

## UNOFFICIAL NOTES

### 06/16/2021 USCIS Chicago Stakeholders' Meeting

#### **Welcome Remarks:**

- CIS Chicago aims to conduct these stakeholder meetings on a quarterly basis.
- CIS Chicago management advised that they will be participating in a “district wide” meeting where the most common questions regarding U.S. customer service operations and relations to local offices will be discussed.
- CIS Chicago has had a lot of attrition during pandemic and has not replenished staff. They will assemble a hiring committee soon in an effort to provide more efficient services.

#### **Information from Questions:**

- Chicago office is NOT accepting emergency AP requests. You must go through USCIS Customer Service.
- Stakeholders may drop off RFE and NOID responses in person, as well as I-290B filings, at Window 19 between 8 am and 3:30 pm. No appointment needed. Chicago management reminded us that we are only able to drop off documents. We may not ask case specific questions.
- Current time frame for PIP requests – they do not keep track of processing times for these requests, but they are currently looking at the workload in the office. If you have questions about PIP case, you can direct inquiries to the customer service unit.

#### **Local Updates and Reports:**

CIS Chicago Branch Chiefs:

- Nelson D. Larkins, Exams Unit
- Paul H. Phillips, Customer Service
- Stacey L. Summers, Citizenship Unit
- Pauline K. Woodson, Citizenship Unit
- Nick Millisis, FDNS Unit (Fraud Detection and National Security)

Exams Unit:

- The Exams Unit is currently going through backlogs of pending cases, including 2nd interview cases and employment-based filings.

Customer Service Unit:

- Priority is now being given to stand alone I-130 petitions.
- Requests for I-551 stamps (ADIT stamps) and emergency advanced parole must be initiated with USCIS Customer Service 1-800 number.

#### Citizenship Unit:

- They are happy to report that this unit is close to the pre-pandemic interview scheduling rate.
- Oath ceremony scheduling is now being done exclusively through the court. At the federal courthouse in Chicago, these ceremonies are being conducted outside, so clients should be prepared for an outdoor ceremony. The ceremonies are only being moved indoors for the most extreme weather.
- They also do monthly ceremonies at the federal courthouse in Rockford, IL (Western Division of the Northern District of Illinois). These are small ceremonies that are scheduled in order of case approval. Ceremonies for Indiana residents are being conducted at the federal courthouse in Hammond, IN.

#### FDNS Unit (Fraud Detection and National Security):

- They are not conducting any residential site visits due to COVID-19.
  - Investigation of family-based filings continue, but site visits are paused.
- Employment-based site visits/investigations are still happening.
- The USCIS Medical Team makes decisions on what, if any, site visits will be conducted following safety protocol.

#### **Presentations:**

#### GRANTS:

- Maria Rodriguez discussed the availability of federal grants for various public and/or non-profit naturalization and refugee programs. The breakdown of these grants is as follows:
  - Naturalization Programs:
    - 33 organizations will receive \$250,000 in grant money for a two-year period (\$125,000 each year).
  - Refugee Programs:
    - 6 organizations will receive \$300,000 in grant money for a two-year period (\$150,00- each year).
- Both grants begin on October 1, 2021, and applications must be submitted by 11:59:59 p.m. EASTERN time on July 16, 2021. No extensions.
- Current grant recipients include public school systems, community and faith-based groups, adult education organizations, and literacy organizations.
- Contact Information:
  - USCIS Program Office (Office of Citizenship):  
[citizenshipgrantprogram@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:citizenshipgrantprogram@uscis.dhs.gov)
  - Grants.gov: [Support@grants.gov](mailto:Support@grants.gov) or 1-800-518-4726
    - The grants.gov contact center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

- There was a special presentation entitled “The Blue Campaign: Combatting Human Trafficking” from Maraya C. Lasisky, Campaign Coordinator, The Blue Campaign, Office of Partnership and Engagement, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- For further information, go to [www.dhs.gov/bluecampaign](http://www.dhs.gov/bluecampaign) or email [bluecampaign@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:bluecampaign@hq.dhs.gov).