

# Immigration Information

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## **2.6 Professional Service.**

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This section will first define professional service and then describe what this means in practice by explaining how to interact professionally with applicants.

### (a) What is Professionalism?

Your behavior should demonstrate that you are representing the U.S. Government and the people of the United States. Your actions will affect the applicant's perceptions of the entire Nation and its Government.

### (b) What Does this Mean in Practice?

**Do:** (1) Demonstrate in word and demeanor that conducting interviews is your first priority. The most important element of your job is to conduct eligibility interviews. Therefore, your attitude should reflect the importance of the applications at hand and that conducting interviews is your top priority. If you approach the interview in a bored, frenzied, or distracted manner, your attitude will be conveyed to the interviewee. Similarly, you should never treat the interview as an interruption or a distraction.

(2) Separate the personal from the professional. When you interact with applicants, always remember you are a professional. Therefore, you should not allow your own personal feelings, beliefs, or experiences to lessen or diminish your professional demeanor.

(3) Maintain control of the interview. In order to ensure that you obtain all of the information you need in an efficient and timely manner, it is important to maintain control of the interview. This means that you keep the interview focused on the task at hand: determining the applicant's eligibility for the benefit sought. You can accomplish this by steering the conversation to topics that pertain to eligibility, making sure that your questions shape the interview, and being alert, firm, assertive and businesslike.

(4) Stay under control. If you allow an applicant to upset you or allow prejudices to influence you, you lose control of the interview. If an applicant says something that upsets you, don't take it personally, reassert your control, and do not respond in a similar manner. If you lose your control, the interview can quickly degenerate and you will have lost the opportunity to obtain the information you need to make a decision.

(5) Dress appropriately. Your dress should be neat and businesslike and reflect the serious nature of the interview. Neat grooming and good personal hygiene sends a message to the applicant that you are competent and take the process seriously.

(6) Maintain a professional work space. As much as possible, your work space should convey the importance and seriousness of the proceedings. Maintaining a neat and well-organized work space shows respect for the applicant and the interview process.

(7) Keep your comments about the applicant focused on the applicant's eligibility for the benefit being sought. The entire purpose of your job is to determine the applicant's eligibility for benefits. You should not discuss with the applicant sensitive matters that do not pertain to the application at hand.

(8) Provide efficient and effective service. As an adjudicator, you must simultaneously balance two goals: efficiency and effectiveness. You should process applications as efficiently as possible. At the same time, you must conduct effective interviews that provide you with enough information to make correct decisions. From an efficiency perspective, you should speak with your supervisor and review your performance work plan to understand how many interviews per day you are expected to complete. An important way you can ensure effectiveness is by knowledgeably applying the laws, regulations, and policies that pertain to Adjudications while interacting with applicants courteously and professionally.

(9) Provide ethical service. As a USCIS employee, you should display a level of judgment, integrity, and self-control that reflects positively upon you and the USCIS. With this in mind, you should understand the standards of conduct and the code of ethics that govern USCIS employees. [See also section 22 c of the *Employee Handbook*.] Your standards of conduct should always be consistent with these codes of conduct. It is also important to remember that our standards of conduct may not always be consistent with some applicants' cultural expectations. For example, some applicants may offer you gifts or gratuities because they believe it is culturally appropriate to provide such items to government officials, rather than because they are attempting to unfairly influence the outcome of the interview. Depending on the circumstances, you should explain that such activity is not acceptable. However, it is not necessarily a reason to deny the applicant's application. You should, however, bring the situation to the attention of your supervisor, no matter what your motivation, and follow his or her directions. In most cases, you will need to document for yourself what transpired, and how you and the supervisor resolved the incident.

**Don't:** (1) Don't make derogatory comments about any other person's race, religion, gender, nationalities, or sexual orientation. Such comments are never acceptable.

(2) Don't drink, eat, smoke, chew gum, talk on the telephone, watch TV, or listen to the radio while an interview. All of these actions suggest that you are not taking the applicant or the application seriously.

(3) Don't bully or belittle an applicant. While you should always closely question an applicant about his or her application, you should not do so in a bullying or belittling manner.

(4) Don't discipline applicant's children. In general, it is not acceptable for you to apply discipline to children who accompany the applicant during the interview. (Your local office policy may provide for discipline in certain circumstances in this regard). If extraordinary circumstances exist, and children do attend the interview and misbehave, you should not discipline them. It is appropriate to ask the applicant to control their children.

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