



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS Initiative to Combat the Unauthorized Practice of Immigration Law</br> Fact Sheet

Introduction

The unauthorized practice of immigration law (UPIL) endangers the integrity of our immigration system and victimizes members of the immigrant community. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) plans to launch an initiative to combat this exploitative practice by:

- Promoting public understanding of the best ways to find bona fide legal advice and avoid scams
- Building capacity for legitimate assistance and services
- Supporting enforcement action against those who engage in the unauthorized practice of immigration law

Unauthorized Practice of Immigration Law

The unauthorized practice of immigration law occurs when those who are not attorneys or accredited representatives:

- Provide legal assistance to applicants or petitioners in immigration matters
- Charge more than a nominal fee
- Hold themselves out to be qualified in legal matters

Locally Focused Engagement Plan

Since January 2010, USCIS has been working with internal and external stakeholders to understand the community's concerns about UPIL. After hosting an initial dialogue with the public earlier this year, the agency convened an internal working group to analyze best practices and design a comprehensive public-engagement strategy.

USCIS will begin the initiative with a focus on seven pilot cities: Atlanta, Baltimore, Detroit, Fresno, Los Angeles, New York and San Antonio. These cities were selected based on the following criteria:

- Geographic diversity
- Diversity of immigrant communities
- Well-established and recent immigration gateways
- Identified need for additional Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) recognized organizations and accredited representatives
- Mix of cities with varying degrees of existing UPIL efforts and resources

Earlier this year, USCIS hosted engagement sessions in seven pilot cities to collect input on specific local concerns. USCIS plans to expand this initiative nationwide in 2011.

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