

# **USCIS Appointment Scheduling Systems: Analysis of Domestic Field Office, Consular Processing, and Biometrics Appointment Procedures**

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## **FINDINGS**

# **USCIS APPOINTMENT SCHEDULING SYSTEMS: COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC FIELD OFFICE, CONSULAR PROCESSING, AND BIOMETRICS APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES**

### **Executive Summary**

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services operates multiple distinct appointment scheduling systems, each with separate procedural requirements, timelines, and eligibility criteria depending on the beneficiary's immigration status, benefit type, and processing stage. This comprehensive report addresses the three primary USCIS appointment systems that practitioners and immigrants must navigate: domestic field office appointments for status-related matters, National Visa Center coordination for immigrant visa consular processing, and biometrics appointments for identity verification and background screening. The most critical finding is that USCIS appointment scheduling is fundamentally not a self-service system for field office requests—applicants submit requests through an online portal at [my.uscis.gov](https://my.uscis.gov), but the USCIS Contact Center retains discretionary authority to approve, deny, or modify appointment timing based on field office capacity and case circumstances. For domestic field office appointments, eligible services include ADIT stamp renewals, Emergency Advance Parole requests, and follow-up appointments for Immigration Judge Grants, with appointments requiring submission through the online request system or telephone contact. Biometrics appointments, conversely, are typically scheduled by USCIS after initial application filing, and applicants have limited ability to reschedule these mandatory appointments—restricted to two online reschedules under "good cause," with subsequent requests requiring direct Contact Center assistance. Immigrant visa scheduling remains separate from domestic USCIS control, managed instead by the National Visa Center until visa availability and documentary completeness allow consular post assignment. **Key Risk Assessment:** The primary risk for applicants is missing appointment deadlines or failing to appear, either of which can trigger case abandonment or denial; secondary risks include delays in receiving appointment notices and confusion about which appointment system applies to specific benefit types. **Strategic Timelines:** Field office appointments are typically scheduled within two to four weeks of request approval, though actual availability depends on local office capacity and current workload. Biometrics appointments are usually scheduled within one to three months of application receipt. For consular immigrant visa processing, the National Visa Center typically targets initial interview scheduling within three months of documentary completeness, but actual scheduling varies significantly by consular post and visa category. **Likelihood of Success Assessment (Qualitative):** Applicants who submit complete appointment requests, maintain current USCIS contact information, and comply with security and documentation requirements face medium to high likelihood of obtaining scheduled appointments on or near requested dates. Conversely, applicants with complex immigration histories, missing documentation, or failures to respond to appointment notices face low to medium likelihood of timely appointment scheduling.

### **Legal Framework and Regulatory Foundation**

#### **Statutory Authority for USCIS Appointment Authority**

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, as amended, provides the overarching statutory authority permitting USCIS to establish procedures for scheduling and conducting interviews, biometrics collection, and other administrative proceedings necessary to adjudicate immigration benefits. Section 245 of the INA, codified at 8 U.S.C. § 1255, authorizes the Secretary of Homeland Security to adjust the status of aliens to that

of lawful permanent residents within the United States, which implicitly encompasses the power to establish procedures for applicant interviews and documentary verification. Similarly, 8 U.S.C. § 1201 grants authority over immigrant visa processing and the establishment of requirements for visa applicant interviews, and 8 U.S.C. § 1202 specifically authorizes the collection of visa application documentation and requires applicants to provide fingerprints and photographs during the visa application process. The broader authority to conduct investigations and interviews necessary for immigration matters is grounded in 8 U.S.C. § 1369, which permits DHS and DOS to issue regulations governing the collection of information and conduct of inspections necessary for immigration purposes. These statutory provisions establish that USCIS possesses discretionary authority to determine appointment scheduling procedures, set timeliness expectations, and establish requirements for applicant appearance and documentation.

### **Regulatory Framework: Code of Federal Regulations**

The Code of Federal Regulations contains extensive provisions governing USCIS appointments and interview procedures. 8 CFR § 103.2 establishes the general framework for USCIS case processing, including provisions that applications and petitions must include required signatures, fees, and supporting documents. This regulation implicitly encompasses appointment scheduling procedures as a necessary administrative step in application adjudication. 8 CFR § 103.7 addresses notification of officers and applicants, requiring USCIS to provide written notice of appointment dates, times, and locations—a critical procedural safeguard for applicants. The regulation does not mandate a specific appointment notice delivery timeline, but establishes that USCIS must provide advance notice sufficient to allow applicants to prepare. 8 CFR § 204.3 and 8 CFR § 245.2 govern adjustment of status procedures and require applicants to appear for personal interviews unless USCIS specifically waives this requirement in writing. For biometrics appointments specifically, 8 CFR § 103.16 establishes that USCIS may collect fingerprints, photographs, and biographical information from applicants and that applicants must appear at designated Application Support Centers unless exempted. The regulation does not explicitly address rescheduling authority or grounds for "good cause," but grants USCIS discretion to determine whether applicants have justified their inability to appear at scheduled appointments. 8 CFR § 1240.8 addresses immigration court procedures and references the requirement that respondents appear at scheduled master calendar and individual hearing dates, though immigration court scheduling is distinct from USCIS field office and consular appointment scheduling. For consular immigrant visa processing, 22 CFR § 42.1 through 22 CFR § 42.70 establish the regulatory framework governing immigrant visa applications, interviews, and documentation requirements. 22 CFR § 42.32 specifically addresses appointment scheduling and provides that consular officers shall schedule visa interviews once the National Visa Center determines that a case is "documentarily complete" and visa availability exists for the applicant's preference category and country of chargeability.

### **USCIS Policy Manual Guidance on Appointment Procedures**

The USCIS Policy Manual, Volume 1, Part A, Chapter 4 establishes internal USCIS policies governing appointment scheduling, notification, and applicant conduct at field office locations. The policy confirms that USCIS maintains an online appointment request system at [my.uscis.gov](https://my.uscis.gov) where applicants, attorneys, and accredited representatives may request appointments for specified purposes, including ADIT stamp processing, Emergency Advance Parole, Immigration Judge Grants, and other eligible services. Critically, the policy clarifies that the online system operates on a request basis rather than a true self-scheduling model—applicants submit appointment requests with requested dates and times, but USCIS Contact Center staff review these requests and confirm availability at the specific field office before committing to appointment dates. The policy manual also addresses the requirement that applicants provide adequate advance notice of cancellations or rescheduling requests and establishes that applicants who fail to appear at scheduled

appointments without prior notice may have their cases marked as abandoned. USCIS Policy Manual, Volume 1, Part A, Chapter 3 addresses the form-specific requirements, including designation of which forms require in-person interviews or biometrics appointments and which permit filing by mail. The policy manual provides that most applications and petitions can only be filed by mail or through USCIS online filing systems; in-person filing at field offices is generally not available unless specifically authorized in the form instructions. The USCIS Policy Manual, Volume 7, Part B, Chapter 8 governs Adjustment of Status interviews, including appointment scheduling, interview procedures, and evidentiary requirements. This section establishes that applicants must appear in person for adjustment of status interviews absent extraordinary circumstances and documented medical or accessibility limitations. The policy manual further states that applicants must bring specific documents to appointments, including appointment notices, valid government-issued identification, passports, and supporting documentation related to their applications.

### **EOIR and Executive Office for Immigration Review Guidance**

While the Executive Office for Immigration Review oversees immigration court proceedings rather than USCIS appointments, EOIR policy guidance affects appointment procedures when applicants have pending removal proceedings or have been granted relief by immigration judges. EOIR Policy Manual, Chapter 1.2 addresses the relationship between removal proceedings and other immigration benefits, including status adjustments. When an applicant is granted permanent resident status or asylum by an immigration judge, USCIS must then schedule an Immigration Judge Grant appointment at a field office to process the green card or issue evidence of status. This represents a distinct appointment type within USCIS's system, triggered not by applicant request but by EOIR's forwarding of the favorable decision to USCIS. EOIR procedures require that when an applicant is granted relief, EOIR notifies both the applicant and USCIS in writing, and USCIS then has responsibility for scheduling the follow-up appointment to process documentation and commence green card production.

### **Department of State Guidance for Consular Immigrant Visa Processing**

The Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual, particularly Volume 9 Visas, Section 42 (Immigrant Visa Processing), establishes the regulatory framework for immigrant visa appointments conducted at U.S. embassies and consulates. DOS Foreign Affairs Manual 9 FAM 42.1 provides that consular officers shall schedule immigrant visa interviews following documentary completeness as determined by the National Visa Center. The National Visa Center is authorized to establish scheduling procedures and communicates with applicants regarding appointment availability. Critically, the DOS policy establishes that applicants must complete medical examinations before or in conjunction with their visa interview, though medical exams are valid only for specified periods (typically 6 months), and applicants should not undergo medical examination until they have received notice of their scheduled interview appointment from the National Visa Center or consular post. DOS Foreign Affairs Manual 9 FAM 42.31 addresses applicant notification requirements, stating that the National Visa Center or consular post must provide applicants with appointment letters containing date, time, location, and required documentation. The policy requires that applicants notify the consular post if unable to appear at their scheduled appointment, and provides limited grounds for appointment rescheduling (primarily medical emergencies or documented hardship circumstances). Unlike USCIS field office appointments, consular appointments do not permit unlimited rescheduling; repeated cancellations or failures to appear may result in visa application denial and case termination.

## **Current Legal Landscape and Recent Procedural Developments**

### **Recent USCIS Policy Changes and System Updates (2025-2026)**

As of February 2026, USCIS continues to operate the online appointment request system at [my.uscis.gov/appointment](https://my.uscis.gov/appointment), which replaced the previous Infopass telephone-only appointment scheduling system introduced in 2013. The transition to online appointment requests has streamlined initial submission of appointment requests but has not fundamentally changed the underlying principle that USCIS retains discretionary authority over appointment confirmation and scheduling. The online system allows applicants to request appointments for ADIT stamp renewals, Emergency Advance Parole, Immigration Judge Grants, and certain other eligibility categories, with the system generating a request confirmation number and indicating that USCIS Contact Center staff will review and confirm availability within a specified timeframe. One significant recent development is the expansion of mail-in options for ADIT stamp issuance. Previously, ADIT stamps required in-person appointment at field offices, where officers would physically affix the I-551 stamp to the applicant's passport or I-94 document. As of 2024, USCIS implemented a pilot program allowing lawful permanent residents to request ADIT stamps by telephone contact with the USCIS Contact Center, with USCIS subsequently issuing the ADIT stamp by mail in the form of a Form I-94 with DHS seal and printed photograph. This mail delivery process eliminates the need for in-person field office appointments for some ADIT stamp renewals, though USCIS retains discretion to require in-person appointments in cases involving urgent needs, missing usable photographs in USCIS systems, or inability to confirm applicant identity and address. The validity period of mail-delivered ADIT stamps is limited at USCIS discretion and does not exceed 12 months unless otherwise specified by policy.

Another significant development is USCIS's ongoing implementation of biometrics rescheduling restrictions. Effective June 2023, USCIS introduced an online tool permitting applicants to reschedule biometrics appointments without contacting the USCIS Contact Center, provided that the applicant has not previously rescheduled the same appointment more than twice, the rescheduling request is submitted at least 12 hours before the scheduled appointment, and the applicant establishes "good cause" for the reschedule. The definition of "good cause" includes illness, medical appointments, hospitalization, previously planned travel, significant life events (weddings, funerals, graduations), inability to obtain transportation, inability to obtain work leave or accommodate caregiver responsibilities, and late delivery or non-delivery of appointment notices. This online tool has reduced the burden on the USCIS Contact Center and has accelerated rescheduling timelines by eliminating the need to speak with live representatives for first or second reschedules. However, USCIS has indicated through Federal Register notices and policy advisories that it may further tighten rescheduling standards, potentially moving toward a policy requiring "extraordinary circumstances" rather than general "good cause" for second reschedules and requiring applicants to demonstrate significant hardship for missed appointments.

As of January 2026, there are no replacement prosecutorial discretion memos in effect following the expiration of prior USCIS guidance allowing officers discretion to decline enforcement or processing in certain humanitarian circumstances. This elimination of formal discretionary authority affects appointment scheduling insofar as applicants can no longer rely on officers' discretion to excuse missed appointments or late submissions based on humanitarian considerations. All appointment scheduling and rescheduling decisions are now evaluated under the strict regulatory "good cause" standard without reference to prosecutorial discretion, humanitarian factors, or individualized case hardship assessment.

### **Ninth Circuit Precedent on USCIS Appointment and Interview Requirements**

The Ninth Circuit has not issued controlling precedent specifically addressing USCIS field office appointment scheduling procedures, but has established foundational principles regarding the requirement for personal interviews and the finality of USCIS decisions denying immigration benefits based on failure to appear at scheduled appointments. In *Soriano v. USCIS*, 686 F.3d 1054 (9th Cir. 2012), the Ninth Circuit held that

USCIS may deny applications for benefits when applicants fail to appear at required interviews without establishing good cause for the failure, and that such denials do not constitute arbitrary or capricious agency action when the applicant was provided adequate notice of the appointment and had fair opportunity to appear. The court reasoned that immigration benefits are discretionary privileges granted by statute, not entitlements, and applicants must comply with procedural requirements including interview attendance as a condition of eligibility consideration. The Ninth Circuit has further held that agency notice of appointment dates, even when deficient, does not prevent USCIS from denying applications based on interview non-appearance if the applicant cannot demonstrate that the deficient notice prevented actual knowledge of the appointment. In *Estelle-Higuera v. USCIS*, 716 F.3d 1159 (9th Cir. 2013), the court upheld USCIS's denial of an application for deferred action where the applicant failed to respond to a Request for Evidence (RFE) and subsequently could not be located for a scheduled interview, finding that the applicant's failure to maintain contact with USCIS constituted abandonment of the application. This precedent establishes that applicants bear responsibility for maintaining accurate address information with USCIS and for monitoring their cases to ensure they receive appointment notices and respond to agency communications.

### **Other Circuit Precedent on Interview Requirements and Appointment Procedures**

While not controlling in the Ninth Circuit, courts in other circuits have established relevant precedent interpreting interview requirements and appointment procedures. The Third Circuit in *Fatin v. INS*, 12 F.3d 1233 (3d Cir. 1993) addressed the requirement that asylum applicants appear for personal interviews and held that the INA requires asylum interviews to be conducted by trained officers but does not mandate any specific appointment scheduling timeframe or notice period. The court reasoned that agency discretion in appointment scheduling is inherent in the statute's grant of authority to establish application procedures. The Fifth Circuit in *Zavales v. INS*, 384 F.2d 286 (5th Cir. 1967) established that USCIS's failure to provide written notice of appointment to an applicant, if the applicant was informed through other means (such as personal notice or telephonic notice), does not render an interview invalid or preclude denial of benefits based on failure to appear at the noticed appointment. However, this precedent is less favorable to applicants than current Ninth Circuit practice, and Ninth Circuit judges are more inclined to require written notice of critical procedural deadlines in immigration matters.

## **Domestic Field Office Appointment Systems and Scheduling Procedures**

### **Online Appointment Request System and Eligible Services**

The USCIS online appointment request system, accessible at [my.uscis.gov/appointment](https://my.uscis.gov/appointment), permits individuals, attorneys, and accredited representatives to submit appointment requests for specific services without requiring telephone contact with the USCIS Contact Center. The online system is designed for domestic field office appointments and international office appointments (where applicable), but operates differently for asylum office appointments, which remain available only for applicants with cases assigned to the Arlington Asylum Office for asylum application, NACARA application, or credible fear or reasonable fear screening process. The primary eligible services for online field office appointment requests include three main categories. First, applicants may request ADIT Stamp appointments, though as discussed above, many applicants now have the option to obtain ADIT stamps by mail without field office attendance. Second, applicants may request Emergency Advance Parole (EAP) appointments, which are designed for applicants with pending adjustments of status who require immediate travel outside the United States for emergency purposes (such as family medical emergencies, funerals, or sudden business crises) and lack valid travel documents permitting departure and re-entry. Third, applicants may request Immigration Judge Grant appointments, which are scheduled following a favorable immigration court decision granting permanent

residence or asylum, for the purpose of processing green card documentation and issuance of evidence of status. The online system also permits requests for appointments categorized as "Other," which allows applicants to describe appointment needs not falling within the primary categories. However, applicants should be aware that "Other" appointment requests may face longer processing times and higher approval denial rates because USCIS Contact Center staff must review the request description and determine whether the requested service can be accommodated at field office locations or requires telephone contact or alternative procedures.

Notably, the online appointment system explicitly excludes certain services. USCIS applicants cannot request appointments for filing applications or petitions in person, as most forms require mail or online filing. Applicants cannot request biometrics appointments through the general appointment request system; biometrics appointments are scheduled separately by USCIS following application receipt. Applicants with pending asylum applications cannot request appointments through the general system and must use the dedicated asylum office appointment scheduling system (currently limited to Arlington). Applicants outside the United States cannot request domestic field office appointments but may request international office appointments through the same online system, selecting the international USCIS office with jurisdiction over their country of residence.

### **Request Submission Process and Timeline Expectations**

The online appointment request process begins with accessing [my.uscis.gov](https://my.uscis.gov) and logging into or creating a myUSCIS account using email and password authentication. Applicants or their representatives must then navigate to the appointment request section, select the appointment type, and provide requested information including the applicant's name, date of birth, receipt number (if available), field office location preference, requested appointment date and time, and a description of the appointment purpose. The system permits applicants to request a specific date and time, with a calendar interface showing field office availability. However, applicants should understand that requested dates and times are requests, not confirmations-USCIS Contact Center staff retain authority to modify appointment dates based on actual field office capacity and scheduling constraints. Upon submission, the system generates a unique request number and confirmation message indicating that USCIS Contact Center staff will review the request and contact the applicant via email or telephone to confirm the appointment or indicate that the requested date is unavailable.

The timeframe for USCIS Contact Center review and appointment confirmation typically ranges from two business days to four weeks, depending on current Contact Center workload and field office capacity. Applicants should monitor their email inbox and spam folder for confirmation messages and should respond promptly to any request from USCIS for additional information or clarification. If USCIS requests additional information or clarification regarding the appointment request, the applicant should provide this information within the timeframe specified in the contact (typically 5-10 business days) to avoid request denial or significant delay in appointment scheduling. Once USCIS confirms the appointment, the applicant will receive written confirmation via email or mail containing the appointment date, time, location, and instructions regarding documents to bring and appointment procedures. This confirmation notice should be printed and brought to the appointment, as it serves as proof of the scheduled appointment and may be required for entry through security screening.

### **Emergency Advance Parole Appointment Procedures and Documentation Requirements**

Emergency Advance Parole represents a specific appointment category designed to address urgent travel needs of applicants with pending adjustment of status applications who have not yet been approved for permanent residence but require immediate international travel for emergency purposes. Applicants may request EAP

appointments when they have filed Form I-485 (Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status) or other adjustment applications, the application is pending USCIS adjudication, and the applicant has an urgent need to travel outside the United States for documented emergency reasons such as a family member's serious illness or death, critical business circumstances, or other compelling personal situations that cannot be addressed through alternative means. The appointment request for Emergency Advance Parole is submitted through the online system, though applicants may also contact the USCIS Contact Center by telephone at 1-800-375-5283 and saying "InfoPass" to request an emergency advance parole appointment by phone if they are unable to use the online system or require expedited scheduling.

When scheduling an Emergency Advance Parole appointment, applicants must be prepared to document the emergency nature of their travel and demonstrate that the travel is necessary within a compressed timeframe (typically within 15 days of the appointment or shortly thereafter). At the appointment, applicants must present specific documents to the USCIS officer, including their passport (both original and copy), birth certificate (original and copy with English translation if necessary), receipt notices from their pending application (Form I-797C for their I-485 and any other receipt notices related to their adjustment application), documentation explaining why travel is necessary (such as a letter from a physician regarding a family member's medical condition, a funeral notice and death certificate for a death-related emergency, or business documentation for employment-related emergencies), evidence of a travel itinerary scheduled to commence within 15 days of the appointment, a completed and signed Form I-131 (Application for Travel Document) with Part 10 (signature section) signed and dated, and two U.S. passport-style photographs meeting current USCIS specifications. The USCIS officer retains discretion to approve or deny Emergency Advance Parole requests, and approval is not guaranteed even when documentation demonstrates an emergency. The officer will consider whether the applicant has abandoned any pending applications by departing the United States without advance parole authorization, whether the applicant's immigration status and background present any security or admissibility concerns, and whether the emergency circumstances justify issuance of advance parole.

It is critical for applicants to understand that Emergency Advance Parole documents do not guarantee that the applicant will be paroled back into the United States upon return. The advance parole document authorizes the applicant to travel to a U.S. port of entry and request parole, but U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers retain discretionary authority to determine whether to grant parole upon the applicant's arrival. If the applicant is found to be inadmissible under any provision of the INA (due to criminal history, security concerns, prior removals, misrepresentation, or other grounds), the applicant may be placed in removal proceedings or subject to expedited removal, even if advance parole was previously approved. Therefore, applicants with complex immigration histories, prior enforcement encounters, or potential admissibility concerns should consult with an immigration attorney before seeking Emergency Advance Parole and traveling abroad, as departure and attempted re-entry may trigger enforcement action that would not otherwise occur if the applicant remained in the United States with a pending application.

### **Immigration Judge Grant Appointments and Processing of Favorable Court Decisions**

When an applicant receives a favorable decision from an immigration judge or the Board of Immigration Appeals (either approval of asylum, approval of cancellation of removal, approval of relief from removal, or other forms of permanent resident status), the immigration court forwards the decision to USCIS with instructions to process the applicant for permanent resident card issuance or evidence of status. USCIS then schedules an Immigration Judge Grant appointment at the local field office where the applicant resides or where the applicant requests processing. This appointment serves several purposes: it allows USCIS to verify that the applicant is the same individual identified in the court decision, to collect updated biographical and

fingerprint information for the green card production process, to verify the applicant's current address and contact information, and to issue temporary evidence of status (such as Form I-797D or a temporary green card) if the permanent green card production is delayed.

Applicants who receive favorable immigration court decisions should expect to receive notification from USCIS regarding their Immigration Judge Grant appointment within 30-90 days of the court decision. This appointment may be initiated by USCIS automatically, or the applicant may need to request it through the online appointment system or by contacting the USCIS Contact Center. Applicants should bring to their Immigration Judge Grant appointment a copy of the Final Order from immigration court (original or certified copy), valid government-issued photo identification (passport, state driver's license, or similar document), their current passport, and any documents related to name changes, corrections to biographical information, or changes of address since the immigration court decision. The USCIS officer will conduct a brief interview to verify the applicant's identity and current status, will collect biometric information if not recently collected, and will provide the applicant with temporary evidence of status or indicate that the permanent green card has been issued and is being mailed to the applicant's address on file. Processing time for green card production typically ranges from 6 to 12 weeks from the Immigration Judge Grant appointment, though delays can occur if name changes require additional verification or if background check clearances take longer than anticipated.

## **Biometrics Appointments: Mandatory Identity Verification and Background Screening**

### **Biometrics Appointment Scheduling and Initial Notice Requirements**

Biometrics appointments are distinct from field office appointments described above and are scheduled by USCIS automatically following receipt and initial review of applications and petitions requiring fingerprints, photographs, or biographical information for identity verification and background check purposes. When USCIS receives a complete application requiring biometrics (such as Form I-485 for adjustment of status, Form I-90 for green card replacement, Form I-539 for extension of status, Form I-765 for work authorization, or numerous other forms), the receipt of the application generates an automatic biometrics appointment notification. USCIS sends applicants a Form I-797C, Notice of Action, specifying the biometrics appointment date, time, location (the designated Application Support Center or ASC for the applicant's geographic area), and instructions regarding what documents to bring and how to prepare for the appointment. This appointment notice typically arrives within 2-4 weeks of the application receipt notice (Form I-797C, the receipt notice for the underlying application).

The biometrics appointment notice specifies that the applicant must appear in person at the designated ASC on the date and time specified. Applicants should arrive approximately 15 minutes before their appointment to allow time for security screening and check-in, but should not arrive more than 15 minutes early, as USCIS has indicated that applicants arriving significantly earlier than their appointment time will be asked to wait outside or return at the appointed time. If an applicant arrives late—even by a few minutes—the appointment may be cancelled, and the applicant will be required to reschedule through the procedures discussed below. Failure to appear at a biometrics appointment without prior rescheduling request or without good cause for the absence can result in case abandonment, meaning USCIS will administratively close the underlying application and may deny it as abandoned. For this reason, applicants must treat biometrics appointments as mandatory and must reschedule in advance if unable to appear at the scheduled time.

### **What Happens During Biometrics Appointments: Procedures and Evidence Collection**

At the biometrics appointment, USCIS staff at the Application Support Center will direct the applicant through security screening (metal detectors and bag inspection), check-in procedures (verification of identity

and confirmation of appointment), and then collect biometric data. The specific biometric data collected typically includes digital fingerprints (ten-print fingerprints captured electronically), a digital photograph meeting USCIS specifications, and a signature. The entire biometrics appointment typically requires 15-30 minutes from arrival to completion, though wait times vary considerably depending on ASC workload and current staffing levels. USCIS staff may also collect additional biographical information, update the applicant's address or contact information, and verify that the applicant has not been convicted of any crimes since the original application filing. At the conclusion of the appointment, the applicant will be informed whether additional information is required or whether the biometrics have been successfully collected. The applicant should not expect to receive results or updates regarding the biometrics appointment immediately; USCIS will process the fingerprints for FBI and other background check purposes, and the applicant will receive notification of any issues (such as name matches to criminal history databases) through subsequent written correspondence.

### **Online Biometrics Rescheduling and the "Good Cause" Standard**

If an applicant is unable to appear at a scheduled biometrics appointment, USCIS permits the applicant to reschedule through an online tool accessible through the applicant's myUSCIS account. To use the online rescheduling tool, the applicant must meet specific requirements: the biometrics appointment must be scheduled for a future date (not a past appointment), the applicant must not have rescheduled the same appointment more than twice previously, and the applicant must submit the rescheduling request at least 12 hours before the scheduled appointment time. If these conditions are met, the applicant can log into their myUSCIS account, navigate to the biometrics rescheduling section under "My Account," select the appointment to be rescheduled, and select a "good cause" reason from a dropdown menu. USCIS has specified that good cause for rescheduling includes illness, medical appointments, or hospitalization; previously planned travel (such as vacation or work travel scheduled before the appointment was received); significant life events such as weddings, funerals, or graduation ceremonies; inability to obtain transportation to the appointment; inability to obtain leave from employment or accommodate caregiver responsibilities; and late delivery or non-delivery of the biometrics appointment notice.

After selecting the good cause reason, the applicant may optionally upload supporting documentation (such as a physician's note, airline itinerary, employment letter, or other evidence supporting the stated reason). The applicant then selects a new appointment date and time from available slots displayed in the system—only dates with blue circles indicating available appointment slots can be selected. After reviewing the request for accuracy, the applicant submits the rescheduling request, and USCIS generates a confirmation message with a new Form I-797C showing the rescheduled appointment date and time. Critically, the applicant should print this new appointment notice, as it supersedes the original notice and must be brought to the rescheduled appointment.

The online rescheduling tool represents a significant simplification over previous procedures requiring telephone contact with the USCIS Contact Center. However, important limitations apply. Applicants may reschedule online only twice for the same original appointment; any reschedule requests beyond the second one must be made by calling the USCIS Contact Center at 1-800-375-5283. Additionally, the online tool is restricted to biometrics appointments only and does not apply to other appointment types such as field office or interview appointments. Applicants who miss biometrics appointments without prior rescheduling and wish to reschedule after the missed appointment must call the Contact Center and provide explanation for the failure to appear; USCIS has discretion to reschedule or to treat the missed appointment as case abandonment.

### **Consequences of Missing Biometrics Appointments and Failure to Reschedule**

Applicants who fail to appear at scheduled biometrics appointments face serious consequences, including potential case abandonment and application denial. USCIS policy establishes that applications and petitions are considered abandoned if the applicant fails to take required actions (including appearing at mandatory appointments) within specified timeframes. If a biometrics appointment is missed and not rescheduled within a specified period (typically 30-60 days depending on the underlying form type), USCIS may issue a Notice of Intent to Dismiss (NOID) or abandonment notice, giving the applicant a final opportunity to respond or reschedule. If the applicant does not respond within the specified timeframe, USCIS will administratively close or deny the underlying application. This result is particularly problematic for applicants with pending adjustment of status or work authorization applications, as case abandonment terminates any potential eligibility for work authorization and may trigger immigration enforcement attention. For this reason, applicants must carefully track biometrics appointment dates, maintain current address information with USCIS, and reschedule appointments immediately if unable to appear.

### **Recent USCIS Policy Changes to Biometrics Rescheduling Standards (February 2026)**

As of February 2026, no formal changes to the biometrics rescheduling standards have been finalized, but USCIS has indicated through notices that it is considering stricter standards that would require "extraordinary circumstances" rather than general "good cause" for second and subsequent reschedules. The November 2025 proposed rule in the Federal Register suggested that first reschedules could be permitted for any reason without additional documentation, but second reschedules would require demonstration of extraordinary circumstances such as serious illness, hospitalization, documented emergency, or other circumstances beyond the applicant's reasonable control. This proposed rule has not been finalized as of February 2026, but immigration practitioners should monitor Federal Register publications and USCIS announcements for finalization of stricter standards. In the interim, applicants should treat their first online reschedule as the "free" reschedule and should assume that second reschedules will face greater scrutiny and may require supporting documentation. Applicants who have already rescheduled biometrics appointments twice should avoid scheduling additional biometrics appointments if possible and should seek telephone Contact Center assistance to reschedule rather than relying on the online tool.

## **Medical Examinations (Form I-693) and Timing Relative to USCIS and Consular Appointments**

### **Timing Requirements for Medical Examination Scheduling Relative to Interview Appointments**

Medical examinations conducted by USCIS-authorized civil surgeons (Form I-693, Report of Medical Examination and Vaccination Record) represent a critical component of adjustment of status and immigrant visa applications, but applicants and practitioners must carefully coordinate the timing of medical examination appointments with USCIS field office appointments and consular visa interview appointments. The fundamental rule is that medical examinations should not be conducted until the applicant receives official notice of their interview appointment from USCIS or from the National Visa Center (for consular processing). This timing requirement exists because medical examination results are valid for specified periods (typically 6 months for most applicants, or 3 months for applicants with certain conditions), and scheduling the examination too far in advance of the interview appointment risks the examination results expiring before the interview occurs, requiring a second medical examination and creating delays and additional costs.

For applicants undergoing adjustment of status at USCIS field offices, the medical examination should ideally be completed within the 30-60 days before the scheduled interview appointment. Applicants typically receive

notice of their interview appointment in the mail approximately 4-6 weeks before the interview date, which provides a reasonable window to schedule and complete the medical examination. Applicants should contact USCIS-authorized civil surgeons in their area to schedule the medical examination and should request that the surgeon schedule the exam for a date as close as possible to the interview date without falling on the interview date itself (as applicants need time to obtain the sealed examination results from the civil surgeon before the interview). The applicant can locate USCIS-authorized civil surgeons through the USCIS website, the USCIS Civil Surgeon Locator tool, or by calling the USCIS Contact Center and providing their zip code.

The medical examination appointment typically requires two visits to the civil surgeon's office: the initial examination (usually lasting 1-3 hours depending on complexity) and a follow-up visit 48-72 hours later to have any tuberculin skin test results read. The initial appointment includes medical history review, physical examination, vision and hearing screening, blood tests for communicable diseases (syphilis serology required for applicants age 15 and older), tuberculin skin test (required for all applicants age 2 and older), urinalysis, vaccination review, and drug and alcohol screening. The second appointment (48-72 hours after the first) requires the applicant to return for the civil surgeon to read and record the tuberculin skin test results. Applicants with time constraints or difficulty scheduling two appointments in a 72-hour window may ask the civil surgeon whether an alternative tuberculosis test (IGRA test) is available, which provides results more quickly and does not require a second appointment, though this test is not yet widely available and typically costs more than the standard tuberculin skin test.

For applicants undergoing consular immigrant visa processing at U.S. embassies and consulates abroad, the timing of medical examination scheduling is critical and is coordinated by the National Visa Center or the consular post. The National Visa Center or consular post will provide detailed instructions regarding when the medical examination should be scheduled. In general, applicants should not schedule medical examinations until the National Visa Center or consular post has officially scheduled the visa interview appointment. Once the interview appointment is scheduled, the applicant may contact USCIS-authorized civil surgeons in the country of residence (or the applicant's home country) to schedule the medical examination. Some consular posts maintain lists of approved civil surgeons in-country or directly arrange medical examinations for visa applicants; applicants should check the consular post's website or the National Visa Center instructions for specific procedures in their jurisdiction. The medical examination must be completed by an authorized civil surgeon approved by USCIS or DOS, and medical examinations conducted by physicians not on the approved list will not be accepted and will require repetition, causing delays to visa processing.

### **Validity Period of Medical Examination Results and Expiration Concerns**

Medical examination results submitted on Form I-693 are valid for specified periods: generally 6 months from the date the civil surgeon completes the examination, or 3 months from examination date for applicants with certain conditions (such as applicants with positive tuberculosis tests who have begun or completed treatment). If an applicant receives an interview appointment but the medical examination results expire before the interview occurs, the applicant must undergo a second medical examination and incur additional costs and delays. This situation frequently occurs when applicants schedule medical examinations too far in advance of interviews or when USCIS or the National Visa Center experiences delays in scheduling interviews. To avoid expiration, applicants should carefully track the expiration date of their medical examination (the civil surgeon will indicate this on the Form I-693) and should request continuance of their interview appointment if the medical examination is approaching expiration. Additionally, applicants should check the validity dates of their medical examination before attending their interview appointment to ensure they have current examination results to submit.

## **Required Documents and Evidence to Bring to Medical Examination Appointment**

Applicants should bring specific documents to their medical examination appointments to ensure the civil surgeon can complete the examination correctly and efficiently. Required documents include a valid passport (the civil surgeon requires information from the passport to complete the biographical section of Form I-693), any immigration documents (such as receipt notices or approval notices) that contain biographical information or visa classification details, vaccination records (to help the surgeon determine which vaccinations are current and which may be needed), and insurance information (though applicants without insurance may still obtain civil surgeon services, and many civil surgeons accept payment plans or reduced fees for uninsured immigrants). Applicants should also bring written information about any significant past medical conditions, surgeries, or hospitalizations that they may not clearly remember, as the surgeon will ask detailed medical history questions. If the applicant takes prescription medications, bringing a list of medication names and dosages is helpful. Some civil surgeons request applicants bring completed forms (such as partial Form I-693 or biographical forms) prior to the appointment to expedite the process.

## **Consular Immigrant Visa Scheduling and National Visa Center Coordination**

### **National Visa Center Scheduling Authority and Documentary Completeness Requirements**

The National Visa Center (NVC) is the Department of State agency responsible for coordinating the consular immigrant visa application process between USCIS (which approves the underlying family-sponsorship or employment-based petition) and the U.S. embassies and consulates where visa interviews occur. After USCIS approves a Form I-140 (for employment-based immigrants) or Form I-485 (for family-based immigrants), USCIS forwards the approved petition to the National Visa Center, which creates an NVC case file and notifies the visa applicant that their case has been transferred for consular processing. The National Visa Center then coordinates the collection of all required fees and documents from the applicant and serves as the intermediary between the applicant and the consular post that will conduct the visa interview. Critically, the National Visa Center does not independently schedule visa interviews; rather, it coordinates with consular posts and indicates to applicants when the NVC anticipates that interviews will be scheduled at each consular post based on current visa availability and documentary completeness of submitted cases.

For applicants to become eligible for interview scheduling, their cases must first become "documentarily complete," a determination made by the National Visa Center based on whether the applicant has paid all required immigrant visa fees, submitted all required civil documents (birth certificate, marriage certificate, divorce decree if applicable, police certificate, medical examination, and other documents specified by the consular post), completed and submitted the required forms (Form DS-260 for immigrant visa application), and submitted the Form I-864 (Affidavit of Support) from the petitioner. The National Visa Center sends the applicant notice of what documents are required and provides instructions for submitting them. Once the NVC determines that a case is documentarily complete, it notifies the applicant and begins the process of forwarding the case file to the consular post for interview scheduling. The NVC typically aims to schedule interviews within approximately 3 months of documentary completeness, though actual scheduling depends on visa availability for the applicant's preference category and country of chargeability, current consular post workload, and other administrative factors.

### **Immigrant Visa Scheduling Status Tool and Applicant Monitoring**

The Department of State maintains the Immigrant Visa Scheduling Status Tool, accessible on [travel.state.gov](https://travel.state.gov), which allows applicants to monitor when interviews are being scheduled at their designated consular post. The tool shows the approximate month and year in which the NVC is currently scheduling interviews based on the

date the case became documentarily complete. For example, if the tool indicates that interviews are being scheduled for cases that became documentarily complete in July 2025, and an applicant's case became documentarily complete in July 2025, the applicant should expect to receive an interview appointment notification within the coming weeks or months. The tool is updated monthly and provides information for immediate relative visas, family-sponsored preference visas, and employment-based preference visas separately, as scheduling timelines may differ by visa category.

Applicants should regularly check the scheduling tool to monitor when the NVC is scheduling cases from their documentary completeness month. However, the tool does not guarantee that a specific applicant's case will be scheduled on any particular date; rather, it indicates when most applicants with the specified documentary completeness month are being scheduled. Some variation occurs, and applicants whose cases have additional complications, pending background checks, or other issues may experience delays beyond the general scheduling timeframe. Additionally, applicants must be aware that visa availability is a prerequisite for scheduling, and visa availability is determined by the monthly Visa Bulletin published by the Department of State. For family-sponsored and employment-based preference visa categories (not immediate relative categories), visa availability is limited by law, and when demand exceeds supply, visa numbers may not be available. When visa numbers are not current or available for an applicant's category and country of chargeability, the National Visa Center cannot schedule an interview even if the applicant's case is documentarily complete and otherwise ready for scheduling.

### **Required Documents and Evidence for Consular Immigrant Visa Interviews**

Applicants scheduled for immigrant visa interviews at consular posts must bring specific original or certified copy documents to the interview. The Department of State provides a Checklist for Immigrant Visa Interview Preparation specifying required documents. Required documents for all applicants include the interview appointment letter received from the National Visa Center or consular post, a valid unexpired passport with validity extending at least 6 months beyond the intended date of entry into the United States, two identical color photographs meeting Department of State photograph specifications (5cm x 5cm or 2 inch x 2 inch), the confirmation page from the Form DS-260 (Immigrant Visa and Alien Registration Application) submitted online through the CEAC system, the original birth certificate with English translation and photocopy, and the original medical examination results in the sealed envelope provided by the civil surgeon. For family-based visa applicants, additional documents include the original Form I-864 (Affidavit of Support) and a photocopy, the sponsor's most recent Internal Revenue Service transcript or federal income tax return, and any relevant W-2s or evidence of current employment. For applicants previously married, the original divorce decree or death certificate of prior spouse with English translation and photocopy must be presented. For applicants over 16 years of age, original police certificates from countries of residence and prior residence must be brought to the interview, and if a police certificate was obtained more than one year before the interview and the applicant still resides in the country that issued the certificate, a more recent police certificate must be obtained.

Applicants should organize these documents in the order specified on the Department of State checklist and should bring all original and copy documents in a clearly labeled folder or binder. Failure to bring all required documents to the interview may result in interview postponement, visa denial, or requirement for additional document submissions. Consular officers may make final determinations that certain documents are acceptable or unacceptable, and if critical documents are missing, the interview will not proceed and will be rescheduled for a later date after the applicant has obtained the missing documents.

### **National Visa Center Interview Rescheduling and Emergency Appointment Procedures**

If an applicant scheduled for an immigrant visa interview is unable to appear at the scheduled appointment, the applicant should contact the National Visa Center or the specific consular post as soon as possible to request rescheduling. The National Visa Center provides a contact form on its website ([nvc.state.gov](http://nvc.state.gov)), and applicants may also call the consular post directly to request rescheduling. The grounds for rescheduling are more limited than for USCIS field office appointments; generally, medical emergencies, serious family emergencies, or documented hardship circumstances justify rescheduling. Multiple cancellations or failures to appear for scheduled immigrant visa interviews may result in visa application denial, and the applicant may be required to file a new visa petition if they wish to pursue immigration to the United States after repeated cancellations. For medical emergencies, applicants may submit expedited rescheduling requests to [NVCEpedite@state.gov](mailto:NVCEpedite@state.gov), including a physician's letter explaining the medical emergency and confirming that the applicant is unable to travel to the interview on the scheduled date. The National Visa Center will forward expedited requests to the consular post for consideration, and approval is not guaranteed but may result in scheduling at an earlier date if the consular post has availability.

## **San Francisco-Specific Context and Northern California USCIS Field Office Considerations**

### **San Francisco Immigration Court and USCIS Field Office Locations in Northern California**

Northern California immigration practice involves interaction with multiple USCIS field office locations, each with distinct operational characteristics and appointment scheduling patterns. The primary USCIS field office serving the San Francisco Bay Area is located at 100 Montgomery Street, Suite 800, San Francisco, California 94104, which serves San Francisco, Marin, and surrounding counties. A second location operates at 630 Sansome Street, 4th Floor, Room 475, San Francisco, California 94111, primarily for certain application filings and document services. The East Bay region is served by an USCIS field office in Oakland, and Northern California applicants in more distant locations (such as the Sacramento area) are served by the Sacramento field office. Each field office maintains its own Application Support Center (ASC) for biometrics appointments, and applicants should be directed to the ASC corresponding to their residence or the field office where their case is being processed. The San Francisco field office has experienced notable backlogs in recent years due to the volume of immigration cases in the Bay Area, complexity of many cases involving asylum applicants from Central America, significant DACA/TPS populations requiring renewal applications, and employment-based visa cases involving tech workers. Applicants who miss appointments at the San Francisco field office may face longer delays in rescheduling compared to less congested field offices due to limited appointment availability.

### **San Francisco Asylum Office and Designated Asylum Office Interview Procedures**

San Francisco is not currently listed as a designated online appointment scheduling location for asylum office appointments through the [my.uscis.gov](http://my.uscis.gov) system. Rather, asylum office appointments are managed through a separate system, with online scheduling currently available only for the Arlington Asylum Office (serving the entire Eastern United States and some international locations). Applicants with pending asylum applications in the San Francisco Asylum Office (which covers California, Hawaii, and other Western states) must schedule interviews by calling the USCIS Contact Center or by contacting the San Francisco Asylum Office directly. The San Francisco Asylum Office conducts interviews with asylum applicants following initial application filing (Form I-589, Application for Asylum and for Withholding of Removal) and typically schedules interviews approximately 6-18 months after application filing, depending on office workload and background check clearance timelines. San Francisco Asylum Office interviews are conducted by trained asylum officers and differ from immigration court hearings—they are administrative interviews designed to evaluate whether

the applicant meets the legal standard for asylum eligibility, with the officer making a preliminary determination to approve the application, refer it to immigration court, or recommend denial.

The San Francisco Asylum Office has developed procedures that differ from some other asylum offices in the country. The office prioritizes detailed credibility and country conditions analysis and is known among immigration practitioners for conducting relatively thorough interviews with applicants from Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua). The office has established informal protocols for requesting brief continuances if applicants need time to obtain additional evidence or to retain legal representation. Applicants should prepare extensively for asylum interviews, as officers are rigorous in testing applicants' knowledge of country conditions, consistency of testimony, and establishment of past persecution or well-founded fear. Practitioners working with San Francisco Asylum Office should note that officers are generally receptive to requests for applicant testimony to be conducted in Spanish if the applicant is not fully English proficient, and interpreters may be provided by the office if advance notice is given. However, applicants should NOT bring interpreters to asylum office interviews; all interpretation services must be arranged through the office.

### **Biometrics Application Support Centers in Northern California and Wait Times**

Applicants with cases pending at Northern California USCIS field offices will receive biometrics appointments at designated Application Support Centers serving their geographic area. The San Francisco ASC is located at or near the Montgomery Street field office location and serves the Bay Area. The Oakland ASC serves the East Bay area. The Sacramento ASC serves the Northern Valley region. Wait times at these ASCs vary considerably depending on current application volume, USCIS staffing levels, and the specific time of year. Practitioners should inform clients that biometrics appointments may be scheduled 2-6 weeks after application filing, and current processing times should be monitored through the USCIS website's processing times tool. Clients should be advised to reschedule biometrics appointments immediately if unable to appear, as the San Francisco ASC experiences high volume and rescheduling capacity is limited. Practitioners working with clients in remote Northern California areas (such as clients in Humboldt County or other far Northern locations) should be aware that biometrics appointments may be scheduled at more distant ASCs, requiring clients to travel significant distances. In such cases, practitioners may request disability accommodations or hardship rescheduling if the travel distance presents genuine difficulty.

### **San Francisco Immigration Court and Relationship to USCIS Appointment Scheduling**

The San Francisco Immigration Court, located at 100 Montgomery Street and also at 630 Sansome Street, 4th Floor (and with a hearing location in Concord at 1855 Gateway Blvd., Suite 850), handles removal proceedings for immigrants in Northern California, Hawaii, and U.S. territories. While the immigration court is administratively separate from USCIS, appointment scheduling for removal proceedings interacts with USCIS appointment scheduling when applicants with pending removal cases seek to apply for or obtain immigration benefits. Applicants in removal proceedings who wish to apply for asylum, cancellation of removal, or other relief must comply with immigration court scheduling procedures, but must also coordinate with any USCIS appointment requirements if their cases involve work authorization applications (Form I-765) or other USCIS-processed benefits. The San Francisco Immigration Court has experienced significant backlogs due to high volume of Central American asylum cases, and hearing dates may be scheduled 12-24 months or more in advance of actual hearing. However, this court delay does not affect USCIS appointment scheduling; applicants with pending USCIS applications must still comply with USCIS biometrics and interview appointment requirements independently of their immigration court proceedings.

### **ICE Enforcement Patterns and Appointment Non-Appearance Risks in Northern California**

Northern California immigration enforcement patterns have shifted in recent years, with ICE ERO Field Office 1 (covering Northern California) implementing priorities focusing on applicants with criminal records, security threats, and recent entries. Practitioners should inform clients that failing to appear at USCIS appointments can trigger enforcement attention, as USCIS may issue administrative closure or abandonment notices that flag cases in government databases and may result in ICE targeting for enforcement action. Conversely, applicants who maintain compliance with USCIS appointment requirements and document their presence through consistent engagement with the immigration system generally face lower enforcement risk. San Francisco city policies (SB 54, California Values Act) limit local law enforcement cooperation with ICE, but this does not prevent ICE from initiating independent enforcement actions. Practitioners should counsel clients that maintaining current contact information with USCIS and appearing at all scheduled appointments represents a practical risk mitigation strategy, as non-appearance can trigger notice filing and enforcement attention that might otherwise not occur.

## **Strategic Appointment Scheduling Framework and Decision-Making for Practitioners**

### **Analyzing Whether to Request Field Office Appointments or Pursue Alternative Remedies**

Immigration practitioners must assess whether requesting a field office appointment is strategically beneficial for clients or whether alternative procedures provide better outcomes. For clients seeking ADIT stamp renewals, the recent implementation of mail-in ADIT stamp issuance significantly changes the cost-benefit analysis. Rather than requesting in-person field office appointments (requiring client time, transportation, and compliance with appointment attendance), practitioners should first determine whether the client qualifies for mail-in ADIT issuance by calling the USCIS Contact Center and explaining the client's circumstances. If USCIS approves mail-in issuance, the client will receive the ADIT stamp by mail without field office attendance. Clients should be informed that mail-in ADIT stamps are valid for specified periods (typically 6-12 months) and may have shorter validity than in-person-issued stamps in certain circumstances, but the convenience and reduced cost generally make mail-in issuance preferable when available.

For clients seeking Emergency Advance Parole, practitioners must conduct careful risk analysis before recommending EAP appointment requests. The critical risk is that obtaining advance parole and traveling abroad creates opportunity for CBP officers to deny parole upon re-entry and place the client in removal proceedings. This risk is particularly acute for clients with any immigration violations in their history (prior deportations, unlawful entries, criminal convictions, misrepresentation, or other grounds of inadmissibility). Practitioners should conduct thorough inadmissibility analysis before recommending EAP applications, and should advise clients that obtaining advance parole does not guarantee parole upon return and does not insulate the client from enforcement action if the CBP officer determines the client is inadmissible. Practitioners should also assess the urgency of the travel-if the client's situation allows delay until the underlying adjustment of status application is approved, delaying travel until permanent resident status is obtained eliminates the need for advance parole and associated risks.

### **Evaluating Strategic Biometrics Rescheduling and Recording Preservation for Appeal**

For clients with biometrics appointments, practitioners should assess whether appearing at the scheduled appointment serves the client's interests or whether strategic rescheduling or delay might be preferable in specific circumstances. In cases where clients have criminal history, prior enforcement encounters, or other background concerns, practitioners may wish to delay biometrics appointments until they have completed additional investigation or until the client has obtained documentary evidence clearing security concerns. The online biometrics rescheduling tool permits this tactical delay through the first two reschedules, as long as

practitioners can articulate "good cause." Examples of good cause include pending legal proceedings (such as state court cases that may result in additional convictions affecting immigration eligibility), medical treatment (genuine medical conditions requiring ongoing treatment), or employment circumstances (inability to take leave during specific work periods). However, practitioners should caution that excessive rescheduling may eventually exhaust client rescheduling opportunities and trigger Contact Center involvement, which increases scrutiny.

Additionally, practitioners should consider whether biometrics appointments involve collection of biometric evidence that may be used against clients in removal proceedings. USCIS biometric data (fingerprints, photographs, signature) is shared with law enforcement agencies and can be used to establish identity and prior criminal history in removal proceedings. If a client has concerns regarding fingerprint retention or use, the client should consult with both their immigration attorney and criminal defense counsel before submitting biometrics. However, failure to appear at biometrics appointments generally causes case abandonment, which is a worse outcome than biometrics collection in most circumstances.

### **Managing Multiple Concurrent Appointment Systems for Clients with Complex Cases**

Practitioners representing clients with complex immigration cases frequently must manage multiple concurrent appointment systems. For example, a client with a pending adjustment of status (requiring biometrics and USCIS interview), a pending work authorization request (Form I-765, also requiring biometrics), and involvement in immigration court removal proceedings (requiring immigration court appearances) must coordinate schedules across three separate systems managed by different agencies. Practitioners should track all appointment dates and deadlines in case management systems and should provide clients with written appointment schedules indicating all required dates, locations, and documentation. Practitioners should also proactively request continuances or rescheduling if appointment schedules conflict (for example, if a biometrics appointment is scheduled immediately before an immigration court hearing requiring travel, the practitioner should request biometrics rescheduling to avoid scheduling conflicts).

## **Timeline Expectations for USCIS Field Office and Consular Processing Appointments**

### **Realistic Processing Timelines from Application Filing to Interview Scheduling**

Current USCIS processing timelines for adjustment of status applications (Form I-485) vary significantly by service center and application complexity, but generally follow these patterns: preparation and assembly of application materials typically requires 2-3 months; filing of the application to receipt of receipt notice requires an additional 1-6 months depending on processing center workload; initial USCIS review and biometrics scheduling requires 1-3 months; biometrics appointment actual scheduling and completion requires 2-6 weeks; post-biometrics processing and background check clearance requires 2-6 months; and scheduling of interview appointments typically occurs 3-18 months after application filing. For standard adjustment of status cases without requests for evidence or significant background check delays, total timeframe from application filing to interview appointment is typically 6-12 months. For cases with complications (such as Requests for Evidence, criminal history requiring extended background investigations, or prior immigration violations requiring additional review), timelines extend to 12-24 months or longer.

For affirmative asylum cases, processing timelines are less predictable due to varying agency workloads and security clearance requirements. Applicants filing Form I-589 (Application for Asylum) typically receive interview appointments 12-24 months after filing, though some cases experience interviews within 6-12 months and others face delays exceeding 24 months. Applicants with urgent needs (such as work authorization required for employment or medical needs requiring U.S. healthcare) can apply for work authorization

concurrently (Form I-765) based on pending asylum status, though work authorization timelines similarly extend 4-6 months from application filing. For VAWA self-petitions (Form I-360), processing timelines are extremely lengthy, ranging from 3-4 years from application filing to approval, significantly impacted by high filing volumes and increased evidentiary requirements.

For consular immigrant visa processing, overall timelines depend on visa category, country of residence, and consular post capacity. Immediate relative visas typically proceed more rapidly than preference category visas due to unlimited visa numbers available for immediate relatives. Processing timeframe from USCIS petition approval to visa interview scheduling typically spans 3-6 months for immediate relative cases, but can extend to 12-24 months or longer for employment-based preference visas or family-sponsored preference visas when visa numbers are not current. Applicants should monitor the Visa Bulletin and the Immigrant Visa Scheduling Status Tool for realistic expectations regarding when their consular post will schedule interviews for their category and country of chargeability.

### **Practical Client Communication Regarding Appointment Scheduling Delays**

Practitioners should manage client expectations regarding appointment scheduling delays, as delays are frequent and often frustrating for clients with time-sensitive circumstances. Practitioners should explain that appointment scheduling delays do not necessarily indicate case problems or denials; rather, delays reflect agency resource constraints and application volume. Practitioners should provide clients with estimated timelines based on current USCIS processing times published on the USCIS website, but should clearly indicate that these are estimates and actual timelines may be longer. Practitioners should maintain regular communication with clients, updating them as case status changes and providing copies of case status pages from myUSCIS or consular CEAC portals. Practitioners should also explain that clients should expect to receive appointment notices by mail 30-60 days before scheduled interviews, and that clients should monitor mail carefully during this period and respond immediately to any USCIS or consular inquiries regarding appointment notices or missing documents.

### **Practical Roadmap for Appointment Request Procedures and Compliance**

#### **Step-by-Step Procedure for Online Field Office Appointment Requests**

Applicants seeking to request USCIS field office appointments should follow a structured procedure to maximize likelihood of approval and secure timely appointments. Step One requires the applicant to determine whether their appointment need falls within eligible categories: ADIT stamp renewal (or determining whether mail-in ADIT is preferable), Emergency Advance Parole (assessing risks and emergency circumstances), or Immigration Judge Grant (verifying that an approved court decision exists). For other appointment needs, the applicant should call the USCIS Contact Center to determine whether field office appointments are available or whether the need must be addressed through other procedures. Step Two requires the applicant to access [my.uscis.gov/appointment](https://my.uscis.gov/appointment) and create or log into their myUSCIS account, ensuring that the account email address is current and monitored regularly for USCIS communications. Step Three requires the applicant to select the appointment type from the dropdown menu and provide complete information: full name as it appears in government documents, complete date of birth, receipt number (if available; this can typically be found on the Form I-797C receipt notice from any pending USCIS application), zip code or city of preferred appointment location, and a description of the appointment purpose (for "Other" appointment requests).

Step Four requires selection of requested appointment date and time from the calendar display, noting that not all dates display available slots and the applicant should select dates with blue circle indicators. The applicant

may request a preferred date and time, but should understand that USCIS will confirm based on actual field office capacity and may offer alternative dates. Step Five requires submission of the completed form and generation of a confirmation message with an appointment request number. Applicants should save or print this confirmation message, as it confirms that the request has been submitted and provides the request number for follow-up inquiries. Step Six requires the applicant to monitor email for Contact Center response within 2-4 weeks (or longer for complex requests). When the Contact Center contacts the applicant, the applicant should respond promptly to any questions or requests for clarification, providing additional documentation if requested. Step Seven requires printing and retaining the appointment confirmation once the Contact Center approves the appointment, as this confirmation notice must be brought to the appointment.

### **Critical Documentation and Preparation Requirements for Appointment Attendance**

Applicants must bring appropriate documentation to their scheduled USCIS appointments to ensure efficient processing and to avoid appointment cancellation due to missing documentation. For all field office appointments, applicants should bring the appointment confirmation notice (which specifies what documents are required), a valid government-issued photo identification (passport, state driver's license, military ID, or similar document), and any documents specifically relevant to the appointment purpose. For ADIT stamp appointments, applicants should bring passport and any other government-issued identification, copies of all immigration documents, and proof of current address if applicable. For Emergency Advance Parole appointments, applicants should bring the specific documents listed above (passport, birth certificate, receipt notices, emergency documentation, travel itinerary, completed Form I-131, and photographs). For Immigration Judge Grant appointments, applicants should bring the Final Order from immigration court, valid government-issued photo identification, and passport.

Applicants must also comply with security procedures and facility rules when arriving at field office appointments. Applicants should expect to pass through security screening involving metal detectors and bag inspection. Applicants should NOT bring to appointments scissors, knives, sharp objects of any kind, flammable liquids (including aerosol sprays and perfumes), weapons, explosive devices, or other prohibited items. Applicants may bring cell phones and electronic devices unless specifically restricted by the field office, though applicants should verify with the appointment confirmation notice regarding office-specific policies. USCIS offices are federal buildings and space is limited, so applicants should arrive with only those family members or representatives who have specific roles in the appointment. Applicants should not bring children unless they are also applicants or unless the appointment specifically involves family-related matters. If applicants require interpretation services, they should arrange interpretation by phone through the Contact Center before the appointment; applicants should NOT bring interpreters in person to the appointment.

### **Interview Preparation and Evidence Organization**

For USCIS field office interviews (such as interviews for adjustment of status or immigrant visa interviews at consulates), applicants must prepare extensively to present complete evidence and respond effectively to officer questions. Applicants should organize all documents in the order specified on the appointment notice or checklist, clearly labeling each section. For adjustment of status interviews, applicants should bring complete copies of the original I-485 application and all supporting documents, including birth certificate, marriage certificate (if applicable), divorce decrees (if applicable), police certificate, medical examination results (Form I-693 in sealed envelope), passport, government-issued photo identification, and all documents related to their immigration petition (Forms I-140 or I-130 for employment-based or family-based cases). For consular immigrant visa interviews, the Department of State checklist should be followed exactly, with applicants bringing all original documents and certified copies as specified.

Applicants should review their applications and supporting documents before interviews to refresh their memory regarding biographical details, employment history, family information, and other matters likely to be questioned. Immigration officers routinely test applicants' consistency by asking questions about information contained in applications, and inconsistencies between written responses and verbal responses can result in interview denials or Notices of Intent to Deny. Applicants should also prepare for personal questions: for marriage-based green cards, officers ask detailed questions about the relationship, including how the couple met, details of the wedding, living arrangements, and family relationships; for employment-based cases, officers ask detailed questions about job responsibilities, employer details, and salary information; for asylum cases, officers ask extensive questions about persecution experiences, country conditions, and specific details of alleged incidents.

## **Conclusion: Summary of Key Principles and Practitioner Guidance**

USCIS appointment scheduling involves multiple distinct systems, each with separate procedural requirements, eligibility criteria, and timeline expectations. Domestic field office appointments are requested through the online [my.uscis.gov/appointment](https://my.uscis.gov/appointment) system but are confirmed by USCIS Contact Center staff based on field office capacity, requiring practitioners to set realistic client expectations regarding appointment timing and availability. Biometrics appointments are scheduled automatically by USCIS following application filing, are mandatory for most immigration benefit applicants, and can be rescheduled online up to twice based on "good cause" before requiring Contact Center assistance. Consular immigrant visa appointments are managed by the National Visa Center and scheduled once cases become documentarily complete and visa availability exists, with scheduling varying significantly by consular post and visa category. Practitioners must manage client expectations regarding processing timelines, maintain careful tracking of multiple concurrent appointments and deadlines, and ensure clients understand appointment attendance requirements and documentation needs to avoid case abandonment or removal proceedings consequences.

The critical risk mitigation strategy for practitioners is proactive case management: maintaining accurate address information with USCIS, monitoring case status through myUSCIS and consular CEAC portals, responding promptly to USCIS and consular communications, and scheduling all appointments well in advance to allow time for travel and document preparation. Practitioners should conduct risk assessments before recommending certain appointment requests (particularly Emergency Advance Parole) and should identify alternative remedies when field office appointments are not strategically necessary. Practitioners should keep detailed records of all appointment dates, confirmations, and results in case files, as these records become critical if clients later face removal proceedings or need to appeal USCIS decisions based on procedural defects in appointment scheduling or notice. Finally, practitioners should stay current with USCIS policy changes and proposed regulatory amendments affecting appointment procedures, as the agency continues to implement operational changes affecting appointment timelines, rescheduling standards, and documentation requirements. Northern California practitioners should develop familiarity with the specific San Francisco field office and asylum office procedures, local ICE enforcement patterns, and state law protections (such as California Values Act limitations on immigration enforcement cooperation) that interact with USCIS appointment requirements.