



Humanitarian, Adjustment, Removing Conditions and Travel Documents (HART) Service Center Frequently Asked Questions Aug 1, 2024 –

All responses are accurate as of this date.

Form I-601A, Application for Provisional Unlawful Presence Waiver

Q1. What is your target processing time for Form I-601A and when do you expect to reach that target?

A1. As of June 2024, we are processing 80% of Form I-601A applications within 43.5 months, according to our [Check Case Processing Times](#) webpage. We do not currently have a short-term cycle time goal for Form I-601A. We are committed to reducing processing times for Form I-601A and to that end, we continue to digitize this workload and to hire, onboard, and train officers adjudicating this form type. As the HART Service Center hires and trains new officers, we expect processing times will decrease.

Q2. Do officers review and adjudicate Form I-601A electronically or on paper?

A2. Because Form I-601A cannot be filed through the USCIS online account, the Lockbox receives and receipts paper-based Form I-601A and then scans and digitizes them before assigning and transferring them to a HART adjudicating officer who reviews them electronically.

Q3. Will I be able to file Form I-601A electronically in the future?

A3. We are constantly expanding our online services and tools, including the ability to file certain forms online. At this time, Form I-601A is not available for online filing.

Q4. Will other service centers, in addition to the HART Service Center, adjudicate Form I-601A?

A4. Only the HART Service Center adjudicates Form I-601A. The HART Service Center also exclusively adjudicates:

- Form I-918, Petition for U Nonimmigrant Status, bona fide determinations;
- Form I-360, VAWA Petition; and
- Form I-730, Asylee Follow to Join Relative Petition.



Any and all petitions in these categories filed at other service centers have been transferred to the HART Service Center.

Form I-918, Petition for U Nonimmigrant Status (U Visa)

Q5. Can you provide an update on U visa bona fide determinations and processing times?

A5. You can access processing times for all HART-based forms at egov.uscis.gov/processing-times. The processing times posted for Form I-918 reflect the time range from receipt to the issuance of either a bona fide determination grant notice or a notice that we will consider the petition for waiting list placement.

USCIS is actively working to address U visa bona fide determination processing times by increasing the HART Service Center resources and pursuing procedural and operational enhancements. For example, on Aug. 11, 2023, we updated the USCIS Policy Manual to provide that we may review and determine whether a qualifying family member's petition for U nonimmigrant status is bona fide and, if already filed, adjudicate their Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, when the principal petitioner receives a bona fide determination, even if the principal petitioner has not filed Form I-765. USCIS has also permanently reassigned officers who were identified by the other service centers as subject matter experts in the U bona fide determination process. These officers will focus on backlog reduction for U nonimmigrant status petitions awaiting bona fide determinations.

Q6. I have clients who have had bona fide determination letters for a year or more, but their application for employment authorization is still pending. Why is it taking so long if the person already has a bona fide determination?

A6. Generally, we adjudicate any Form I-765 filed concurrently with Form I-918 or I-918A directly after we grant bona fide determination. This means current processing times for Form I-765 in these cases correspond to the Form I-918 and I-918A bona fide determination processing times. However, if a petitioner files their Form I-765 **after** receiving a bona fide determination, we will adjudicate it in order of receipt date. This may delay receipt of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

To avoid delays, we encourage U nonimmigrant status petitioners and their qualifying family members to file Form I-765 with their Form I-918 and Form I-918A initial filing.

Q7. The policy manual states there is no method for appealing a bona fide determination decision. If we believe a decision was made in error (or if there is no reason given for a bona fide determination denial), what can a petitioner do?



A7. The non-issuance of a bona fide determination EAD is not a final agency action, so USCIS does not accept or process motions to reopen or reconsider, appeals, or requests to re-apply for a bona fide determination EAD. If a petitioner does not receive a bona fide determination EAD and deferred action, we conduct a full adjudication to determine waiting list eligibility; this process is automatic and does not require any action on the part of the petitioner to initiate. If we deem the petitioner eligible for waiting list placement, they may obtain employment authorization and receive a grant of deferred action. Unlike the bona fide determination process, officers may issue a request for evidence or a notice of intent to deny to gather and submit additional information necessary to determine waiting list placement.

USCIS also similarly completes a full adjudication for any qualifying family member who will not receive a bona fide determination EAD. While the full adjudication also includes issuing requests for evidence to address any deficiencies or concerns in the qualifying family member's record, it is not an adjudication for waiting list placement. That is because qualifying family members are only placed on the waiting list if the principal petitioner is. If the qualifying family member resolves the deficiencies or concerns in the record, USCIS issues a bona fide determination EAD and grants deferred action to the qualifying family member. If additional evidence provided by the qualifying family member does not resolve the deficiencies or concerns, then USCIS does not issue a bona fide determination EAD and generally places the qualifying family member's petition with the principal petition back in line to wait for a final statutory cap adjudication.

Q8. If an attorney withdraws from a U visa case, how does USCIS communicate with a petitioner while ensuring confidentiality?

A8. If an attorney withdraws from a U visa filing, they must mail a letter to the USCIS office that has jurisdiction over the filing. If they are also representing qualifying family members, they must also mail a withdrawal letter for each qualifying family member they are representing. As a best practice, this letter should confirm the preferred mailing address of the petitioner and qualifying family members.

USCIS can communicate directly with petitioners if their attorney or accredited representative withdraws representation via U.S. Postal Service mail or if the petitioner sets up an InfoPass appointment at a local field office. As of March 29, 2024, both represented and unrepresented U petitioners and qualifying family members can also obtain customer service through the USCIS Contact Center after meeting the enhanced identity validation requirements. For more important information, please visit the [Contact Us](#) webpage and look under "Inquiries for VAWA, T, and U Filings."



In addition to the USCIS Contact Center and in-person appointments, unrepresented petitioners and qualifying family members may also send signed, written inquiries to the appropriate address listed in the table provided on the [Contact Us](#) webpage.

Q9. Is the HART Service Center only doing bona fide determinations for Forms I-918, or will the HART Service Center officers also make waiting list determinations?

A9. The HART Service Center conducts all U bona fide determination reviews. Generally, if a petition is not granted a bona fide determination, USCIS will transfer that case to the Vermont or Nebraska Service Center for full waiting list adjudication. However, if the HART officer who determines the petition will not receive a bona fide determination grant is waiting list trained, then that officer will also complete the waiting list adjudication.

Q10. Will the HART Service Center adjudicate Form I-765 applications for derivatives of U visa cases that have received a bona fide determination?

A10. Yes, the HART Service Center adjudicates Form I-765 for U nonimmigrant status petitioners, including qualifying family members, who have received a bona fide determination. Generally, we adjudicate Form I-765 immediately after the bona fide determination grant if the petitioner filed Form I-765. If the Form I-765 was filed after the bona fide determination grant, we will adjudicate Form I-765 in order by receipt date.

Q11. Can you explain the division of labor between the HART Service Center and the Vermont and Nebraska Service Centers for Form I-918? Do all Forms I-918 initially go to the HART Service Center, and then the HART Service Center will send them back if they cannot make a bona fide determination?

A11. For more information on this process, please refer to the [Bona Fide Determination Process Flowchart](#) available in the USCIS Policy Manual.

Q12. Can we request biometrics appointments for U or T visas at the HART Service Center?

A12. Generally, petitioners do not need to request biometrics appointments for T or U visa filings because the receipting service center will automatically schedule any required biometrics appointments at intake, after entering the petitioner's data and issuing a receipt notice. Petitioners usually will receive a biometrics appointment within 30 days, but scheduling time frames may vary slightly based on the number of incoming receipts.

If you need to reschedule a biometrics appointment, see the [Preparing for Your Biometric Services Appointment](#) webpage under "Rescheduling Appointments" to find



instructions for the online self-service tool. This online tool is available to T visa applicants, U visa petitioners, and their qualifying family members. The HART Service Center does not have a physical location and cannot provide in-person services such as biometrics collection.

Q13. Are U visa bona fide determination approvals supposed to be issued in the order USCIS receives the forms? We have heard of approvals for petitions that were filed well after others, which have yet to be adjudicated. Also, we have heard of principal applicants receiving favorable bona fide determinations but derivatives not receiving anything. Will this be addressed?

A13. USCIS endeavors to provide important stabilizing benefits to U petitioners and their qualifying family members as efficiently as possible and continues to consider ways to increase efficiency.

Q14. How long is it taking for receipt notices to be issued after a U visa case with a fee waiver has been received by USCIS?

A14. As of May 15, 2024, USCIS was receipting all Forms I-918 filed on April 18, 2024, including those filed with a fee waiver request.

Q15. If HART adjudicates I-918 bona fide determinations, which service center adjudicates the related Form I-765 in the A-File? If a Form I-765 is already in the file when USCIS is deciding on the bona fide determination, will HART adjudicate that I-765 or does the I-765 adjudication occur after the bona fide determination gets transferred to another office?

A15. Generally, if a Form I-765 is filed concurrently with a Form I-918, the HART Service Center will adjudicate the Form I-765 along with the U bona fide determination. If a Form I-765 is filed after a bona fide determination is completed, the HART Service Center will adjudicate the Form I-765. However, the time required to process the Form I-765 will vary depending on receipt volume and available adjudicative resources at that time. Please note, if receipt volumes are high, it can take up to 3 weeks after the Form I-765 approval for USCIS to produce an EAD.

Q16. For Form I-918 adjudications, we have been seeing increased scrutiny of petitioners who have arrest histories (but not convictions) and undue weight being placed on those arrests, many of which were related to the domestic violence that petitioners experienced, and which serves as the underlying qualifying criminal activity.

a) What training are adjudicators given regarding the weight that should be given to arrests? Are adjudicators trained about the disproportionate impact of arrests on communities of color (i.e., over policing)?



b) Other than filing a Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion, what can advocates do to bring this training issue to the attention of USCIS?

A.16

- a) Officers are provided comprehensive training on the statutory and regulatory framework for the U nonimmigrant visa process, how to weigh discretionary factors in an adjudication, and victimization awareness training to enhance sensitivity and empathy toward victims. Officers are also trained to determine if there is a nexus between a victim's arrest history and the crime certified on the Form I-918, Supplement.
- b) The USCIS Public Engagement Division is always interested in hearing from you. Please email us at public.engagement@uscis.dhs.gov to provide feedback on any of our engagements, areas of concern or requests for additional information. Please do not email case-specific questions as this division is unable to provide specific answers or resolve case-specific issues.

Form I-730 Asylee Relative Petition

Q17. Does the HART Service Center process Form I-730 refugee petitions or only Forms I-730 filed by asylees?

A17. Jurisdiction for processing and adjudicating Form I-730 is currently divided among the Service Center Operations Directorate, Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate (RAIO), and Field Operations Directorate. Procedures differ depending on whether the beneficiary is outside of or in the United States and whether the petitioner was admitted as a refugee or granted asylum.

The HART Service Center processes following-to-join asylee Form I-730 petitions (FTJ-A) when the beneficiary is outside the United States. If a Form I-730 FTJ-A beneficiary is outside the United States in a location that has a USCIS international office, the HART Service Center will forward their petition to the USCIS international office for interview and adjudication via the Department of State National Visa Center (NVC). If a Form I-730 FTJ-A beneficiary is outside the United States in a location without a USCIS international office, the HART Service Center will forward the petition to the U.S. embassy or consulate for interview via the NVC. As [announced in January 2023](#), all Form I-730 petitions should be filed at the Texas Service Center (TSC). There are no plans for the HART Service Center to process refugee-based Forms I-730. Since 2017, RAIO has had jurisdiction over following-to-join refugee Form I-730 petitions (FTJ-R). Form I-730 FTJ-R petitions are received by the TSC and as of May 6, 2024, initial domestic processing of Form I-730 FTJ-R petitions is handled by International Operations. International Operations falls under the International and Refugee Affairs Division of RAIO.

Since 2018, all Form I-730 petitions with beneficiaries inside the United States are adjudicated by USCIS' FOD at USCIS field offices. Petitioners with beneficiaries inside



the United States file Form I-730 with the TSC. The TSC forwards FTJ-A petitions to the USCIS field office with jurisdiction over the beneficiary's location to complete processing and adjudication. The TSC forwards FTJ-R petitions with beneficiaries inside the United States to International Operations for initial domestic processing. After initial domestic processing, International Operations forwards the petitions to the domestic field office that has jurisdiction over the beneficiary's location, if appropriate.

Form I-360 VAWA

Q18. Why does the HART Service Center forward some VAWA self-petitions to the Vermont Service Center?

A18. Currently, the HART Service Center is a hybrid service center with virtual adjudication capabilities that coordinates with existing service centers for certain administrative support. Therefore, Form I-360 VAWA self-petitions are mailed to the Nebraska Service Center (NSC). The NSC receipts them and then ships them to the Vermont Service Center (VSC) for pre-adjudicative preparation. The VSC will then send them to the HART Service Center for adjudication.

Q19. Does the HART Service Center process all Form I-360?

A19. No, the HART Service Center does not process all Form I-360 classifications. The HART Service Center only adjudicates the VAWA-based [Form I-360](#).

General Process Questions

Q20. What training is given to officers to refer to the scanned forms for accuracy instead of relying on the data entered at the USCIS Lockbox? How are the supporting documents grouped when they are scanned, and what care is being taken when scanning to ensure that pages are not sticking to each other?

A20. Service centers have provided detailed Record of Proceeding (ROP) requirements for applicable form types to Lockbox, and packages are manually arranged according to that guidance before scanning. Generally, the ROP used by Lockbox mirrors the ROP used by the service centers.

The Lockbox service provider performs a quality check on a percentage of processed work to ensure that documents are appropriately processed, both before scanning and before shredding and shipment.

USCIS' Office of Intake and Document Production also manages a quality assurance program that conducts quality control review to ensure that images are clearly scanned, all data is visible, the document is oriented upright and face forward, and the entire document is captured in the scan.



There is no specific training given to officers to refer to scanned forms versus relying on Lockbox-entered data. However, USCIS form training materials and adjudication procedures instruct officers to review the required forms and systems necessary to make an adjudicative decision. Officers are trained to review scanned forms, submitted evidence, electronic systems searches, and if necessary, paper-based forms or physical and digital A-Files. Officers then ensure that adjudication systems are updated, if needed, to accurately reflect information.

Q21. For scanned (or unscanned) petitions, does USCIS prefer single-sided or double-sided filings from attorneys?

A21. Single-sided submissions are always preferable and recommended in USCIS' [Tips for Filing Forms by Mail](#), which says "All forms and supporting documents submitted must be single-sided, standard 8½ x 11 letter-size pages."

Q22. Will the HART Service Center provide filing tips for the form types they adjudicate, especially to guide applicants, considering that adjudications are virtual? We are used to filing paper application packets, but scanned packets might present different challenges for officers to adjudicate.

A22: Thank you for the suggestion. Although the HART Service Center is a virtual service center, many of the filings for its product lines are paper-based. For this reason, we recommend organizing filings according to [Tips For Filing Forms by Mail](#). Additionally, each form webpage has a section for "Checklist of Required Initial Evidence."

Q23. How do we get in touch with you regarding culturally sensitive trainings?

A23. The USCIS workforce, including adjudicators at the HART Service Center, regularly receives specialized training to ensure cohesive and consistent adjudication of these forms. Trainings for VAWA form types educate officers, including HART Service Center officers, on all eligibility and evidentiary requirements. In addition to form type training, officers receive 8 U.S.C. § 1367 protection training, victimization awareness training, and vicarious trauma training as required and appropriate for this sensitive workload.

We value input from stakeholders who have experience building trust with the communities we serve, and we appreciate the offer from experts in the advocacy community to discuss these trainings. We look forward to engaging further on this topic to ensure our trainings are as comprehensive and culturally sensitive as possible. If you have feedback or suggestions, please email public.engagement@uscis.dhs.gov.

Q24. Can you provide a hiring update?



A24. Hiring and training new staff is a top priority for the HART Service Center. As of the end of FY 2023, 327 employees onboarded at the HART Service Center, including officers, supervisors, and analysts. We met our hiring goals for FY 2023, achieving 79% staffing. We are on target to reach our next hiring benchmark goal of 95-98% staffing in FY 2024. At the end of HART's first 12 months of operation, it was 86% staffed. An additional 34 employees (7%) have been selected and are waiting to onboard.

Q25. Will the HART Service Center be designated as the service center on receipt notices?

A25. No, the HART Service Center will not have a designated filing unique receipt number identifier. Filings will continue to use the same designators that are currently being used dependent on where they are filed (YSC, SRC, LIN, EAC).

Q26. Are all pending Forms I-360 and I-918 at HART now? What about cases that were filed pre-HART (VAWA I-360s, that is)?

A26. HART adjudicates all pending Form I-360 VAWA petitions, including petitions that were filed pre-HART. Please note that while the Nebraska Service Center receipts and conducts the intake process for I-360 VAWA petitions, specially trained HART officers adjudicate them.

HART currently adjudicates only Form I-918 bona fide determinations. Generally, cases requiring waiting list adjudication and cases adjudicated each fiscal year under the statutory cap are adjudicated by the Vermont and Nebraska Service Centers.

Customer Service

Q27. How can we ask case-specific questions about forms being adjudicated by the HART Service Center?

A27. The [USCIS Contact Center](#) has information about how to get help with your individual case. The transition to the HART Service Center does not affect existing customer service channels. As noted above, benefit requestors, including those with VAWA, T or U based filings, may call the Contact Center. Attorneys and representatives representing a VAWA, T or U benefit requestor may utilize the email Hotlines. For additional questions about customer service for pending VAWA based I-360, Form I-914 or Form I-918, visit USCIS' [Contact Us](#) webpage under "Inquiries for VAWA, T, and U Filings." USCIS is also in the process of updating customer service options for Form I-730 petitioners and their attorneys or representatives. Until those changes are implemented, please follow the guidance provided at Question 16 for case inquiries. Follow the filing instructions in the "Where to File" section on each form's webpage. Any changes to filing locations will be posted on webpages for each form and announced to stakeholders via GovDelivery updates, web alerts, and updates to the USCIS website. To register for alerts and updates, visit USCIS' [Alerts](#) webpage.



Q28. What is best way to address recurring, possibly systemic errors or problems, for example when we see multiple examples of the same issue?

A28. You may email uscisfeedback@uscis.dhs.gov. Please note this email box accepts inquiries only for:

- Administrative, technical, systems, or operational issues that could indicate a trend or theme affecting case processing on a larger scale;
- Pending requests for an urgent appointment with the Contact Center, if you have not received a response within the specified time frame (24-72 hours);
- Pending request for appointment for proof of legal permanent resident status with the Contact Center if you are now experiencing an emergency.

If your inquiry is regarding an operational or processing trend, it will be shared with the appropriate USCIS office. If your inquiry is regarding an already pending request for an appointment at the Contact Center, you will receive a response as soon as we can provide one.

USCIS is committed to addressing your concerns, but we cannot respond to specific case inquiries that do not meet the requirements above through this mailbox. We may forward your inquiry, as appropriate, to relevant parties within the agency. Please refer to the [Contact Center](#) to get help with individual cases.

Q29. Will you be creating a HART Service Center website?

A29. There are no current plans for a HART Service Center-specific webpage. You can find information about all service centers at [USCIS Service Centers](#).

Q30. Will the HART Service Center have its own customer service component in the future that may help with Contact Center and congressional inquiries?

A30. The HART Service Center will continue to coordinate with existing service centers and existing channels for customer service. Stakeholders should continue to use existing channels.

Q31. Have processing times improved?

A31. The number of case completions has improved significantly for some of the form types.

Form	May 2023 Processing Time	May 2024 Processing Time	Completions FY 2023	Completions FY24 through January 2024
I-360, VAWA	33.9 months	39.6 months	12,058	8,625



I-601A	43.9 months	42.6 months	12,782	46,064
I-730, FTJ-A	31.8 months	8.7 months	19,162	7,022
I-918 BFD	60 months	57.3	53,556	87,880

Q.32 How will the final rule adjusting certain immigration and naturalization benefit request fees affect the forms processed at the HART Service Center?

A32. Some of the forms processed at the HART Service Center are fee exempted, but not all. More detailed information is available in the Frequently Asked Questions on the USCIS Fee Rule: uscis.gov/forms/filing-fees/frequently-asked-questions-on-the-uscis-fee-rule.

Q33. Who can we reach out to when we haven't received a receipt notice for a U visa case months after a case was mailed to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)?

A33. Attorneys and accredited representatives can contact USCIS about non-receipt at the Vermont (vsc.ncscfollowup@uscis.dhs.gov) or Nebraska (ncscfollowup.nsc@dhs.gov) Service Centers, depending on which center processed the application.

Unrepresented petitioners and applicants may reach out to the Contact Center or send an inquiry via the US. Postal Services by following the instructions found at uscis.gov/about-us/contact-us.

Q34. We have a systemic issue of not receiving responses from the direct email addresses USCIS mentioned for sending case inquiries to the Vermont and Nebraska Service Centers. What is being done to address that?

A34. Hotline response times for Form I-918 and Form I-914 related inquiries are approximately 90 days. Hotline response times for the Form I-360 are also approximately 90 days. If you do not receive a response from the hotline within that time frame, please allow an additional 14 days before submitting another inquiry. Include the phrase "SECOND REQUEST" in the subject line to alert the VSC that this is a follow up inquiry and that you did not receive a response to the first request. Please note, VSC and NSC do not respond to status inquiries when an application or petition is within normal processing times. For more information, please carefully read the automatic replies received in response to messages submitted to the hotlines.

If an urgent situation arises, you may request that USCIS expedite the adjudication of your application or petition. More detailed information can be found at uscis.gov/forms/filing-guidance/how-to-make-an-expedite-request. We recommend



including “**Expedite Request**” in the subject line of your email to the hotline accounts so the inquiry can be routed appropriately.

Q35. I have not been getting auto-responses to the hotlinefollowupi360.vsc@uscis.dhs.gov email address so I am concerned that the address isn’t even receiving my messages. If someone could look into whether that email is still sending auto-replies to confirm receipt, that would be helpful.

A35. We have confirmed the auto-reply is up to date and functioning correctly.

Q36. There appears to be a discrepancy between posted processing times for the HART Service Center and actual processing times. This also results in an inability to place service requests. How does USCIS plan to address this discrepancy and display accurate information? For example, Forms I-730 are currently listed at 20 months but cases pending over 4 years still do not have the ability to submit service requests.

A36. For processing times, there will be outliers. For example, case-specific factors may make an individual adjudication more complex, requiring additional adjudicative time. The processing time displayed is the amount of time it took us to complete 80% of adjudicated cases over the last six months. Processing time is defined as the number of days or months that have elapsed between the date that USCIS received the application, petition or request and the date USCIS completed it (that is, approved or denied it). In addition, we’ve noted a significant increase in cases of Afghans filing Forms I-730 after being granted asylum. These cases are expedited before others, affecting overall processing times.

Q37. Should we email both service centers for change of address for pending Forms I-918 (and associated Forms I-192 and Forms I-765) that are split between the Vermont Service Center and the Nebraska Service Center?

A39. Those representing petitioners with forms pending at both the VSC and NSC do not need to email both centers. If you have filings pending at both service centers, attorneys and accredited representatives should use the email hotline for the center where the U petition was filed. This service center will change the address for any filings pending at that location and then transfer the change of address request to the other service center. Find the hotline email addresses at the [Victims of Human Trafficking and Other Crimes](#) webpage, under “Case Inquiries.”

In addition, USCIS recently expanded access to the USCIS Contact Center for benefit seekers protected under 8 U.S.C. 1367, including U petitioners and qualifying family members.



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Public Engagement Division

While the USCIS Contact Center acclimate to this workload, attorneys and representatives must still use the dedicated VAWA/T/U email hotlines for all customer service related to 1367-protected clients, including change of address requests. To support more efficient processing, USCIS requests that attorneys and representatives try to avoid submitting the same request that your client is submitting through the USCIS Contact Center.