

What are some scams that target immigrants?

People who are immigrating to the U.S. might hear about several kinds of scams:

- websites that look like U.S. government sites, but are not
- people who are charged for government forms that are free
- people called notarios, who charge fees but cannot give you legal help

These scams cost more than money. These scams can take away your chance to immigrate legally.

What is a notario?

In the U.S., notarios, notarios públicos and notary publics **are not lawyers**. They cannot help you with immigration. They will say they can help, and tell you to pay them. But they cannot help you.

Sometimes a notario can even ruin your chance to get a Green Card or become a citizen.

What is an accredited representative?

The U.S. government authorizes some people who can help you with immigration. These people are called “accredited representatives.” An accredited representative does not have to be a lawyer. But he can give you legal advice on your immigration. Immigration lawyers also can help you.

Who can help me with immigration?

Immigration cases can be difficult. You need help from someone who can handle your forms and meetings correctly.

An immigration lawyer can help you. Someone authorized by the U.S. government can help you, too. This person is called an “accredited representative.”

Only an immigration lawyer or an accredited representative can handle your immigration forms and meetings correctly.

Can I get help from people I know?

Honest people you trust, like your family or friends, may offer help. These helpers should write or translate what you tell them to. But they should not give you legal advice.

Sometimes there are people in your community who have experience with immigration. These people might be able to talk to the government for you. This is called representing you. You should not pay these people. These people cannot charge you a fee.

How can I avoid scams in the immigration process?

Here is how you can avoid some scams:

- Do not pay for immigration forms. Those forms are free from the government.
- Get advice from U.S. government websites. A website might look like it comes from the government. Make sure the website address ends with .gov. That means it is a government website.
- Do not pay a notario for legal advice. Notarios will not help you, even when you pay them.

There are scams that target people who are trying to immigrate to the U.S. You can lose money in those scams. These scams also can hurt your chance to immigrate. Learn how to avoid a scam.

How can I avoid scams in the immigration process?

- Do not go to a notario, notario público, or a notary public for legal advice. In the U.S., notarios are not lawyers. They cannot give you legal advice.

- Never pay for government forms from the U.S. government. Government forms are free.
- Get immigration information from U.S. government websites. You might see a website that looks like it is from the government. Make sure that the website address includes .gov. That means the website is from the U.S. government.

What else can I do to protect myself?

- Never sign a form that is blank. Never sign a form that has false information in it.
- Do not let anyone keep your original documents, like your passport or birth certificate.
- Keep a copy of every document you turn in. Keep a copy of every letter you get from the U.S. government.
- You will get a receipt when you turn in your forms. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) will give it to you. Keep the receipt. You will need it to check on your application.

How can I get help with immigration?

Immigration can be complicated. It can feel frustrating until you find the right kind of help.

- Get free immigration forms:
 - visit [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Forms](#)
 - call USCIS at 1-800-870-3676
- Learn who can help you and where to find help:
 - order the free brochure from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), [I Need Immigration Help. Who Can Help Me?](#)
 - Find the brochure online at [Fair Trade Commission Avoiding Scams Against Immigrants Brochure](#)
 - Call the FTC at 1-877-382-4357 to get a free copy sent to you

What if I paid someone who did not help me?

Immigration scams are illegal. Report what happened to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

- Call the FTC at 1-877-382-4357
- Go online: [Fair Trade Commission Complaint Page](#)

The FTC uses complaints to build cases against scammers. Any information you can give helps investigators.