

AILA / CHICAGO ASYLUM OFFICE LIAISON MEETING
AUGUST 24, 2017 · 10:00 A.M.

TVPRA

1. How many TVPRA asylum applicants have you interviewed since October 1, 2016?

Please see attached statistics.

2. How many TVPRA asylum cases have you adjudicated since October 1, 2016?

Please see attached statistics.

3. How many TVPRA asylum cases are currently pending awaiting a decision?

Please see attached statistics.

4. Are there any procedural changes in light of the new Executive Orders or due to new Headquarter directives with regard to TVPRA cases that you can share with the chapter?

No, there are no procedural changes due to either new Executive Orders or HQ directives to report to the chapter.

REASONABLE/CREDIBLE FEAR

5. How many credible fear interviews have you conducted since October 1, 2016?

Please see attached statistics.

6. How many reasonable fear interviews have you conducted since October 1, 2016?

Please see attached statistics.

7. How many individuals are currently waiting to receive a credible/reasonable fear interview?

The number of individuals awaiting a CF or RF interview varies on a daily basis. The AO aims for a very fast turnaround for CF and RF interviews. Once jurisdiction by the AO is established every effort is made to complete the interview and issue a decision, preferably within 24 hours. Delays are generally a result of ICE logistics and interpreter issues outside the control of the AO.

How many individuals are currently waiting to receive a credible/reasonable fear decision?

Please see response to question seven.

8. Are there any procedural changes in light of the new Executive Orders or due to new Headquarter directives?

No, there are no procedural changes due to either new Executive Orders or HQ directives to report to the chapter.

9. Chapter members have been informed that the asylum office has temporarily stopped scheduling reasonable fear interviews for non-detained individuals.

- a. In the future would it be possible for the AO to alert liaison co-chairs that there has been a procedural change, even if temporary?

- b. When do you anticipate starting to schedule non-detained RFI interviews again?

The AO remains committed to providing information on substantive policy changes to the Chapter in an effort to promote efficiency for both the AO and chapter members.

*The current pause in scheduling RF and CF interviews for non-detained individuals is **not** the result of a procedural change at the AO. The current pause in scheduling non-detained RF and CF interviews is an operations management/allocation of resources issue as earlier in the year resources were concentrated on moving through the backlog of non-detained RF and CF interviews. The AO was able to make significant headway and has now reallocated resources to focus on affirmative asylum cases and paused the scheduling of non-detained RF and CF interviews. The AO cannot provide an exact timeline for re-starting these interviews, but expect that they may resume as soon as October 2017.*

10. Are credible fear interviews for non-detained individuals also affected by this policy change?

Please see response to question nine.

11. Are there any new policies affecting RFIs and CFIs for detained individuals that you can share with the chapter?

No, there are no new policies affecting RFIs and CFIs to report to the chapter.

ASYLUM

12. How many asylum cases have you adjudicated since October 1, 2016?

Please see attached statistics.

13. How many grants/denials/referrals?

Please see attached statistics.

14. Any new trends in asylum cases? Has the asylum office seen an influx of cases from any particular region of the world?

Please see attached statistics.

15. Are there any procedural changes in light of the new Executive Orders or due to new Headquarter directives?

No, there are no procedural changes due to either new Executive Orders or HQ directives to report to the chapter.

16. What steps should an applicant, who filed her application in October 2014 and has yet to be interviewed, take in order to facilitate the scheduling of her interview, especially in light of the fact that applicants who filed after her, i.e. after October 2014, are now being interviewed?

The AO makes every effort to schedule interviews on a first in/first out basis while working within their priority directives. Due to the high volume to applications pending the AO is often forced to manually shift interview scheduling due to resource allocation needs and also to allow counsel reasonable spacing in between interviews. For example, the routing software for cases may pull four cases for the same attorney on one day, the AO must then go in and decide how to space out those interviews manually and keep the queue moving forward.

17. Attorneys have recently encountered issues with delays between the date a decision is made and when notice is mailed out. On one hand, attorneys have noticed an increasing delay between the grant date listed on the approval letter and the date the approval letter is mailed out. Since asylees only have 30 days to seek certain federal benefits, even a one-week delay between the grant date and the mailing of the letter can cause significant hardship for asylees.

The AO is aware of this issue and is currently acting to fix the problem.

On the other hand, an asylum applicant recently submitted an email inquiry to the office regarding the status of his decision and he received a response stating that his case had been referred to court. When he then went to the asylum office to follow-up several days later, the Office gave him the referral letter and NTA dated that same day, even though several days prior, he had been told that his case had already been referred to court. Can you explain the process and timing from when a referral or approval is entered into the computer system and the referral or approval letter is mailed out?

The process and timing from when a referral or approval is entered into the computer system and the referral or approval letter is mailed out varies.

The NTA requires supervisory signature after completion of the documents by the administrative staff. There are several steps between the officer's decision and the service of that decision.

18. If an individual is represented with a G-28 on file, what is the Asylum Office's policy regarding communicating with that individual directly? Are there any situations where the Office might contact a represented applicant directly (whether via phone or mail), instead of contacting the attorney of record first or simultaneously?

The AO makes every effort to contact counsel of record prior to communicating with an applicant directly. The AO will contact applicants directly by phone for scheduling changes such as pick-up and/or interview rescheduling to avoid inconveniences to applicants and counsel.

Any and all substantive communications from the AO should be in writing and to counsel of record. If any chapter members have clients who have been contacted by phone by AO staff for any reason other than scheduling issues please alert the asylum liaison committee immediately.

NACARA

19. How many NACARA applications are currently pending with the Chicago Asylum Office?

Please see attached statistics

20. How many grants/denials?

Please see attached statistics

MISCELLANEOUS

21. Can you provide an update on any new staff and supervisory positions?

The AO is currently staffed at 50 officers with 43 officers on board and as of September 17, 2017 will increase staffing to 47 officers. Two of the four newly filled positions are for senior asylum officer positions. Please see meeting minutes from the June 29, 2017 AO liaison meeting minutes for a full supervisory list.

The next AILA Asylum Office Liaison Meeting will be held on Thursday October 19, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. at the Chicago Asylum Office. The meeting is open to all Chicago Chapter AILA members. All questions must be submitted to Amanda Crews Slezak by email to ACrews@heartlandalliance.org by Friday, October 13, 2017 no later than 3:00 p.m.