



Questions and Answers

CIS Ombudsman Webinar Series: Overview of myUSCIS for Applicants

General Questions

Q1. Does USCIS have plans to reduce the “time tax” of online filing? It takes 2-3 times as much time to file a form through the online system than through paper. A big deterrent to using the online system is that it is extremely time consuming.

A1. Before a user begins an online application, it is helpful to have all required evidence for submission. It is also useful for customers to take a tutorial on using the online system to help them better navigate once they are ready to file. The time burden for filing a form online generally is comparable to or less than what is required when completing a paper form. See the “Paperwork Reduction Act” section of the USCIS form for additional information on estimated times for completion of the form.

Q2. Why does myUSCIS use two different URLs? One of them is myaccount.uscis.gov that you log in to with an email and password. The other one is egov.uscis.gov that you log in to with a username and password. It is confusing.

A2. USCIS makes accessing your USCIS online account easy by offering you several different options for doing so. USCIS recommends you bookmark the URL that works for you.

Q3. Can I file all available online forms outside the United States?

A3. No. Most forms require that the applicant be physically present in the United States to file for the requested benefit. Forms that are filed from outside of the United States will be rejected as improperly filed. The only exception relates to members of the U.S. Armed Forces whose cases are subject to special handling rules, procedures, and processing overseas.

Q4. How do I screen out scammers who pretend to be calling from USCIS’ 202-838-2200 phone number?

A4. USCIS will send both a text message and email one to two days in advance of when the agency plans to call you to address the issue you contacted them about.

Submitting Forms Online

Q5. Can I create an account and file a form on behalf of somebody else if I am not an attorney?

A5. Only an attorney or an accredited representative may file on behalf of a client. In this case, the attorney and client must have their own separate accounts. Someone who is not an [authorized immigration service provider](#) may provide limited help such as reading a form or translating and writing down information you provide. However, a person who is not an attorney or accredited representative cannot represent the individual before the agency. You also cannot create an online account on behalf of another individual or file an immigrant benefit request online using another person's online account. In addition, you may bring a relative, neighbor, member of the clergy, business associate or personal friend to help you at an interview or other appearance in a USCIS office. This person is known as a "reputable individual." In this case, the person helping you does not need have to have their own USCIS online account and may not log in to or use your account.

Q6. Can I complete applications using a smart phone?

A6. USCIS designed your online account to work with all mobile and desktop browsers. You may use any electronic device with an internet connection to complete your form online.

Q7. Does USCIS accept electronic signatures for online forms? Or do I still need to sign with pen and then scan and upload the form?

A7. When an applicant files a form online, the applicant is permitted to sign electronically.

Q8. How can I upload passport photos? I have never seen passport photos in electronic form.

A8. If USCIS requires passport-size photos, you must either scan them or take a picture with your phone, then upload. Please follow all format and file naming conventions outlined in your online account before uploading, otherwise your photo will not upload properly or be readable.

Q9. Who do I contact if there appears to be a technological glitch?

A9. If you filed a case online or you added a paper case to your online account, you can send questions related to technical issues with online filing to us through your secure inbox. You can also call the USCIS Customer Contact Center for additional support at 1-800-375-5283.

Q10. Can I apply for an application online using a fee waiver?

A10. No. If you intend to request a fee waiver, you must file your form and form I-912, Request for Fee Waiver using paper forms by mail. You cannot file online.

Requests for Evidence (RFEs)

Q11. Is USCIS mailing RFEs via regular postal service or do I see those requests online only?

A11. For all form types, USCIS issues the same type of notices. These include receipt notices, biometrics appointment notices, interview notices, and Requests for Evidence. For forms that can be filed online, except Form I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status, (Form I-539) USCIS mails a hard copy of every notice AND posts electronic copies of the notice to the applicant's online account. For the Form I-539, USCIS only posts electronic copies of the notices to the applicant's or legal representative's online account. If you filed your case online, you can set an alert to be notified by email and/or text when USCIS posts a notice in your USCIS online account.

Q12. If USCIS sent me an RFE by postal service and the RFE states to mail the response to a specific address, can I still submit the response online through the myUSCIS account? Or do I need to submit it by postal service?

A12. If you filed your form online using your USCIS online account or you added a paper-filed case with a receipt number that begins with IOE, and the RFE has been posted in your account, you may respond to the RFE through your online account.

Viewing Case Status Using myUSCIS

Q13. Do agents have access to more detailed information on a pending case than the very general information that appears on an applicant's online account such as "Your correspondence has been received on October 1st and is being processed"?

A13. Only applicants and their legal representatives, if any, receive case information through their online accounts. We will send official and courtesy notifications to either the applicant or their representative in accordance with the communication preferences designated by the applicant on Form G-28, Notice of Entry of Appearance as Attorney or Accredited Representative. These notices provide information on action taken on a pending benefit request or when a decision has been made. The notification directs the applicant and representative to log in to their online account to view any documents that USCIS may have issued electronically.

Q14. How can I sign up for notifications on case status to be delivered to your email?

A14. Using your USCIS online account, you can sign up to receive automatic case notifications via email and/or text message. For more information on how to create an online account and set your preferences for notification when USCIS takes action on your case, see USCIS' [How to Create a USCIS Account Online](#) page.

Q15. Can I use myUSCIS to query and track the status of a paper application that I previously mailed/submitted via postal service to USCIS? If so, can you show how this is done?

A15. If your case has a receipt number that begins with the letters “IOE”, you may be able to add your paper-filed case to your USCIS online account and receive all the benefits of the account as if you had filed online, such as being able to track case status, see notices and correspondence from USCIS, respond to RFEs, upload evidence, update your address, and send USCIS secure messages. Most, but not all, receipt numbers that begin with “IOE” can be added to your USCIS online account as a paper-filed case. Adding a paper-filed case is very simple. For additional information about creating an online account and adding a paper-filed case to your USCIS online account, see USCIS’ [How to Create a USCIS Account Online](#) page.

Once you’ve added your paper case to your USCIS online account, we’ll notify you in your account each time we take a new action on your case. You can manage your notifications in your account settings and sign up for text messages and/or emails to be notified when we’ve uploaded a notice to your account.

Students

Q16. Is there a way for designated school officials (DSOs) to put a hold on an online Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization (Form I-765) application so that it cannot move forward until the student uploads the required Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status (I-20)? Some students have submitted the Form I-765 without the I-20 with the OPT recommendation.

A16. No, there is no way for DSOs to put a hold on an online form I-765. Students applying for employment authorization are required to upload evidence of an approved I-20 with their online application. Failure to upload required evidence may result in a denial or issuance of a Request for Evidence. If the form has already been submitted, additional information and evidence can be uploaded using the “unsolicited evidence” function in the online account.

Q17. If I create a myUSCIS account as an F-1 student to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) using the Form I-765, do I need to make a duplicate account, if I then enter the H-1B lottery?

A17. No. An applicant needs only one USCIS online account. If the applicant filed a form online initially and is seeking to file another form that also is available to file online, the applicant can use the same account.

Q18. If I (a student) submit my Form I-765 online and later realize there was a typo or an issue with one of the documents I submitted as evidence, what should I do to address the error so that USCIS does not deny my form?

A18. Applicants can submit unsolicited evidence at any point until USCIS decide the case. Unsolicited evidence may include a clarification or correction. The best way to make sure USCIS reviews all your evidence is to have it ready and submit it when you apply.

Specific Forms

Q19. I noticed that Form I-589, Application for Asylum, is on the drop-down list in myUSCIS but is not on the [Forms Available to File Online](#) page. Do you have any idea when the online filing option for Form I-589 will become officially available?

A19. USCIS does not have a release date for the online Form I-589.

Q20. The online Form N-400, Application for Naturalization, differs from the paper form in a few ways, which can lead to data entry errors. For example, the online form puts “0” as the number of marriages, if the person is married, but the paper form allows you to put “1.” It appears that the online form is asking if the person has “other” marriages rather than asking the total number of marriages. The online Form N-400 also forces you to put an end date on your physical residence even if you still live there, and it forces you to put a month, day, year for every day even if you don't know the actual date. When I go to a Form N-400 interview for a paper-filed case that has been converted to an electronic case file, the officer at the interview always tells me that there are errors in the online form. The officers sometimes blame the applicant for this, but it is a USCIS data entry error.

A20. Thank you for this feedback. USCIS confirmed that they will look into this issue.