

## USCIS Citizenship and Integration Grant Program

# Promising Practices

<b>Organization Name:</b>	International Institute of the Bay Area
<b>Location:</b>	San Francisco, CA
<b>USCIS Grant Program:</b>	FY 2015 Citizenship and Integration Direct Services Grant Program—Citizenship Instruction and Naturalization Application Services FY 2013 Citizenship and Integration Direct Services Grant Program—Citizenship Instruction and Naturalization Application Services FY 2011 Citizenship and Integration Direct Services Grant Program—Citizenship Instruction and Naturalization Application Services FY 2010 Citizenship and Integration Direct Services Grant Program

## Law Student Volunteers Conduct Practice Naturalization Interviews

Under the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program, International Institute of the Bay Area (IIBA) maximizes its capacity to provide citizenship preparation services by recruiting law student volunteers to help with its citizenship application workshops. IIBA also relies on law student volunteers to conduct practice naturalization

interviews with citizenship students. Law student volunteers provide permanent residents with the individualized practice they need to feel prepared for the naturalization interview.

### Purpose

IIBA recruits and trains law student volunteers in order to provide permanent residents with high quality naturalization application assistance and interview practice. IIBA relies on law student volunteers to conduct practice naturalization interviews because they

have a strong understanding of the law. Understanding legal implications and complexities allows law student volunteers to conduct rigorous and realistic practice interviews.

### Process

Each year, IIBA partners with the Stanford Law School Pro Bono Project to recruit approximately 10 law student volunteers to assist permanent residents with naturalization application workshops and interview

preparation. IIBA provides law student volunteers with rigorous training on naturalization requirements, the interview process, and how to assist clients in completing Form N-400, Application for Naturalization.

IIBA also equips law students with interview models and other resources on naturalization interviews, including those found on the USCIS Citizenship Resource Center. Additionally, students participate in naturalization information sessions conducted by USCIS community relations officers. At those sessions, law student volunteers learn more about the naturalization process, interviews, and available USCIS resources.

Law student volunteers take on the role of an immigration officer during the practice interviews. They act and dress professionally to create the feeling of a realistic interview. To begin the interview, a law student volunteer enters the citizenship classroom and calls out a citizenship student's name. This simulates the way that an immigration officer might call on an applicant in the waiting room of a USCIS office.

The volunteer then leads the student to a desk in another room and asks a series of questions based on the information found in the citizenship student's Form N-400, Application for Naturalization. The law student volunteer also asks the student to answer 10 of the [100 civics questions on the naturalization test](#) and to read one sentence and write one sentence in English using vocabulary published on the [USCIS Citizenship Resource Center](#). At the end of the interview, the law student volunteer provides the student with feedback and suggests strategies for improvement.

The practice interviews gives law student volunteers an opportunity to hone their client interview skills, learn about naturalization law, and interact one-on-one with clients. For citizenship students, the practice interviews allow them to prepare for their naturalization interview in a realistic setting.

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## Challenges

IIBA has found that some students experience nervousness before participating in a

practice naturalization interview with law student volunteers.

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## Overcoming Obstacles

IIBA manages student nervousness by offering support and encouragement. IIBA instructors ensure that students understand the purpose of the practice interviews, the confidential nature of the process, and the importance of preparing for the actual

naturalization interview. Once students understand the significance of the practice interviews and hear the positive experiences of their peers, they are willing to work with law student volunteers.

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## Outcomes

Law student volunteers are a valuable asset to IIBA's citizenship preparation program. Law student volunteers provide citizenship students with the practice and feedback they need to succeed during the naturalization

interview. After participating in practice interviews with law student volunteers, citizenship students feel capable and prepared to attend their naturalization interviews.

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