

We recommend having an attorney or accredited representative help you if you have factors that could complicate your case, such as a criminal conviction. The US government does not provide legal representatives, so you will need to find your own.

A [good legal representative](#) can give you the best chance for a good result on your complex case.

Who can represent me?



Licensed Attorney = Licensed Lawyer

The words lawyer and attorney refer to the same job. Only lawyers who have a **valid bar license from a US state** or territory should practice law. There are many kinds of law. For asylum or other complex immigration filings, you will most likely want an **immigration attorney**, a person who specializes in US immigration law. Immigration lawyers may be in private practice on their own or they may work at a law firm or another organization like a non-profit or charity.

Accredited Representative

The US Department of Justice authorizes certain non-profit legal service providers to employ accredited representatives. Accredited representatives are not attorneys but are qualified to represent immigrants. [Click here](#) for the list of all active recognized organizations and their accredited representatives.



Where can I find immigration help? The following links are good starting points:

- The Executive Office of Immigration Review has a [list of free and low-cost legal service providers](#) that you can search by state.
- Immigration Advocates Network has a [directory of free or low-cost immigration legal services](#) as well.
- The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) allows you to search for individual lawyers based on the type of help you need and language that the lawyer speaks. Lawyers on [AILA's Lawyer Search](#) are AILA members and have a currently valid state bar license.



Costs Vary.

- It is always a good idea to ask about the fees and any payment options in advance and agree to the price in writing.
- Some lawyers and organizations offer immigration legal services **pro bono**, meaning for free or at a low cost (often based on your income).

This page offers some tips on how to avoid becoming a victim of immigration fraud and ensure that a legal representative is worthy of your trust.



Check that the legal representative you are considering has the right credentials.

- **Attorneys must be properly licensed to practice law.** This means they will have a bar license or number from a state or territory.
 - Because immigration laws are federal (and do not vary by state), immigration attorneys may be licensed to practice law in another state from the state where you live. You can ask the attorney to specify the states in which s/he is admitted.
 - If you are represented by law students through a university law clinic, those students should be supervised by a fully licensed attorney who can practice law.
- **All accredited representatives are listed [here on the Department of Justice website](#).**
- Check here to make sure your legal representative **does not** appear on [the list of people disciplined for or banned from practicing immigration law](#).



Other tips to protect yourself.



- **Be sure you have copies of or access to all filings made for you.** You have a right to this information and may need it in the future.



- **Do not sign blank forms or documents.** Counsel must allow you to review the completed forms and accompanying materials before signing. You will be personally responsible for the information they contain.
- **Do not pay for forms.** All forms are available for free on the USCIS website.
- **If your representative asks you to include or say something you know is not true, do not do it!** Find new counsel immediately because this person is not honest. Lies on immigration forms can have serious consequences for your immigration case, and explaining that your counsel told you to lie will not keep those consequences from happening. Please do not risk it.

For more information on seeking legal services, please visit the US government links [here](#) and [here](#).

