

Immigration Information

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INSERTS/Adjudicator's Field Manual - Redacted Public Version/Adjudicator's Field Manual - Redacted Public Version (3 of 3), Customer Service./2.5 Courtesy.

2.5 Courtesy.

This section will first define courtesy and then describe what this means in practice by explaining how courteously with applicants.

(a) What is Courtesy? Courtesy is the use of exceptional manners to treat other people with respect a means treating people as you would wish to be treated were you in their situation.

(b) What Does Courtesy Mean in Practice?

Do:(1) Recognize the Applicant Promptly. When you first meet the applicant, extend a polite greeting.

(2) Identify Yourself. Provide your name and title, and explain that you will be conducting the interview.

(3) Treat the Applicant Politely and Respectfully. You should use the proper courtesy title (Mr., Ms) and the applicant's full surname on the application. If necessary, ask for the correct pronunciation of the applicant's name. You should say "please" and "thank you" when asking for something from an applicant.

(4) Treat Each Case Individually. You should convey sincerity and interest in the individual's application, do not treat it as just another case to process.

(5) Your Body Language Should Convey Respect. Body language such as facial expressions and gestures send strong messages to the applicant about your interest in the application and your respect for the applicant. If you look bored, slump in your chair, and roll your eyes when interviewing an applicant, demonstrate the respect and courtesy the applicant is due. In contrast, if your posture, attitude, and expression are attentive and respectful, you will convey that you take your job and the applicant seriously.

(6) Speak With a Respectful Tone of Voice. You project your attitude with your tone of voice as much as the actual words you use. If your words are polite, but your tone is condescending, patronizing, or hostile, you are not treating the applicant courteously. In contrast, if your tone is respectful, you demonstrate that you are knowledgeable about the issues at hand and that you take the applicant seriously.

(7) Demonstrate Exceptional Listening Skills. Paying close attention to the applicant's tone, word choice, and body language will help build a relationship of mutual respect and allow you to ensure that you have correct information to make a decision. The following elements make up exceptional listening skills (when time constraints, use your best judgment about when to move an interview forward.)

(8) Focused Listening. Focused listening - which conveys respect - demonstrates that the applicant has your undivided attention. You should not be preoccupied, but rather demonstrate in word, tone, and body language that during the interview, the applicant has your complete attention.

(9) Active Listening. Active listening will ensure that you have correctly heard what the applicant actually said as opposed to what you assumed they said, or expected them to say. Similarly, it will help you keep track of what the applicant says.

interview focused on topics related to the applicant's eligibility for the benefit being sought.

Effective active listening techniques include:

- Listening with an open mind. You should listen to what the applicant says with an open mind, rather than listening with a pre-determined goal of either approving or denying the application or a pre-determined expectation about what the answer will be. Your goal should always be to listen so that you can gather the information you need to make a correct decision.
- Steering the conversation to topics that pertain to eligibility.
- Asking follow-up questions to allow the applicant to complete his/her thoughts and to ensure that you have the necessary information to make the correct decision.

(10) Empathetic Listening. Empathy allows you to demonstrate that you have heard and understood the applicant's position and concerns. Paraphrasing an applicant's words and expressing understanding of his/her situation are important ways to demonstrate empathy. Displaying empathy doesn't necessarily mean you have to agree with an applicant's position. With this in mind, you should understand the difference between empathy and sympathy. Unlike sympathy, empathy doesn't involve identifying or taking on another person's emotions. Rather, empathy acknowledges and affirms another's emotional state. A sympathetic response is, "I'm really angry too," while an empathetic response is, "I can understand how that makes you angry."

(11) Eliminate Barriers to Effective Listening. The following barriers can prevent effective listening:

- Noise. As much as possible, try to eliminate outside noise that would distract the interview.
- Interruptions. Do not interrupt the interview once it has started, unless it is absolutely necessary. If, for any reason, you need to interrupt the interview, you should apologize and clearly explain why you are doing so. This demonstrates respect for the applicant's time.
- Daydreaming. If you aren't paying attention to the applicant, you will not be able to gather the information needed to properly adjudicate the case.
- Stereotyping. If you have a set of stereotypes (believing that all people in a group behave the same way) about the applicant before the interview begins, you will find it difficult to evaluate the application with an open mind. Remember, each application must be judged on its own merits.
- Trigger Words and Phrases. Certain words or phrases may upset you. If an applicant uses those words or phrases, you must maintain your professionalism and not get distracted from the job. Determine whether the applicant has met the requirements for a benefit.
- Attitude. If you have negative or hostile attitudes toward the applicant, you will find it difficult to listen objectively to what the applicant is saying. **7**

(12) Speak at the Same Physical Level. If an applicant is standing when talking, you should be standing. If the applicant is sitting when talking, you should be sitting.

Don't: (1) Don't Speak in Jargon, Technical Terms, or Acronyms. Doing so may be very confusing to an applicant who has recently learned English or is unfamiliar with USCIS terminology.

(2) Don't Complain or Use Sarcasm or Patronizing Language. Doing so is disrespectful and conveys to the applicant that you don't take the process or the applicant seriously.

(3) Don't Show Impatience to an Applicant Whose English May be Difficult to Understand. You should always convey respect and understanding to the applicant, for whom this interview is a very stressful moment. For example, don't raise your voice simply because you are having difficulty communicating with the applicant.

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