

Do You Need a Lawyer or Accredited Representative?

Information on How to Find Legal Representation in Immigration Court

The information in this packet was prepared by the U.S. Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR). It is not intended, nor should it be construed in any way, as legal advice. The information does not extend or limit the jurisdiction of the Immigration Courts as established by law and regulation. Nothing in this packet shall limit the discretion of Immigration Judges to act in accordance with law and regulation.

Do You Need a Lawyer or Accredited Representative?

You have the right to have a lawyer or Department of Justice accredited representative represent you in your immigration proceedings. However, the government will not give you a lawyer or accredited representative. **If you want a lawyer or accredited representative, you must find one on your own and pay for any of the costs.** You should do this *as soon as possible*.

The **ONLY** people who can represent you in immigration court are lawyers and accredited representatives.¹ Notarios, document preparers, immigration consultants, and travel agents are NOT allowed to give you ANY legal advice.

Some nonprofit organizations offer free legal advice and may be able to find a lawyer or accredited representative to represent you for free. The immigration judge will provide you with a list of these organizations. **This list is also available at www.justice.gov/eoir/list-pro-bono-legal-service-providers.**

What is a Lawyer?

A lawyer is generally someone who has a license to practice law before *the immigration courts and other courts of law* in the United States. A lawyer helps you fill out immigration applications, such as an application for asylum. A lawyer may also help collect evidence, prepare you to testify in court, and present your case to the immigration judge for you.

What is a Department of Justice Accredited Representative?

An accredited representative is someone who has a certificate from the U.S. Department of Justice to practice law *only* in the U.S. immigration system. An accredited representative receives training in immigration law and is part of a U.S. nonprofit organization. Like a lawyer, an accredited representative helps you fill out immigration applications, collect evidence, and present your case to the immigration judge.

Can I Represent Myself?

Although you can always represent yourself in your immigration proceedings, the Department of Justice *strongly recommends* that you find a lawyer or accredited representative for your immigration case. If you cannot find a lawyer or accredited representative, you should use the Immigration Court Self-Help Legal Resource Center to familiarize yourself with the immigration system and understand your rights in immigration court. These materials are available in every immigration court and online at www.justice.gov/eoir/self-help-materials. Additional information is available at the Immigration Court Online Resource, which can be accessed at <https://icor.eoir.justice.gov>.

¹ Under certain circumstances, the following people may also provide legal representation: law students and law graduates not yet admitted to the bar, certain accredited officials, and other reputable individuals as defined under section 1292.1 of the Code of Federal Regulations.