



October 1, 2010

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## Memorandum

TO: Asylum Office Directors  
Asylum Office Deputy Directors  
Supervisory Asylum Officers  
Quality Assurance & Training Coordinators  
Asylum Officers

FROM: Joseph E. Langlois /s/  
Chief, Asylum Division

SUBJECT: Release of the Asylum Officer Timing Survey and the Asylum Officer Staff Survey

The purpose of this memorandum is to encourage all asylum officers' participation in two online surveys to be released this month – the Asylum Officer Timing Survey and the Asylum Officer Staff Survey.

In September 2008, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommended that the Asylum Division develop a cost-effective way to collect empirical data on the time it takes asylum officers to thoroughly complete the steps in the adjudication process and revise productivity standards, if warranted. (See *U.S. ASYLUM SYSTEM: Agencies Have Taken Actions to Help Ensure Quality in the Asylum Adjudication Process, but Challenges Remain*, GAO-08-935, revised October 2008. Available on the Asylum Virtual Library at

<http://z02rscow12:8080/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-72264/20081002%20Final%20Report%20revised%20GAO-08-935.pdf>)

The USCIS Office of Policy and Strategy (OPS) sponsored a study to be conducted by Research Triangle Institute International (RTI), an independent, non-profit organization that engages in research and development, to address this recommendation. Recently, OPS and RTI research teams visited the asylum offices to collect information through focus groups, interview observations, and meetings with various staff members. The information collected was used to inform two online surveys scheduled for release this month for asylum officer participation – the Asylum Officer Timing Survey and the Asylum Officer Staff Survey. These surveys represent an opportunity for asylum officers to share their concerns about their workload and to provide valuable input on the timing of activities. *These surveys are for asylum officer completion only and should not be completed by*

*directors, deputy directors, supervisory asylum officers, or quality assurance & training coordinators.*

The **Asylum Officer Timing Survey** is a self-reported measure of the amount of time it takes asylum officers to complete various activities daily. This survey will be released on Monday, October 4, 2010. Asylum officers are encouraged to complete this survey on a daily basis for four weeks. OPS and RTI have estimated that this survey will take approximately five minutes each day to complete.

The **Asylum Officer Staff Survey** focuses on questions related to the asylum adjudication process and factors impacting the time it takes for an officer to complete an adjudication. This survey is expected to be released in mid-October. Asylum officers will be notified by e-mail when the survey is available. OPS and RTI have anticipated that this survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Unlike the Asylum Officer Timing survey, the Asylum Officer Staff Survey should be completed only one time by each participating asylum officer.

*All asylum officers are invited to participate in both surveys. Survey participation is voluntary and anonymous.* Asylum Division management staff will not be privy to the information asylum officers provide at the individual level. OPS and RTI are taking every precaution to assure confidentiality and anonymity in these studies. Survey feedback will assist USCIS in responding to GAO's recommendation and will help shape the future of the Asylum Division.

During the data collection period, 1.5 hours per week will be allocated for survey completion. The Asylum Division is intentionally providing an abundance of time for survey completion to encourage all asylum officers to provide complete and thorough responses. This allocated time will substitute scheduled weekly training time during October. All asylum officers will be allocated this time regardless of their participation in the surveys. Asylum officers who choose not to participate in the study are required to engage in other training or study during this time in lieu of the surveys.

Thank you for your gracious accommodation of the OPS and RTI research teams during their recent visits to your offices. Each officer's input is extremely valuable to this study. I encourage you all to be forthright and honest in your survey responses. Should you have any questions regarding the study, please contact Todd Soloweigh, USCIS Office of Policy and Strategy, at (202) 272-1471.