

Immigration Information

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INSERTS/Adjudicator's Field Manual - Redacted Public Version/Adjudicator's Field Manual - Redacted Public Version (3 of 3), Mission and Functions of Adjudications./3.5 Roles of Headquarters, Regions and Field Organizations.

3.5 Roles of Headquarters, Regions and Field Organizations.

(a) Office of Program and Regulations Development (formerly the Office of Adjudications). (Revised 0: The Office of Program and Regulations Development (OPRD):

- Maintains the integrity and quality of the immigration process by providing policy direction to assure right applicant receives the right benefit in the right amount of time.
- Provides program guidance and policy development that supports national security and profession customer-oriented adjudication of immigration benefits.
- Prepares regulations and policy directives to ensure that USCIS employees have the necessary a tools to ensure the right applicant receives the right benefit.
- Presents applicants with clear, accurate and understandable application information.
- Enhances standardized, timely and accurate adjudications through clear policy directives, speciali and development of easily understood forms.
- Defines, plans and manages program and policy development to improve processing and strength integrity of the adjudicative process.
- Confers with internal and external stakeholders for feedback to promote process improvements

(b) Immigration Services Division. Organizationally, the Immigration Services Division (ISD) is a comp Office of Field Operations. ISD is responsible for planning, developing, coordinating, and assessing im services operational activities USCIS-wide. ISD consists of the following branches:

- Information and Customer Service Branch
- Business Process and Re-engineering Branch
- Service Center Operations Branch
- Field Services Operations Branch
- Backlog Reduction Branch
- Benefits Systems Branch, and
- Administrative Services Staff.

(1) Information and Customer Service Branch. The Information and Customer Service Branch coo and manages the operations of the USCIS Telephone Centers, and plans, develops, and coordina information and customer service functions throughout ISD. The branch also serves as the custor advocate within the Immigration Services Division. The branch consists of the Telephone Centers

the Field Customer Service Operations Unit.

(A) Telephone Centers Unit. The Telephone Centers Unit establishes and implements standard procedures for managing the day-to-day operations of the Telephone Centers. It plans, monitors and manages long-term telephone-related customer service delivery for immigration services. It coordinates USCIS' and other Federal agencies' efforts to set priorities for customer service projects and procedures. The unit proposes administrative policy and procedures for and monitors efficiency and compliance with USCIS telephone information and customer service functions. It regularly monitors and evaluates resources to ensure maximum effectiveness and economy of operations. The unit furnishes guidance and instructions and resolves unusually complex, novel and high visibility issues involving the telephone centers.

(B) Field Customer Service Operations Unit. The Field Customer Service Operations Unit provides outreach services, through communication and training, to the field to assure the quality and accuracy of information provided to customers. It provides guidance to the correspondence unit on public contact plans and reviews the information and customer service provided to the public. It develops brochures, pamphlets, and forms for distribution to the public regarding customer services. To improve public relations and outreach efforts the unit conducts customer surveys, then analyzes the results to improve communication with employees and the public, and to avoid potential customer service problems. It provides ombudsman services to improve the quality of customer service.

(2) Business Process and Re-engineering Branch. The Business Process and Reengineering Branch is responsible for USCIS-wide improvement and growth of services-related business practices and processes. The branch handles regulatory issues for the Immigration Services Division, as well as short-term national operational business process and reengineering initiatives. To accomplish this program studies and projects. It also formulates implementation policy and long range plans to reduce operating costs and assure effectiveness. The branch restructures and reorients immediate and long-term goals to meet changes in legislation.

BPR, which is responsible for developing and reengineering the Naturalization Quality Procedures, conducts studies regarding naturalization processes and policy. Its members serve as interagency liaisons for immigration services policy and initiatives.

(3) Service Center Operations Branch. The Service Center Operations Branch coordinates and manages the operations of the USCIS Service Centers, Integrated Card Production System, and Direct Mail Production System. The branch manages and coordinates the operations of the four service centers, formulates and develops policies and procedures governing their production and management and monitors the implementation of organizational structures, management methods and contract management of the service centers.

The branch furnishes guidance and instructions involving interpretation of policy, procedures, and workload measurements and quality assurance.

The branch formulates and develops policies and procedures governing the execution of the Immigration Card Production Systems (ICPS) and monitors ICPS resources to ensure effectiveness and economy of operations.

In addition, the branch directs the development, implementation, and maintenance of the Direct Mail Production System within each of the Service Centers, for effective control and evaluation of operations.

To enhance automated processing, the branch provides liaison between Office of Information Systems, systems developers and service centers and recommends changes to policies and procedures in automated systems.

(4) Field Services Operations Branch. Through direct communication with the Regions and field, Field Services Operations Branch coordinates, directs, implements, oversees, and evaluates all field off administration of immigration laws, regulations, policies, procedures and projects associated with its services. The branch consists of the Field Coordination Unit, the Application Support Centers Unit and Program Analysis Unit.

(A) (Reserved)

(B) Application Support Centers Unit. The Application Support Centers Unit is responsible for administering and overseeing the application support centers USCIS-wide; managing the fingerprint background check operation, including facilities acquisition and management; technology system development and maintenance; and personnel management for contract field support staff. It employs contract employees focus on providing courteous service during the collection of fingerprints, signatures, and photographs, and measures effectiveness through surveys and management reports. The unit develops systems supporting ASC operations, and ensures full compliance with acquisition and regulatory requirements. To make best use of available resources, the unit develops fingerprint appointment schedules for benefit applicants. The unit plans, implements, and oversees the electronic capture, transmission, storage and retrieval of all sensitive information relating to the fingerprint process. The ASC unit is also responsible for developing, overseeing and managing the Designated Law Enforcement Agency and Mobile Unit Programs to provide fingerprint, photograph, signature and identification-related services to applicants residing in remote areas of the country.

(C) Program Analysis Unit. The Program Analysis Unit implements, directs, and oversees the Quality Assurance Program for ISD. It develops, implements, and maintains Standard Operating Procedures and other policy and process guidelines related to the benefits Quality Assurance Program, which is an integral part of quality improvement.

By conducting reviews on a regular basis it ensures consistency USCIS-wide for every adjudicatory support process. When the unit identifies areas that are non-compliant it follows-up to correct and improve processing.

The unit helps prepare the field for audits, and works closely with the Office of Internal Audit to address findings and trends to ensure procedures are consistent with legislative policies.

(5) Backlog Reduction Branch. The Backlog Reduction Branch initiates projects and carries out duties to manage and reduce backlogs in processing applications and petitions for immigration and naturalization benefits.

The unit provides strategic planning, coordination, liaison, oversight, and workload and program analysis to assist the field in reducing processing backlogs. It also develops and monitors resources, operational business processes, and practices that affect productivity. The unit works closely with regional and USCIS-wide, to accomplish its mission.

(6) Benefits Systems Branch. The Benefits Systems Branch is responsible for the development, design, and management of the naturalization and immigration services automation systems. There are three units in the branch: the Systems Development Unit, the Deployment Management Unit, and the Systems Support Unit.

(A) Systems Development Unit. The most significant initiative of the Systems Development Unit is replacing or updating existing automated immigration services processing systems. The unit performs systems-related activities that support changes arising from the ongoing reengineering of the naturalization process. The unit works with contractors to prepare functional requirements for new systems, redesign efforts, and conversions from other systems. As part of this effort, the unit

systems for effectiveness, quality assurance, and compliance with field requirements.

(B) Deployment Management Unit. The Deployment Management Unit develops systems deployment plans and resource estimates, communicates implementation and training schedules to the field, monitors the workload of sites scheduled for deployment. As part of this effort, the unit directs the flow of cases to newly automated immigration services systems. The unit prioritizes deployment, training, and technical support. After deployment, the unit evaluates the implementation through surveys, an analysis of the results.

(C) Systems Operations Unit. The Systems Operations Unit directs the day-to-day maintenance operations of all deployed immigration services automated systems. Because issues arise which affect operating systems, the unit maintains liaison with the other branches of ISD and works to assure smooth transition. Examples of these issues are: data conversion and integrity, technology obsolescence, and hardware and software upgrades.

To accomplish these ends, the unit establishes software change control boards as needed for all systems, and manages their operations; maintains matrix level authority of IRM project leads for all automated systems; analyzes and prioritizes issues for each automated system; and formulates and implements a detailed strategy for dealing with these issues. In addition, the unit reengineers and redesigns future immigration services systems, and monitors the interface of automated systems with other immigration services systems and data conversion.

(7) Administrative Services Staff. The Administrative Services Staff manages all administrative program activities, determines administrative priorities, and represents ISD, Service Centers, Regions, and offices on immigration services administrative issues. It consists of: Workload/Staffing Analysis and Modeling Unit; Personnel Unit; Budget/Finance Unit; Contracting/Procurement Unit, and Office Management Unit.

(A) Workload/Staffing Analysis and Modeling Unit. The Workload/Staffing Analysis and Modeling Unit performs monthly review and analysis of immigration services workload and staffing data. Unit also performs studies of immigration services processes to monitor and improve productivity and identify opportunities for improving customer service. The unit prepares weekly, monthly, and ad hoc responses to Departmental, Congressional, and Administration requests for workload and staffing data.

(B) Personnel Unit. The Personnel Unit performs a wide range of personnel and administrative services and provides technical assistance to managers and subordinates by monitoring activity and performance reviews, and helps analyze information resulting from these reviews. It also furthers the goals of Employment Opportunity by taking positive steps to assure affirmative action objectives.

(C) Budget/Finance Unit. The Budget/Finance Unit formulates, presents, and executes the budget process for ISD, and provides guidance, assistance, and expert advice on budgeting and financial management issues. It implements financial management methods and systems for maintaining and accounting for federal funds.

(D) Contracting/Procurement Unit. The Contracting/Procurement Unit is responsible for procurement contracting. It monitors, analyzes, and evaluates contract and procurement issues to identify problems and to recommend appropriate action.

(E) Office Management Unit. The Office Management Unit coordinates issues regarding day to day Immigration Services Division needs such as office supplies, computer support, telecommunication, filing procedures. The unit also insures that security policies are enforced, and serves as liaison for building management for coordination of ISD fire safety and other programs.

(c) Administrative Appeals Office. (Revised 03-13-2005) The Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) processes

appellate decisions that provide fair and legally supportable resolutions of individual applications and provide immigration benefits. These decisions provide guidance to applicants, petitioners, practitioners, and government officials in the correct interpretation of immigration law, regulations, and policy.

To accomplish its mission of providing timely, consistent, and accurate resolutions of appeals through decisions that are fair, impartial, and legally supportable, the AAO:

- Reviews the decisions of adjudicators of petitions and applications for immigration benefits to ensure consistency and accuracy in the interpretation of immigration laws, regulations, and policies.
- Maintains awareness of applicable case law to ensure compliance with the most current legal standards.
- Reviews and edits all decisions for quality control as to accuracy and legal sufficiency.
- Maintains the highest possible level of output for every officer consistent with a high standard of quality appellate decisions issued.
- Recommends the publication of precedent decisions as necessary to clarify issues in the adjudication program.

The authority to adjudicate appeals is delegated to the AAO by the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) pursuant to the authority vested in him through the Homeland Security Act of 2002, **Public Law 107-296**. See DHS Delegation Number 0150.1 (effective March 1, 2003); see also **8 CFR 2.1** (2003). The AAO exercises appellate jurisdiction over the matters described at 8 CFR 103.1(f)(3)(iii) (as in effect on February 1, 2003), with two exceptions - (1) petitions for approval of schools and the appeals of denials of such petitions have been the responsibility of Immigration and Customs Enforcement since November 1, 2004; and (2) appeals for Special nonimmigrant status have been the responsibility of the Office of Fraud Detection and National Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services since October 2004.

(d) Regional Adjudications Office. The Regional Office of Adjudications reports directly to the Regional Director who reports to the Executive Associate Commissioner for Field Operations. The unit is charged with the administration of Headquarters programs for the adjudication of applications for all types of benefits and services sought under the provisions of the immigration laws and related statutes. Additionally, the unit is responsible for providing administrative guidance for the naturalization, citizenship, adjustment of status, and other programs at field offices.

ROADN assists Headquarters in the identification, development and prescription of procedures and techniques to meet program goals and objectives. It provides verbal and written guidance to field offices, evaluates field office needs and recommends action items to management. It monitors computerization of program activities and identifies corrective operational actions needed to eliminate problems at selective field offices.

ROADN assists the Regional Director in the orderly management of program resources. ROADN staff assist in the review of budget proposals, distribution of funds and human resources to ensure the most efficient use of resources. ROADN also assists Headquarters in the audit of field office activities within and outside the region.

The unit also advises the Regional Director, through the assistant regional director for Adjudications of interest to assure continuity of regional adjudications activities, and consistency in the application of program policies. The unit is often called upon by Headquarters to conduct surveys, provide training, recommend correction of deficiencies in field office operations and respond to written inquiries, requests, complaints or requests for information originating from external customers that are directed to HQ.

(e) Service Centers. There are four Adjudications service centers. Originally, they were completely regional in character; that is, they each handled the same types of work within their respective geographic region reported through the regional director. Eventually, the centers began reporting directly to Headquarters; workloads, in part, became specialized. For most applications and petitions except asylum, the geographic jurisdictions of the service centers are as follows:

Vermont Service Center: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virgin Islands, West Virginia.

Texas Service Center: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas

Nebraska Service Center: Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming

California Service Center: Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Nevada.

Asylum pre-processing and related employment authorization applications are divided among the four centers according to the asylum office jurisdictional lines: Newark, New York and Arlington asylum office cases are handled through the Vermont Service Center; Chicago and San Francisco asylum office cases are handled through the Lincoln Service Center; Los Angeles asylum office cases are handled through the California Service Center and Miami and Houston asylum offices are handled by the Texas Service Center.

In addition, specific service centers have been designated to handle certain specialty cases:

Nebraska Service Center handles refugee and asylee adjustment cases; refugee relative petition cases; refugee travel document issuance and reentry permit issuance cases; military service and Filipino Waiver N-400 cases; employment authorization for A and G dependents; HRIFA adjustment cases and related employment authorizations and parole requests, and NAFTA and sports-related temporary worker cases.

Texas Service Center handles immigrant investor cases (I-526 and I-829); Cuban adjustment cases; immigrant visas except those entering at Los Angeles and San Francisco; NACARA Section 202 adjustment cases relating to employment authorizations and parole requests;

California Service Center handles immigrant visa cases from Los Angeles and San Francisco; immigrant adjustment cases (I-526 and I-829); NACARA **Section 203** applications (I-881) for aliens living in Alaska, Arizona, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, Ohio, South Dakota, Washington or Wisconsin; replacement alien registration cards (I-551 renewal program); and

Vermont Service Center NACARA **Section 203** applications (I-881) for all states except those listed for the California Service Center; and replacement alien registration cards (I-551 renewal program).

(f) District and Sub-office Adjudications Sections. District and sub-office adjudications units have always been the "backbone" of the Adjudications Program. Originally, before the evolution of service centers, these offices performed virtually all adjudications work within their assigned geographic area. Prior to 1983, each district and sub-office also had a separate unit handling naturalization and citizenship matters. With the rapid increase in adjudications and naturalization volumes, the four service centers were opened and rapidly expanded. The service centers were originally an outlet for adjudication of certain types of cases which did not require interviews, investigation or complex research. Eventually, the service center concept was expanded to

receipting function and the "direct mail" program began. Further evolution of the service centers, taking advantage of contract mail and file operations and large scale automation, has dramatically altered the district and sub-office. Today, the adjudicator in a district or sub-office is primarily responsible for more cases and cases requiring a personal interview. Much of the preliminary work on such cases has been by a service center, with only the interview or investigation and closing actions handled by district adjudicator personnel. Largely, district and sub-office workload falls into three categories: naturalization, adjustment and removal of conditional resident status. Other work which is time-sensitive, such as orphan proceedings and urgent travel document requests, is also handled by district and sub-office staffs. Jurisdictional boundaries of district and sub-offices are set out in **8 CFR 100.4**.

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