



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

USCIS OVERVIEW



AN OVERVIEW OF U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES

March 2021

INTRODUCTION



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- **USCIS** is the federal agency that **oversees lawful immigration** to the United States.
- USCIS began operations on March 1, 2003, as part of the newly established **U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)**.
- We are 19,000 government employees and contractors working at more than 200 offices around the world.

AGENCY HISTORY



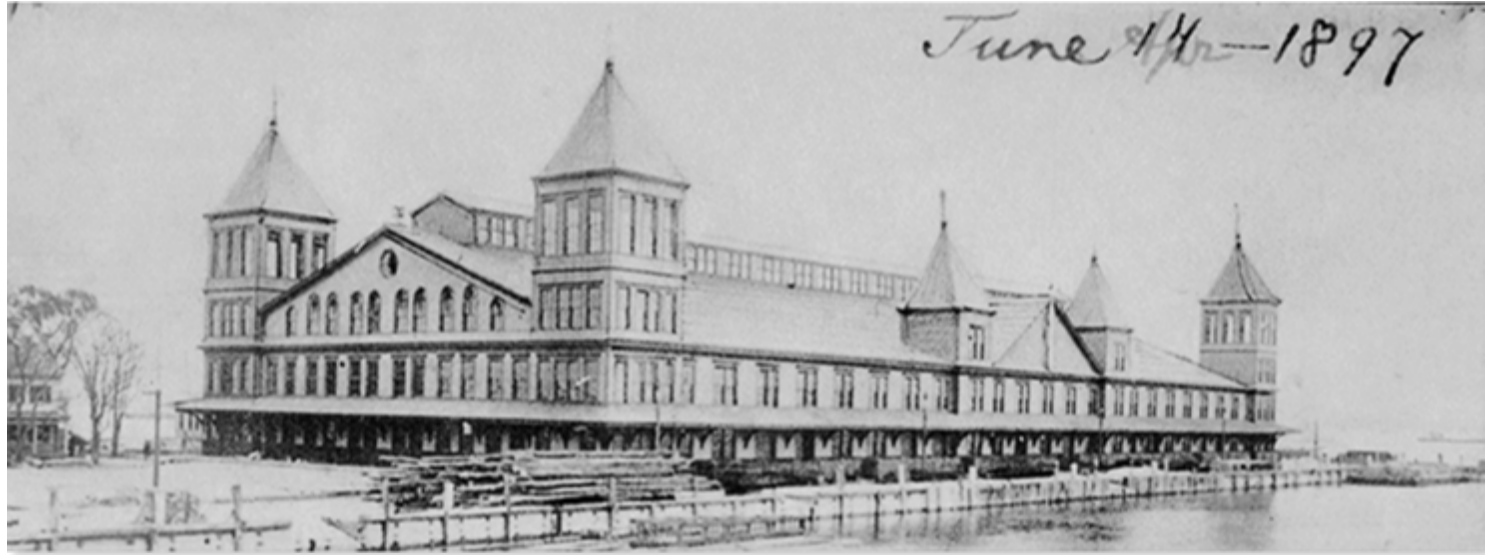
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- The federal government assumed direct control of inspecting, admitting, rejecting and processing all immigrants seeking admission to the United States with the **Immigration Act of 1891**.
- On Jan. 2, 1892, the Immigration Service opened **Ellis Island** in New York Harbor, an immigration station that operated until 1954.

AGENCY HISTORY



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- **Ellis Island** housed inspection facilities, hearing and detention rooms, hospitals, cafeterias, administrative offices, railroad ticket offices and representatives of many immigrant aid societies.

AGENCY HISTORY



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- The **Immigration Service** continued evolving as the United States experienced rising immigration during the early years of the 20th century.
- Executive Order 6166 of June 10, 1933, combined the Bureau of Immigration and Bureau of Naturalization into one agency, the **Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)**.

AGENCY HISTORY



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- The events of **9/11** initiated another shift in U.S. immigration policy.
- The **Homeland Security Act of 2002** disbanded INS and created DHS on March 1, 2003.

AGENCY HISTORY



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- The functions of INS fell to **three new federal agencies** serving under DHS:
 - U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)
 - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)
 - U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

WHAT WE DO



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- **CBP** prevents drugs, weapons, terrorists and other inadmissible persons from entering the country.
- **ICE** enforces criminal and civil laws governing border control, customs, trade and immigration.
- **USCIS** oversees lawful immigration to the United States and naturalization of new American citizens.

WHAT WE DO



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SOME OF THE SERVICES USCIS PROVIDES

- **Citizenship** through civilian and military naturalization
- **Immigration** of family members
- **Processing employment petitions** for temporary or permanent workers in the United States
- **Verifying** an individual's legal right to work in the United States (E-Verify)

WHAT WE DO



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SOME OF THE SERVICES USCIS PROVIDES

- **Humanitarian programs**
- **Intercountry adoptions**
- **Civic integration**
- **Outreach and public engagement**
- **Genealogy**



WHAT WE DO



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CITIZENSHIP AND NATURALIZATION

- Individuals who wish to become **U.S. citizens** through naturalization submit their applications to USCIS.
- We determine eligibility, process the applications and, if approved, schedule the applicant for a ceremony to take the **Oath of Allegiance**.
- We also determine eligibility and provide documentation of U.S. citizenship for people who **acquired or derived U.S. citizenship** through their parents.

WHAT WE DO



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IMMIGRATION OF FAMILY MEMBERS

- We manage the process that allows current permanent residents and U.S. citizens to **bring close relatives** to live and work in the United States.
- The [Family](#) page on our website, uscis.gov, explains how people can **petition** for relatives (or future relatives such as a fiancé(e) or a prospective adopted child) to immigrate to the United States.

WHAT WE DO



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PROCESSING EMPLOYMENT PETITIONS

- We manage the process that allows individuals from other countries to work in the United States.
- Some of the opportunities are **temporary**, and some provide a path to a Green Card (**permanent residence**).



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PROCESSING EMPLOYMENT PETITIONS

- The [Working in the United States](#) page of our website provides a summary of **employment-based nonimmigrant and immigrant** visa classifications and other categories of individuals who are eligible for employment authorization.

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E-VERIFY

- We manage **E-Verify**, the system that allows participating employers to electronically verify the employment eligibility of their newly hired employees.
- E-Verify employers match information provided by employees on the **Form I-9**, Employment Eligibility Verification, against records available to the Social Security Administration and DHS.
- See the [E-Verify](#) website for more information.

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HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMS

- We administer humanitarian programs that **provide protection** to individuals inside and outside the United States who are displaced by war, famine and civil and political unrest, and those who are forced to flee their countries to escape the risk of death and torture at the hands of persecutors.
- See the [Humanitarian](#) page for information on DACA, humanitarian parole, refugees and asylum, temporary protected status and other programs.

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INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTIONS

- We manage the first step in the process for U.S. citizens to **adopt children from other countries**.
- We are responsible for:
 - Determining the eligibility and suitability of the Prospective Adoptive Parents (individuals) looking to adopt; and
 - Determining the eligibility of the child to immigrate to the United States.
- See the [Adoptions](#) page for more information.

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CIVIC INTEGRATION

- We promote **instruction and training** on citizenship rights and responsibilities and provide immigrants with the **information and tools** necessary to successfully integrate into American civic culture.



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CIVIC INTEGRATION

The [Citizenship Resource Center](#) has resources and free study materials for a variety of users including:

- **Immigrants** who are interested in becoming U.S. citizens;
- **Educators** who play a critical role in preparing learners; and
- **Organizations** that are interested in supporting immigrants in becoming citizens and assisting them with integrating into American civic society.

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OUTREACH AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- USCIS holds a variety of **external stakeholder events** in which we share information and obtain feedback on USCIS programs and policies.
- We focus some events on a single-issue area while others include a wide variety of subjects. These meetings include **call-in numbers and webinar sessions** for stakeholders to participate virtually.
- For more information, visit www.uscis.gov/outreach and our [Contact Public Engagement](#) page.

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GENEALOGY

- The **USCIS Genealogy Program** is a fee-for-service program that provides **researchers** with timely access to historical immigration and naturalization records of deceased immigrants.
- See the [Genealogy](#) page for more information.



WHO WE ARE



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PROGRAM OFFICES AND DIRECTORATES

Program Offices

- Administrative Appeals Office (AAO)
- Office of the Chief Counsel (OCC)
- Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)
- Office of Equal Opportunity and Inclusion (OEIOI)
- Office of the Executive Secretariat (EXSO)

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PROGRAM OFFICES AND DIRECTORATES

Program Offices (continued)

- Office of Investigations (OI)
- Office of Performance and Quality (OPQ)
- Office of Policy and Strategy (OP&S)
- Office of Privacy (PVY)

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PROGRAM OFFICES AND DIRECTORATES

Directorates

- External Affairs Directorate (EXA)
- Field Operations Directorate (FOD)
- Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate (FDNS)
- Immigration Records and Identity Services Directorate (IRIS)

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PROGRAM OFFICES AND DIRECTORATES

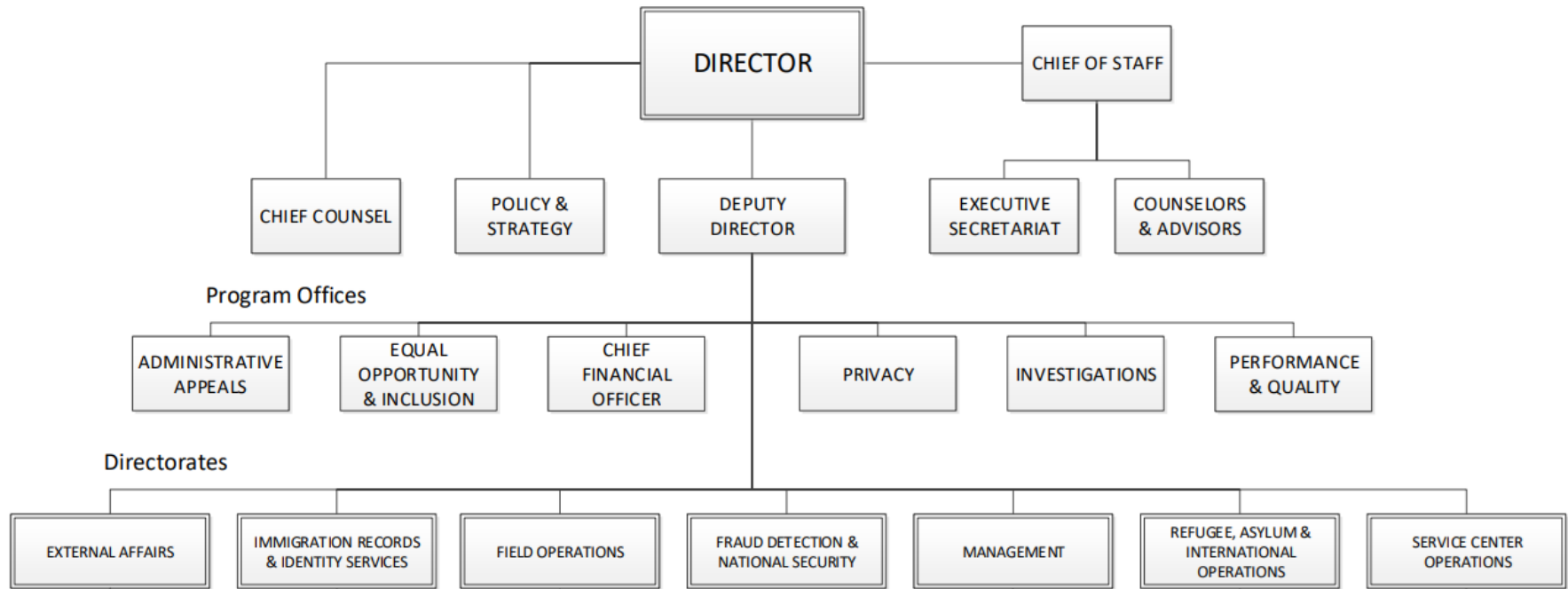
Directorates (continued)

- Management Directorate (MGT)
- Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate (RAIO)
- Service Center Operations Directorate (SCOPS)

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ONLINE RESOURCES



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NEWS AND ALERTS

- You can find all USCIS **news releases** and **alerts** on our [USCIS News](#) webpage, searchable by topic and date.
- It also includes **policy and procedure** updates and information about USCIS **office closures**.
- **Subscribe** to get updates by email.



ONLINE RESOURCES



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NEWS AND ALERTS

- USCIS has spokespersons in Washington, D.C. and throughout the country to respond to **media inquiries**.
- Members of the media may contact **USCIS public affairs officers** listed on our website.
- Note that public affairs officers do not provide case-specific information.

ONLINE RESOURCES



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USCIS AND CONGRESS

- USCIS has a dedicated website, uscis.gov/congress, that only **members of Congress and their staff** can access.
- The **USCIS and Congress** website provides information about the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs and how we can help you with your **constituent's casework**.
- You can also get USCIS congressional liaison **contact information**, find **legislative resources** and learn about **educational opportunities** in your area or virtually.

ONLINE RESOURCES

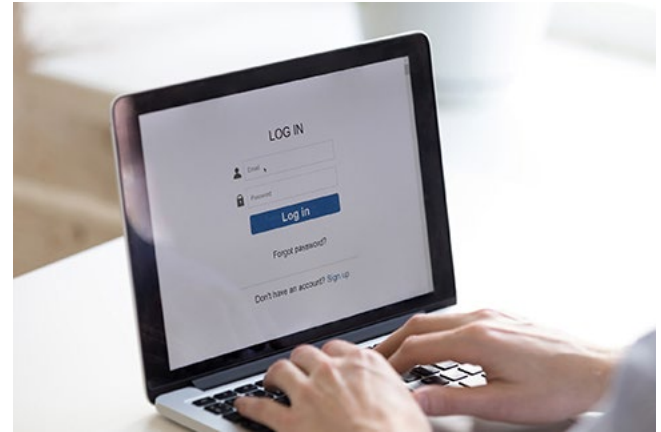


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NEWS AND ALERTS

- Our **online tools and resources** deliver the information customers need without them having to call us or visit a field office.
- **Filing a form online** is easier and faster than paper filing. It is a simple and personalized way to track a case online and access other USCIS services. The first step is to create a **USCIS online account**.



ONLINE RESOURCES



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TOOLS

- With a **USCIS online account**, customers can **file forms** and **pay fees** from their computer, phone or tablet.
- They can also **track their case** anytime from anywhere.
- **Attorneys or representatives** can create their own account to manage their client's case, but they cannot use their client's account.

ONLINE RESOURCES



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TOOLS

- Users can manage their case by:
 - [Checking their case status](#);
 - [Checking processing times](#); and
 - [Changing their address online](#).
- Our self-service tools also provide information about **eligibility** through [Explore My Options](#) and our **filing fees** by using the [Fee Calculator](#).

ONLINE RESOURCES



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LAWS AND POLICY

- [USCIS Policy Manual](#) – Centralized online repository for USCIS' immigration policies.
- [Administrative Appeals](#) – Information on precedent decisions, adopted decisions and non-precedent decisions.
- [Regulations](#) – Immigration-related regulations in the Code of Federal Regulations.
- [Legislation](#) – The Immigration and Nationality Act and other public laws governing U.S. immigration law.

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PROGRAM OFFICES

- The **Administrative Appeals Office (AAO)** conducts administrative review of appeals from applicants and petitioners who received an unfavorable decision. AAO's reviews the appeals to ensure consistency and accuracy in the interpretation of immigration law and policy.
- The **Office of the Chief Counsel (OCC)** provides specialized legal advice, opinions, determinations, regulations and any other assistance to the USCIS director as an embedded legal program of the DHS Office of the General Counsel.

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PROGRAM OFFICES

- The **Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)** ensures sound stewardship of USCIS fiscal resources, delivers accurate and timely financial reporting, improves financial management processes, and strengthens enterprise risk management and internal control.
- The **Office of Equal Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI)** develops programs and services to ensure equality of employment opportunity, promote and sustain a diverse workforce, and foster workplace inclusion.

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PROGRAM OFFICES

- The **Office of the Executive Secretariat (EXSO)** receives, controls and tracks correspondence and other written and electronic documents addressed to the USCIS director or the secretary or deputy secretary of Homeland Security.
- The **Office of Investigations (OI)** conducts investigations of misconduct, corruption and fraud involving USCIS employees and contractors and establishes policy relative to investigative procedures and techniques.

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PROGRAM OFFICES

- The **Office of Performance and Quality (OPQ)** provides data and operational analyses to senior decision makers and key stakeholders, including Congress, DHS and other governmental agencies.
- The **Office of Policy and Strategy (OP&S)** serves as the principal policy advisor for USCIS, performs research and analysis on immigration issues and program evaluations, manages the USCIS Policy Manual, coordinates USCIS strategic goals and objectives, and oversees the regulatory development process.

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PROGRAM OFFICES

- The **Office of Privacy (PVY)** evaluates USCIS legislative and regulatory proposals involving collection, use and disclosure of personally identifiable information; evaluates USCIS programs, systems and operations to identify privacy sensitivities; and ensures USCIS' adherence to federal, regulatory, statutory, departmental and component privacy requirements, mandates, directives and policy.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE (EXA)

- Ensures that USCIS conveys accurate, consistent and transparent information and unified messaging to both our external and internal audiences.
- Develops and circulates official USCIS materials aimed at external audiences, including Congress, the press, immigration stakeholders and the general public.

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FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE (FOD)

- Oversees and manages the day-to-day operations of:
 - Western, Central, Northeast and Southeast Regional Offices;
 - National Benefits Center;
 - Immigrant Investor Program Office; and
 - 16 District Offices and 88 Field Offices located throughout the continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, Saipan and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

WHAT WE DO



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FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE (FOD)

- Makes decisions on immigration benefit applications, petitions and requests, including naturalization and citizenship applications, through written correspondence and in-person interviews with applicants, petitioners and beneficiaries;
- Conducts background security checks for pending applications and petitions;

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FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE (FOD)

- Conducts more than 10,000 naturalization ceremonies per year nationwide; and
- Provides in-person information and documentary services for applicants.

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FRAUD DETECTION AND NATIONAL SECURITY DIRECTORATE (FDNS)

- Employs numerous measures to detect and deter immigration benefit fraud.
- Pursues benefit fraud cases in collaboration with USCIS adjudication officers and federal law enforcement agencies.
- Works closely with law enforcement and intelligence community partners to resolve potential fraud, national security and public safety concerns, and to ensure the mutual exchange of current and comprehensive information.

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FRAUD DETECTION AND NATIONAL SECURITY DIRECTORATE (FDNS)

- Implements the Targeted Site Visit and Verification Program (TSVVP) to focus resources where fraud and abuse of employment and family-based visa types are more likely to occur.
- Implements the [Administrative Site Visit and Verification Program \(ASVVP\)](#) to enhance the integrity of the immigration benefit process. Under ASVVP, FDNS immigration officers conduct unannounced pre- and post-adjudication site visits to verify information contained in certain visa petitions.

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IMMIGRATION RECORDS AND IDENTITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE (IRIS)

- Provides immigration, employment and identity information accurately and completely to enable confident and timely decisions regarding cases/benefits.
- Evaluates and improves processes to achieve optimal performance and drives flexible and modern technology solutions and services to support evolving operational needs.

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MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE (MGT)

- Provides leadership, coordination and logistics for a variety of complex mission support functions and activities on which other USCIS program offices and directorates rely to achieve their goals.
- Plans, directs, manages and coordinates all management support functions within USCIS.

WHAT WE DO



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REFUGEE, ASYLUM AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE (RAIO)

- Conducts protection screenings, adjudicates asylum and refugee applications, and adjudicates other immigration benefits both domestically and internationally.
- Maintains effective intergovernmental partnerships, consults with other countries to build the capacity of their protection systems, implements bilateral information-sharing agreements for identity management and confidentiality, and helps advance the U.S. government's strategic priorities in the international and refugee protection arenas.

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SERVICE CENTER OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE (SCOPS)

- Provides adjudications services through five service centers:
 - California Service Center (CSC)
 - Nebraska Service Center (NSC)
 - Potomac Service Center (PSC)
 - Texas Service Center (TSC)
 - Vermont Service Center (VSC)
- Adjudicates applications and petitions for persons seeking immigration benefits that do not require in-person processing or interviews.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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- Visit our website at www.uscis.gov for news, tools, forms and information about our leadership and organization.
- For information on what USCIS accomplishes on an average day, see [A Day in the Life of USCIS](#).
- Visit www.uscis.gov/congress for information on the USCIS congressional program.

