
U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES

Description

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is responsible for administering the Nation's lawful immigration system.

In any given year, USCIS receives millions of immigration benefit applications and petitions. In FY 2019 alone, USCIS received more than eight million benefit requests. Through approximately 230 domestic and foreign offices, USCIS processes immigrant and nonimmigrant petitions; lawful permanent residence and citizenship; asylum, refugee, and intercountry adoption applications; and employment authorization documents. It also manages E-Verify and conducts administrative fraud investigations, working side-by-side with law enforcement and intelligence partners to help ensure the security of the American people and the integrity of the immigration system.

Responsibilities

USCIS adjudicates citizenship and immigration benefit requests in a timely, accurate, consistent, and professional manner while also safeguarding national security and public safety and ensuring that U.S. workers are not adversely impacted. USCIS processes more than 50 different types of citizenship and immigration benefit applications. Every case is unique and requires specialized attention from experienced USCIS immigration officers.

As an integral part of the vetting process, USCIS employees determine whether individuals or organizations requesting immigration benefits pose a threat to national security, public safety, or the integrity of the Nation's immigration system by:

- Detecting, deterring, and administratively investigating immigration benefit fraud;
- Implementing effective and efficient security screening policies, programs, and procedures;
- Identifying and eliminating systemic vulnerabilities in the immigration system; and
- Promoting information sharing and collaboration with law enforcement and other governmental agencies.

At a Glance

Senior Leadership:
Kenneth T. Cuccinelli, Senior Official
Performing the Duties of the Director

Established: 2003

Major Divisions: Field Operations;
Service Center Operations; Refugee,
Asylum, and International Operations;
Fraud Detection and National Security;
Immigration Records and Identity
Services; External Affairs; and
Management.

New Budget Authority: \$4,079,093,000

Gross Discretionary: \$118,676,000

Mandatory Fees: \$3,960,417,000

Employees (FTE): 20,003



Naturalization Ceremony, Gunston Hall, VA
September 14, 2019.

Service to the Public

USCIS administers the Nation’s lawful immigration system, safeguarding its integrity and promise by efficiently and fairly adjudicating requests for immigration benefits while protecting Americans, securing the homeland, and honoring our values.

FY 2019 Accomplishments

- **Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP):** USCIS worked with other DHS Components to answer President Trump’s call to address the crisis at the southern border. MPP was established by the Trump Administration in January 2019 to restore a safe and orderly immigration process along the U.S. southern border and decrease the number of aliens attempting to deceive the immigration system. Under MPP and Section 235(b)(2)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, aliens attempting to enter the U.S. from Mexico without proper documentation may be returned to Mexico to wait outside of the U.S. during their immigration proceedings.
- **Third Country Transit Asylum Rule:** In July 2019, the DHS and the Department of Justice (DOJ) published a joint interim final rule to enhance the integrity of the asylum process. Specifically, with limited exceptions, the rule bars aliens, who entered along the southern border, from receiving asylum in the U.S. if they did not apply for asylum in at least one other country they transited through. This rule aims to mitigate the crisis at the border by better identifying and serving legitimate asylum seekers.
- **Public Charge:** In August 2019, USCIS published the Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds Final Rule, clarifying the self-sufficiency requirement envisioned by Congress for over 100 years. The rule prescribes how DHS will determine whether an alien applying for admission or adjustment of status is inadmissible to the United States under section 212(a)(4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), because he or she is likely at any time to become a public charge. The final rule includes definitions of certain terms critical to the public charge determination, such as “public charge” and “public benefit,” which are not defined in the statute, and explains the factors DHS will consider in the totality of the circumstances when making a public charge inadmissibility determination. The final rule also addresses USCIS’ authority to issue public charge bonds under section 213 of the Act in the context of applications for adjustment of status. The rule further included a requirement that aliens seeking an extension of stay or change of status demonstrate that they have not, since obtaining the nonimmigrant status they seek to extend or change, received public benefits over the designated threshold, as defined in the rule. This rule ensures that those seeking to come to or stay in the United States are self-sufficient. At the present time, the rule is enjoined.
- **H-1B Electronic Registration:** USCIS published final rules making simple changes to the H-1B cap selection process to make it more efficient. These rules require petitioners seeking to file H-1B cap-subject petitions to first electronically register with USCIS during a designated registration period and pay a \$10 registration fee. The electronic registration process will



A young sailor shakes hands with an officer in front of Deputy Director Mark Koumans after becoming a U.S. citizen onboard the U.S.S. Constitution in Boston, MA on July 2, 2019.

dramatically streamline processing by reducing paperwork and data exchange, and will provide an overall cost savings to petitioning employers. USCIS also reordered the cap selection process to increase the chance of selecting petitioners with a master's degree or higher from a U.S. institution of higher education. As a result of the change, the number of petitions for U.S. advanced degree holders selected toward the FY 2020 numerical allocations increased by more than 11% over the year before¹.

- USCIS naturalized 833,000 new citizens in FY 2019 – an 11-year high in new oaths of citizenship.
- Interviewed over 44,300 refugee applicants in 61 countries to support the admission of 30,000 refugees to the United States; completed² 78,580 affirmative asylum applications; and processed 103,235 credible fear cases.
- Awarded nearly \$10.0M in Citizenship and Assimilation grants under two competitive funding opportunities to 41 organizations, located in 24 states, to help approximately 27,500 lawful permanent residents prepare for naturalization and to promote assimilation through increased knowledge of English, U.S. history, and civics.
- Added approximately 93,000 employers to the E-Verify program, growing to more than 909,000 employer participants at the end of FY 2019. The number of employee work authorization verification requests processed grew to more than 40 million in FY 2019. E-Verify reduced manual case processing by 49,000 cases from approximately 388,000 to 339,000 cases per year, and developed a connection to the Arrival and Departure Information System (ADIS) 2.1. E-Verify now has access to the expanded Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record information that was missing in the previous connection which improves the matching process and helps reduce the number of manual cases.
- Processed approximately 18 million immigration status queries from public benefit-granting agencies (e.g., Federal agencies, State Departments of Motor Vehicles, and State and Local social services agencies) through the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program. SAVE assists these agencies in ensuring that only qualified applicants receive public benefits and licenses.
- Published Fee Rule change for public comment in the Federal Register on 14 November, 2019, proposing adjustment to certain immigration and naturalization benefit request fees.
- Under the Administrative Site Visit and Verification Program (ASVVP), USCIS completed 4,031 compliance reviews in FY 2019, including worksite visits, relating to petitioners filing under four visa classifications (H-1B, L-1A, Religious Workers, and EB-5) to help ensure that employers comply with immigration laws and regulations. Of the 4,031 ASVVP compliance reviews, nearly 591 reviews were found noncompliant.
- Under the Targeted Site Visit and Verification Program (TSVVP), which is designed to detect both fraud and compliance issues and is data-driven in its approach to petition

¹ USCIS began accepting H-1B petitions that are subject to the FY 2020 cap on April 1, 2019. On April 10, USCIS used a computer-generated random selection process to select enough H-1B petitions to meet the congressionally-mandated regular cap and the U.S. advanced degree exemption for FY 2020. For additional information, please visit: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-workers/h-1b-specialty-occupations-and-fashion-models/h-1b-fiscal-year-fy-2020-cap-season>

² A completion includes the full range of final actions USCIS can take on an application. Not all applications received are adjudicated (given a decision on the merits of the claim) and some are administratively closed.

selection, USCIS conducted 8,512 targeted worksite visits in FY 2019. TSVVP began in FY 2017 with H-1B petitions, but added L-1A, L-1B, E-2, H-2B, and CW-1 petitions as pilots during FY 2018 and FY 2019. Of the 8,512 completed visits, 324 had a finding of fraud and an additional 1,049 were found to be noncompliant. By conducting further reviews of noncompliant cases found through the ASVVP and TSVVP, USCIS is helping to deter abuse of employment-based immigration programs, and protecting the wages and working opportunities for U.S. citizens by potentially revoking immigration benefits for fraudulent petitions as well as referring these cases to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and/or other law enforcement agencies for criminal investigations,

- The primary background screening system for USCIS (known as ATLAS³) processed more than 16.5 million screenings through law enforcement and other federal databases generating approximately 124,000 automated potential fraud, public safety, and national security detections requiring further analysis and manual review by USCIS officers.

BUDGET REQUEST

Dollars in Thousands

	2019 Enacted		2020 Enacted		2021 President's Budget		2020-2021 Total Changes	
	FTE	\$000	FTE	\$000	FTE	\$000	FTE	\$000
Operations and Support	398	\$109,688	398	\$122,395	398	\$118,676	-	(\$3,719)
Procurement, Construction, and Improvements	-	\$22,838	-	-	-	-	-	-
Federal Assistance	-	\$10,000	-	\$10,000	-	-	-	(\$10,000)
Net Discretionary	398	\$142,526	398	\$132,395	398	\$118,676	-	(\$13,719)
Gross Discretionary	398	\$142,526	398	\$132,395	398	\$118,676	-	(\$13,719)
Immigration Examinations Fee Account	17,924	\$3,895,612	18,806	\$3,885,000	19,429	\$3,888,300	623	\$3,300
H-1B Nonimmigrant Petitioner Account	-	\$19,590	-	\$19,450	-	\$19,450	-	-
Fraud Prevention and Detection Account	176	\$52,139	176	\$52,000	176	\$52,667	-	\$667
Total Mandatory/Fees	18,100	\$3,967,341	18,982	\$3,956,450	19,605	\$3,960,417	623	\$3,967
Enacted/Fee Receipts¹	18,498	\$4,109,867	19,380	\$4,088,845	20,003	\$4,079,093	623	(\$9,752)
Less: CHIMP	-	\$4,000	-	\$4,000	-	\$4,000	-	-
Less: Rescissions to Prior Year Balances	-	\$321	-	\$1,815	-	-	-	(\$1,815)
Total	18,498	\$4,105,546	19,380	\$4,083,030	20,003	\$4,075,093	623	(\$7,937)

¹ Mandatory Accounts/Fees reflect actual (FY 2019), estimated (FY 2020), and projected (FY 2021) fee receipts consistent with the FY 2021 President's Budget Appendix.

³ ATLAS is not an acronym.

FY 2021 Highlights

E-Verify.....\$118.7M, 398 FTE

The FY 2021 President’s Budget includes a decrease of \$3.7M and no change in FTE for E-Verify from FY 2020. The reduction is possible due to various efficiencies achieved by the program, including the transition to a cloud-based architecture. In FY 2021, USCIS will concentrate on strengthening system architecture, improving system reliability and resiliency, and delivering verification services with the highest degree of speed and accuracy possible, while reducing any unnecessary employer and/or employee burden. This will include automating manual processes, refining business processes and strengthening data integrity. USCIS will work to leverage cloud-based data warehousing and analytic services that allow users to run customized reports, dashboards, and data analytics tools to monitor performance and support decision making. In order to improve users’ services, USCIS will refine the systems that support Verification Division call center operations, monitoring and compliance units, and status verification operations. Lastly, USCIS will look to expand access to new data sources and will continue to improve advanced data matching and machine learning techniques that further automate E-Verify case processing. This will enhance the ability of the E-Verify system to quickly and accurately determine an individual’s immigration status and employment eligibility.