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Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman



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The CIS Ombudsman's Webinar Series: The USCIS Contact Center

April 14, 2021

Disclaimer

This webinar material is intended solely as informational. It is not intended to, does not, and may not be relied upon to create or confer any right(s) or benefits(s), substantive or procedural, enforceable at law by any individual or other party in benefit applications before DHS, in removal proceedings, in litigation with the United States, or in any other form or manner. This webinar material does not have the force of law, or of a DHS directive.

Questions

- Submit written questions to us through the “Q&A box” that appears to the right of the slide deck on your screen.
- We will review every question submitted and determine if we can address concerns arising from the stakeholder community.
- Due to time constraints, we may not be able to answer every question.
- If you are a member of the media, please reach out to DHS Public Affairs with any inquiries.



The USCIS Contact Center

Mission Overview

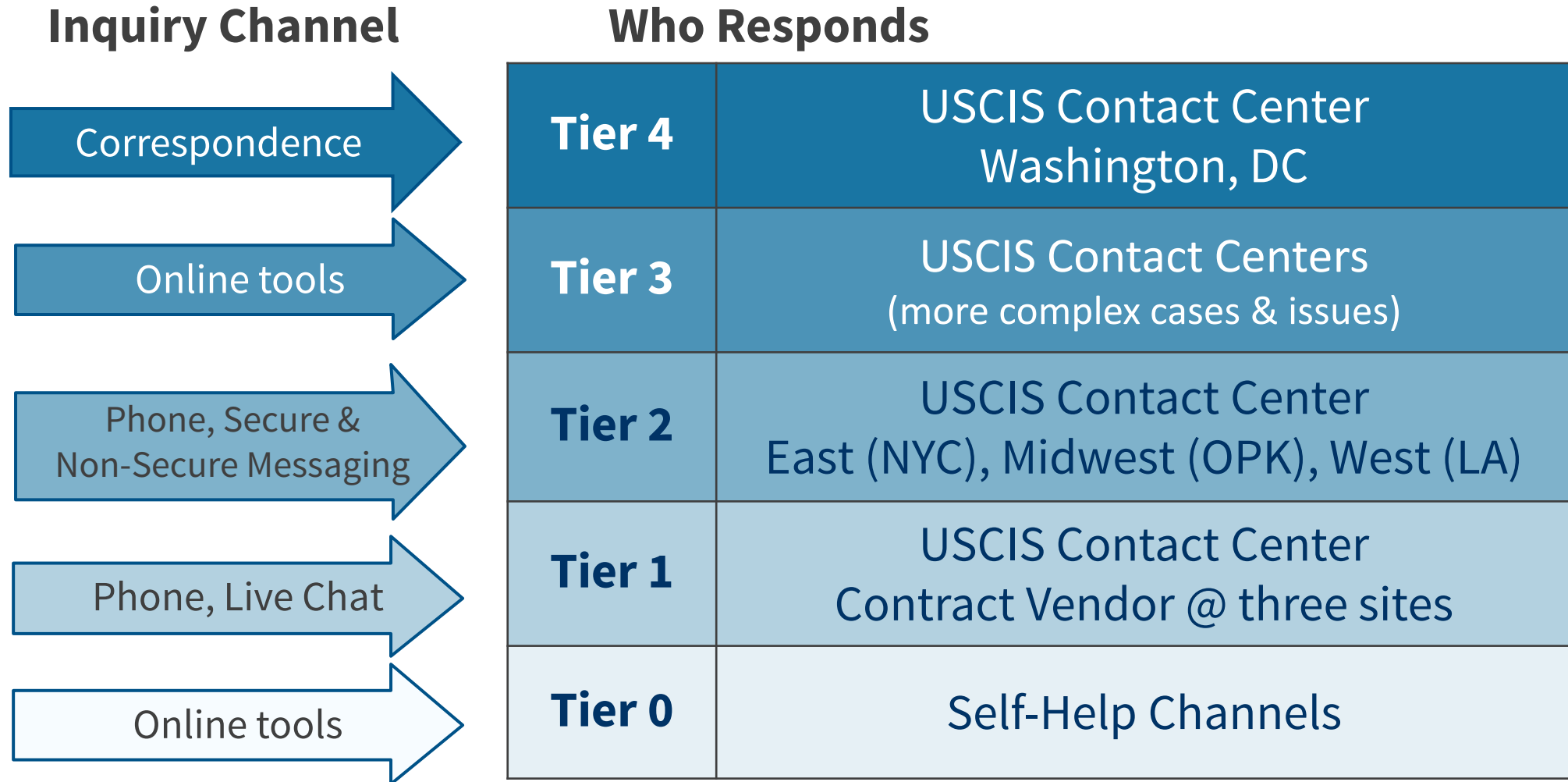
www.uscis.gov/about-us/contact-us

A Year in USCIS (FY20 Data)

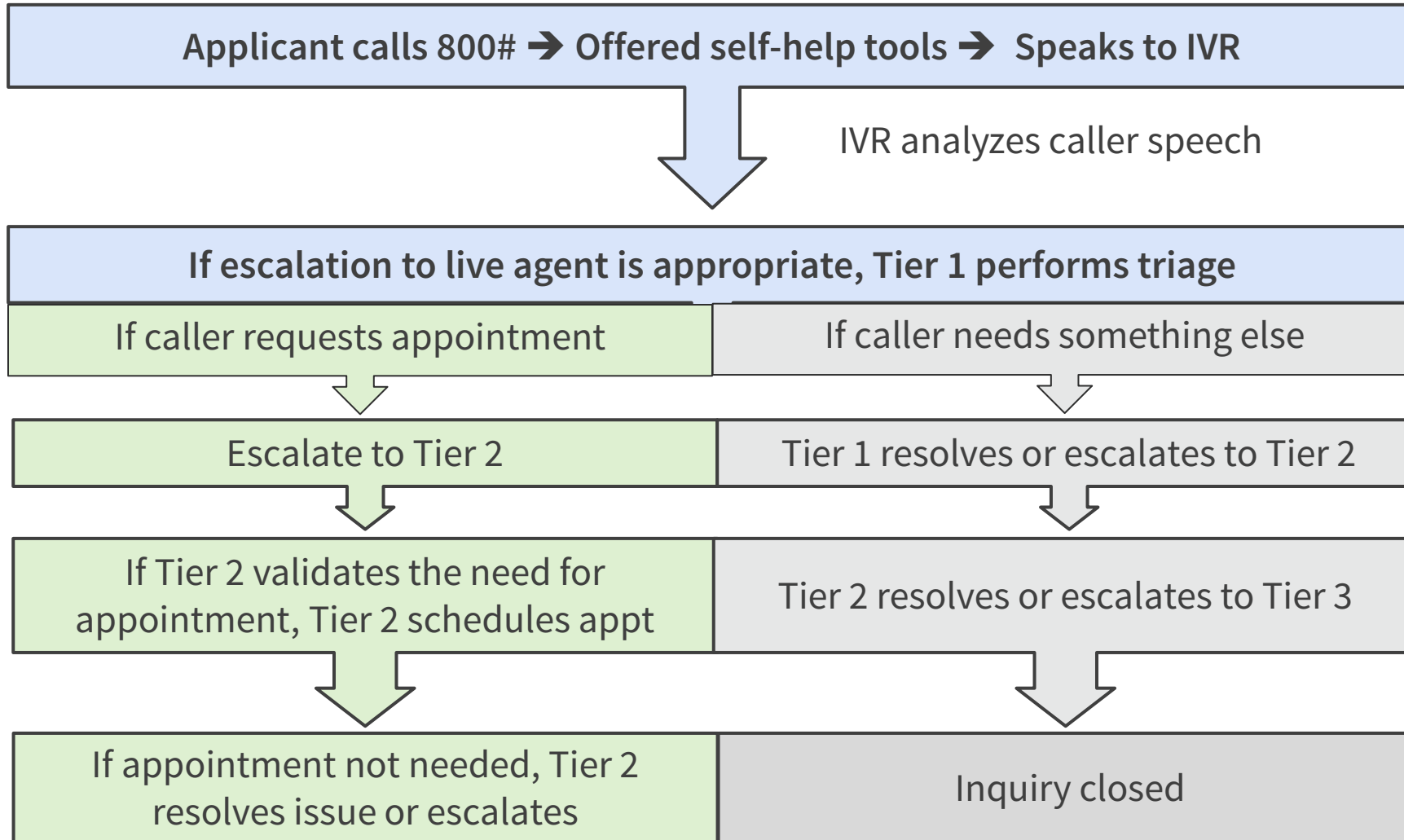
- InfoMod Appointments – 168,000
- Calls received at the Contact Center—11 million
- Questions asked to Emma—12 million
- Live Chat—160,000



Engaging with the USCIS Contact Center



General Inquiry Flow



Current Challenges

- Staffing
- Reduced contract capacity
- Callbacks



Training and Resources

- Contractors use the same data systems as USCIS officers.
- USCIS officers go to the USCIS training academy and receive ongoing instruction on a wide variety of benefit types.
- We partner with operational directorates on new policy and procedures to ensure Contact Center content is accurate.
- Work closely with Field Operations on appointments and communicate daily on urgent situations.



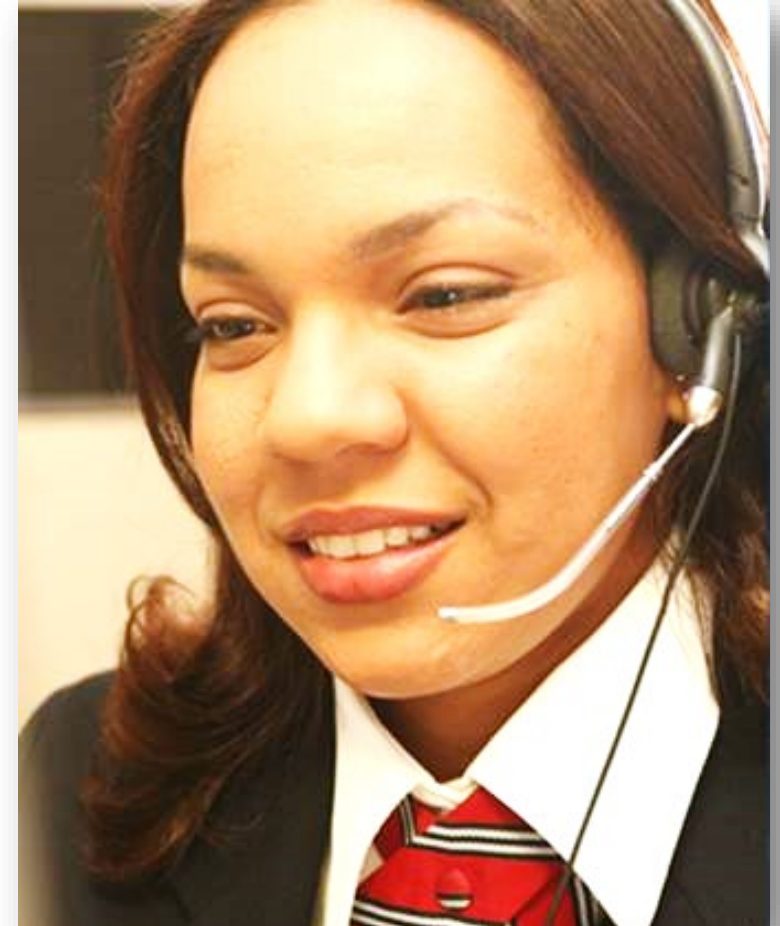
Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System

- 2020—Replaced menu options with Intelligent Assistant (we call her MIA)
- Callers say what they need out loud in English or Spanish
- IVR gives case status, sends links via email and text
- IVR limits live service to certain scenarios



Callbacks

- Urgent inquiries—72-hour response time
- Non-urgent inquiries—14-day response time
- We make two callback attempts
 - If we don't reach customer on first callback, we leave a message and try again in 60-90 minutes



Callbacks

- Callback hours: 7 a.m.– 6:30 p.m. Eastern
- Phone number in caller ID is 202 area code
- Representatives—we can take multiple phone numbers in case callback happens outside normal business hours
- Future options, possibly in FY 22, include text ahead and scheduled call backs



Requesting Expedited Processing

- Contact Center does not decide requests for expedited processing
 - Expedite requests are decided by operational component (Field Ops or Service Center Ops)
 - Expedite criteria
 - Severe financial loss;
 - Urgent humanitarian reasons;
 - Compelling U.S. government interests; or
 - Clear USCIS error
- Documentation is required ***



Scheduling Appointments

- 3-4% of inquiries require an appointment
- Non-urgent appointments scheduled as slots are available
- Urgent appointment requests are reviewed individually and prioritized
- Reasons for urgent appointments:
 - Family emergency requiring travel
 - Medical emergency
 - Finance related issue including loss of employment or loss of aid/benefits





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Question and Answer Session



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