

## Using an Immigration Assistance Service Provider Tips for Consumers

Immigration Assistance Service Providers (ISPs) are people or businesses who are not lawyers and who charge fees for any kind of immigration-related services. Because immigration law is complicated, **ISPs are NOT qualified to:**

- Tell you how to file for a particular immigration status
- Advise you on your chances of getting a particular immigration status
- Help you prepare for immigration interviews

Note: A [notario público](#), or **notary public**, is not an attorney and cannot offer the services above.

### Before you go to an ISP

Talk to a reputable lawyer about your situation. Or try a reputable [nonprofit organization](#); many have lawyers on staff or are recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals so they can represent you in immigration proceedings. **Know which forms you need to file when you walk in the ISP's door.**

**For information on free or low-cost immigration advice or help**, call the New York Immigration Hotline at (800) 566-7636 or (212) 419-3737.

**For an attorney referral**, call the [New York City Bar Association](#) at (212) 626-7373.

You can find all immigration forms on the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Web site](#).

### Only use an ISP to:

- Translate and notarize documents
- Help you gather documents (like a birth certificate or school records)
- Type up application forms (but *not* to advise you on your answers)
- Arrange for photographs or medical tests
- Take English language or civics classes

### Protect Yourself

- Only go to ISPs that have physical locations. Never use one you can reach only by phone or e-mail.
- Do not believe any ISP that claims to have special influence with immigration authorities.
- ISPs must sign a written contract with you before providing services. Read the contract before signing it and keep a copy for your records.
- Do not leave your original documents (like a marriage certificate) with an ISP. Give copies instead.
- Avoid paying in advance for service. Pay only after the ISP has finished the work.
- Get a written receipt. Make sure the receipt contains the name and address of the ISP.
- Do not sign any blank or incomplete forms, and insist that the ISP sign any form it prepares for you.
- Make sure the ISP has a bond, contract of indemnity, or letter of credit. Write down the name and contact information of the bond company or bank. If the ISP does not give you a refund it owes you or harms you in another way, you can file a claim. If the ISP does not have a bond or will not give you its bond information, use another business.

**Call 311 to file a complaint about a business providing immigration services.** You do not have to give your name or your immigration status in order to make a complaint. Read about Mayor Bloomberg's [Executive Order 41](#). 311 can take calls in many different languages. You can also file a complaint [online](#) or download free copies of DCA's [What You Need to Know about Immigration Service Providers](#) and NYC [law](#) governing immigration service providers, and a [sample contract](#).

**Call 311 or visit the [New York State Unified Court System](#) online to file a complaint about an attorney.**