuny.edu/about/resources/citizenship/news-events/Publications/CitizenshipNowGuide.pdf>), and is also available for Participants at each event.

We offer our volunteers various opportunities to remain current with immigration issues. We encourage you to take advantage of our free webinars, our volunteer newsletter "Citizenship Now! Monthly," and our Member Network where we have included information on various immigration topics and resources useful for volunteers with various levels of expertise.

Please note: If at any moment during the event you have questions, please make sure to contact one of the station coordinators who will assist you. If you have legal questions, contact one of the more knowledgeable volunteers or staff members who can be identified by a red or blue sash.

2. Dress Code/ Attire

We are often asked by our volunteers “How should I dress for an event?” We recommend that Volunteers arrive to our events wearing business casual attire. We think that our presentation has an impact on the participant’s perception of the quality of the services.

3. Pledge to Maintain Confidentiality

Our volunteers are asked to sign and abide by the “Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement” (See the Appendices section at the end of this manual). Confidentiality is not only a legal obligation, but also one of the values that we promote at Citizenship Now! and one of the reasons that Participants seek our services. Failure to comply with this agreement will result in dismissal from the Volunteer Corps.

4. Handling Referrals

CUNY Citizenship Now! aims to provide free services to New Yorkers. For this reason, our policy regarding referrals is that volunteers and staff only refer Participants to CUNY Citizenship Now! Immigration Centers, BIA recognized non-profits offering free or low cost immigration services, the New York City Bar Association Legal Referral Panel or AILA's Immigration Lawyer Search service. Volunteers should not refer Participants to private attorneys or other for-profit service providers. Failure to comply with this requirement is also grounds for dismissal from the Corps.

5. Pledge Not to Engage in Unauthorized Practice of Law

By registering as a member of the CUNY Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps, each volunteer attests that he/she does not engage in the unauthorized practice of law and has not violated New York State or New York City Laws limiting the provision of legal services by non-attorneys. Volunteers who are found to be in violation of these provisions or who have lied in their attestation will be expelled from the Corps. For more information on the unauthorized practice of law, you can watch our webinar on that topic at <http://cuny.edu/about/resources/citizenship/WebinarSeries/Webinar7.html>.

6. Handling Media Representatives

Our events may be covered by the media. If approached by a media representative, please talk to the Site Manager who will assign a spokesperson to talk on behalf of CUNY Citizenship Now! Though we don’t discourage you from talking to the media as an individual, we want to make sure that statements on behalf of CUNY Citizenship Now! are made by our official spokespeople. Please help us accomplish this goal.

IV. Day of the Event

Please plan on arriving at least half an hour before we open doors to the public. When you receive our email announcements we'll let you know at what time we expect you to arrive. Generally at each of our events, before we start seeing Participants, we provide a short training and overview of the event. We also serve breakfast. So, it is important that you come early so you do not miss any important announcements. Please always sign in at the volunteer registration table upon your arrival. This is important so that we are able to track your participation for future rewards. At the registration table you will be able to confirm your assignment for that day and sometimes make changes. We will accommodate each volunteer's preferences if possible, taking into consideration the volunteer's experience and our needs on that day.

A. Important Information for Volunteers

Filling out the N-400 application for naturalization is the final step toward citizenship for lawful permanent residents. Many lawful permanent residents have been eligible to apply for naturalization, but have not applied. This can be because they do not know they are eligible, do not know where to begin the process, or cannot afford to hire a legal expert, among many other reasons. CUNY Citizenship Now! aims to fill the gap for this need. As a volunteer with us, you play an essential role in providing this vital community service.

Before providing assistance, Volunteers at the pre-screening and N-400 application assistance stations, should tell applicants that *when applying for naturalization, they are granting permission to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to review their immigration history*. If an applicant has any reason to believe that USCIS may question their eligibility to become a U.S. citizen or to remain in the United States, Volunteers must advise the applicant to speak with the Supervising Attorney or other legal expert on site before proceeding. Below you will find the basic eligibility requirements for Naturalization.

1. Basic Eligibility Requirements for Naturalization

- The applicant has continuously resided in the United States as a permanent resident for the last five years. An applicant can qualify after only three years of permanent residence if he or she is married to and living with the same U.S. citizen for the past three years and their spouse has been a U.S. citizen for the past three years;
- The applicant has been physically present in the United States for at least half of the five (or three) years;
- The applicant has resided for at least three months in the state in which the naturalization application will be filed;
- The applicant is a person of good moral character;
- The applicant has a basic knowledge of U.S. government and history (with exceptions for some disabled permanent residents);

- The applicant is able to read, write, and speak basic English (with exceptions for disabled or some older, long-time lawful permanent residents and for some disabled permanent residents);
- The applicant is at least 18 years old and legally competent to take an oath of allegiance to the United States;
- The applicant is willing to express allegiance to the United States.

Volunteers should make sure that applicants see the Supervising Attorney or other legal expert in any of the following situations:

2. Red Flags

- The applicant has ever been arrested or convicted of a crime.
- The applicant is a male who lived in the United States at any time between his 18th and 16th birthday and failed to register with the Selective Service.
- The applicant ever failed to support his/her dependents or to pay alimony.
- The applicant has ever lied to any immigration officer, consular official, or government official.
- The applicant married solely to obtain permanent residence.
- Since becoming a lawful permanent resident, the applicant has been absent from the United States for long periods of time, especially continuous periods of more than six months.
- The applicant failed to file an income tax return for any year since becoming a lawful permanent resident.
- One of the applicant's parents became a U.S. Citizen before the applicant turned 18. He/she may already be a U.S. citizen.
- There is anything else about the applicant's case that he or she does not want disclosed to USCIS.

B. Citizenship Now! Event Walk-Through

At each event there are generally seven stations that Participants will have to go through in order for them to complete their application. (Please check the event flow chart in the Appendices Section at the end of this book).

1. Station 1: Registration

Station 1 Volunteers will:

- Have the applicant sign in.
- Provide the applicant with a Citizenship Packet, a Participant Registration Form, and a Citizenship Now! Guide.
- Direct the applicant to take a seat in the waiting area. General inquiries on subjects not related to the naturalization process may be received at this station. Volunteers will respond to these inquiries by

providing one or more of the CUNY Citizenship Now! brochures and making referrals as necessary. Sometimes, we may be able to address these inquiries at the event, though this is largely dependent on the complexity of the inquiry and the availability of knowledgeable Volunteers. Resource flyers will be available at this table so that applicants can be referred to Citizenship Now's immigration centers.

2. Station 2: Waiting Area

Station 2 Volunteers will:

- Instruct the applicant to complete the Participant Registration Form (PRF) while they wait for their number to be called by the Site Manager. The PRF asks Participants for demographic information that allows Citizenship Now! to obtain funding from various sources and to report back to our funders on the demographics we serve. Sometimes Participants are hesitant to answer some of the questions, so you must clarify to them that we do not share their information with anyone and that it is a requirement we must meet in order to receive the funding that allows us to provide a free service.
- Encourage applicants to begin filling out their N-400 forms.
- Direct Participants to the next available screener.

3. Station 3: Screening

- Legal experts at this station will check that applicants meet the basic requirements for naturalization, including reviewing the documents they have brought to the event. Participants with incomplete documentation should be referred to our centers. To learn about the documents we require Participants to bring to our events, check www.cuny.edu/about/resources/citizenship/news-events/ApplicationDocuments.html.
- A few recommendations for volunteers at this station:
 - After you introduce yourself to the participant, please check their PRF to see that it is completed and signed, and that the Declaration of Understanding (DOU) has been signed. Make sure that the person understands the DOU.
 - Interview the participant following the Naturalization Checklist found in page 3 of the PRF (Case Notes Section) and check the appropriate answers. Explain that we ask these questions because USCIS will determine the applicant's eligibility based on his/her answers. Also mark your initials under the corresponding column. By answering all the questions and making any other appropriate notes you will ensure that the volunteer at Application Assistance is aware of any important issues and/or red flags.
 - Based on the participant's responses to the questions, make an assessment of the person's eligibility for Naturalization and mark her or his Participant Registration Form and direct them to the next station as follows:



Green sticker: The applicant is eligible for citizenship and should be directed to the Application Assistance Station.



Blue sticker: The applicant is eligible for a fee waiver and should be directed to the fee waiver station.



Red sticker: The applicant is ineligible for Naturalization at this time or we are unable to assist him/her at the event. He or she may be referred to one of the CUNY Citizenship Now! Immigration Centers.

4. **Station 4: Fee Waiver**

Participants will only proceed to this station if they have a blue sticker on their Participant Registration Form, as indicated above. At this station, Volunteers will:

- Review the various types of New York State benefits Participants may be receiving such as food stamps, Social Security or SSI, Medicare or Medicaid, or Section 8 Housing Assistance. (**Tip:** Participants will have provided us information about these benefits in the first page of the PRF.)
- Copy all letters and benefit cards stating when the participant started receiving stated benefits. These documents demonstrate the financial need of the applicant.
- Help the applicant fill out USCIS form I-912, Request for a Fee Waiver. If you have difficulty filling out any section of the form, please notify a supervising attorney, who will help you determine the next step.
- When applicants are finished at this station, they should be directed to Station 5, Application Assistance.

5. **Station 5: N-400 Application Assistance**

Volunteers at this station will:

- Review the N-400 form and assist applicants in completing it. Volunteers will ensure that the appropriate fields in the form are properly filled out. Sometimes there's not enough room to include all the information, so we have included the riders we use at our events (See appendix 1 through 5)
- If you cannot answer the applicant's questions, or notice any of the Red Flags from above, or have any other questions, speak with the Supervising Attorney or other legal expert who can be identified by a red or blue sash. We recommend that you watch the webinar "Challenging Issues on Citizenship Applications" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tsf8aKbFzJA>), and read our CUNY Citizenship Now! Guide (<http://www.cuny.edu/about/resources/citizenship/news-events/Publications/CitizenshipNowGuide.pdf>) for you

to become familiar with Red Flags and learn how to complete difficult sections of the form.

- If applicants are unable to complete the process at the event, Volunteers should refer them to one of the CUNY Citizenship Now! Immigration Centers for follow up. For instance, the applicant needs to obtain a certificate of disposition, or if they didn't bring necessary records/documents to fill out their application completely.
- Complete the applicant's certified mail and return receipt (included in the packet).
- Advise the applicant to make a copy of his or her application for his or her own record, before mailing it in.
- Direct applicant to Station 6, Camera/Photocopies.

6. Station 6: Camera/Photocopies

At this station Volunteers will:

- Take the photographs required of the applicant (two passport style photos).
- Ensure that the applicant's name and A# (the number on the Legal Permanent Resident card) are written on the back of the photos in pencil or lightly in pen.
- Place the pictures into the small envelope provided.
- Make copies of the front and back of the applicant's green card.
- Instruct the applicant to proceed to Station 7, Checkout.

7. Station 7: Checkout

- Attorneys and other legal experts will conduct a final review of the application and its supporting documents, to determine if they are complete and ready to be mailed by the applicant to the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.
- If there are errors on the form, the attorney or other legal experts will make corrections.
- At this station, the applicant will be instructed to purchase a money order or to include a personal check payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" in the amount of the filing fee unless a fee waiver request will be included with the application.
- The applicant should be instructed to write his or her name and A# on the money order or personal check.
- Before sealing the envelope to be mailed, instruct the participant to make a complete copy of the application to keep for their records.

8. General Observations

- If you foresee any difficulties staying for the whole event, please let us know when you register to volunteer so that we can fill your spot.

- To ensure that you receive emails from us, make sure to add cunycitizenshipnow@gmail.com to your e-mail address book.
- We want to stay in touch with you. Please let us know if you change your contact information. You can do so by clicking on the “Update Profile” link that is included at the bottom of all the communications that we send you.
- We want your experience to be as pleasant as possible. If you have any ideas, suggestions or complaints, send us a comment to our suggestion box at <http://www.formstack.com/forms/?1095539-j6tkMv1rNJ>.

Thanks for volunteering with CUNY Citizenship Now!

V. Appendices

RIDER – N-400 Application for Naturalization **A#** _____

Applicant: _____

This is the continuation to **Part 6, Section B.**

Employer or School Name	Employer or School Address (Street, City and State)	Dates (mm/dd/yyyy)		Your Occupation
		From	To	

Signature

Date

RIDER — N400 Application for Naturalization **A#** _____

Applicant _____

This is the continuation to **Part 7, Section C.**

Date You Left the United States (mm/dd/yyyy)	Date You Returned to the United States (mm/dd/yyyy)	Did Trip Last 6 Months or More?		Countries to Which You Traveled	Total days Out of the United States
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		

Signature

Date

RIDER — N400 Application for Naturalization A# _____

Applicant: _____

This is the continuation to **Part 9, Section B.**

Full Name of Son or Daughter	Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)	USCIS "A" – number (if child has one)	Country of Birth	Current Address (Street, City, State and Country)
		A		
		A		
		A		
		A		
		A		
		A		
		A		
		A		
		A		
		A		
		A		
		A		

Signature

Date

RIDER — N400 Application for Naturalization **A#** _____

Applicant: _____

This is my explanation for my answer to **Part 10 Section G, Question 33**.

33. I am a male who lived in the United States at a time between my 18th and my 26th birthdays, but I did not register with the Selective Service because I was not aware of my obligation to do so. Had I known of the requirement, I would have registered.

Signature

Date

Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement

As a volunteer (attorney, paralegal, law student, community member, or translator) for CUNY Citizenship Now!, I understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality.

I pledge not to disclose confidential or personal information provided by or about anyone seeking assistance from CUNY Citizenship Now! to third parties without the express consent of the individual. If I have any questions regarding confidentiality, I will consult with a Staff Attorney or a Site Manager before divulging information to any other person.

By signing this document, I am bound to keep all information confidential. This includes information about Participants seeking assistance and volunteers serving at events. I understand that this duty to maintain confidentiality remains in force both during and after my work as a volunteer with CUNY Citizenship Now!

Volunteer Printed Name

Location

Volunteer Signature

Date

CITIZENSHIP NOW! APPLICATION ASSISTANCE EVENT FLOW CHART

