



# Follow Up Questions and Answers

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

On April 14, 2021 the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman (CIS Ombudsman) hosted a public webinar to discuss the USCIS Contact Center.

Below is the list of inquiries received from stakeholders during this webinar and the responses provided by USCIS.

### **Q1. What happens if a caller needs assistance in a language other than English or Spanish?**

A1. We continue to evaluate the need to provide services in additional languages. Currently, if the caller needs assistance in a different language, we would ask the caller to provide an interpreter.

### **Q2. Can a Contact Center ISO schedule someone for biometrics (if over 90 days)?**

A2. The Contact Center can currently reschedule biometric services appointments at an Application Support Center (ASC), but we cannot schedule an initial biometric services appointment.

### **Q3. Would USCIS consider a Contact Center dedicated to attorneys or representatives with G-28s on file?**

A3. Our Contact Center is available to all USCIS customers and there are no immediate plans to change this process. As an alternative, all attorneys and representatives who create an online account have immediate access to a secure mailbox that allows them to send inquiries directly to the Contact Center. Additionally, we are working to add features to the representative account that will enhance that experience based on feedback received from a series of focus group sessions conducted earlier this year.

### **Q4. Where do VAWA/U Visa/T Visa case inquiries fit into the tiers?**

A4. Under USCIS policy, the Contact Center is generally not able to assist with inquiries related to VAWA/U/T visa applications and petitions due to privacy. In the event that a VAWA/U/T applicant or petitioner requires assistance scheduling an appointment, our Tier 3 staff of senior Immigration Services Officers (ISOs) will handle the inquiry.

**Q5. How can we reach tech support? I have called the Contact Center several times regarding problems with clients inputting the passcode for online filings such as N-400 and I-130 applications? They said we will get a callback, but it has been over three weeks and no solutions.**

A5. Once connected to live assistance, someone with a password reset issue or locked account is transferred to our help desk. These inquiries are usually handled within one day. The public can also contact us using our [online help form](#).

**Q6. Does USCIS take into consideration the area code they are calling and the time zone where that area code is located?**

A6. We take into consideration the location of the filing and try to ensure we are calling back at appropriate times given geography and time zones. We cannot rely on area code as stakeholders often maintain numbers as they move and work across different regions.

**Q7. Do the representatives provide the adjudication decisions or application statuses over the telephone?**

A7. Yes. Customers can use our case status online self-service tool to determine the latest action taken on their application or petition. We can also provide case status through our virtual assistant Emma or over the phone.

**Q8. Can appointments be made at the 800 number to go into an office (like New Orleans) for an emergency advance parole request?**

A8. Yes.

**Q9. What information is shared on the secure forms messaging and how does this differ from Service Request Management Tool (SRMT)?**

A9. The USCIS Contact Center can respond to case-specific inquiries through a secure message. If we are unable to resolve the inquiry, we use the SRMT tool and send a request to another office that will then respond to the customer.

**Q10. Will the secure messaging system via the online CIS account be able to answer case-specific questions?**

A10. In most instances, yes.

**Q11. How can a person access the live chat through Emma?**

A11. If a user is inquiring through Emma and their question cannot be answered, they may be prompted with a question asking if they would like to be connected to a live agent to chat with.

**Q12. What is the best online customer service option to submit attachments? For example, when a G-28 filed with a case is not entered into the USCIS system, how can an attorney/representative resubmit it?**

A12. Once a form is filed, the applicant may submit additional documentation or unsolicited evidence for their case through their online account.

In regard to filing a Form G-28 for an existing case, a representative may submit a Form G-28 through their online account on behalf of their client. However, the existing Form G-28 associated with the case must first be withdrawn. The applicant or the prior representative may withdraw the existing Form G-28 through their respective online accounts.

**Q13. Can you review what steps one should take if they've been locked out of their USCIS online account and need a password reset?**

A13. Users can click on “forgot password” and enter the primary email address. Password reset instructions will be sent to the primary email address as well as the recovery email address if the user has one on record.

Users can contact our 800 number and the Help Desk will send an email with the instructions to reset the password or unlock the account. Users may also click on “Ask Emma,” type “forgot password” and Emma will give them options:

- Reset Password on USCIS Online Account → Emma directs the user to the site where the user provides the primary email address and the reset instructions will be sent to the user.
- Reset Password on Case Status Account → Emma asks the user to select Retrieve “Password” or Retrieve “Username”; once the user selects one of the options, the link will take the user to the new USCIS.GOV site; the user will provide the email address and the instructions will be emailed to the user to reset password or unlock account.
- Reset Password on E-Verify Account”. Once the user selects the option, Emma directs the users to the next steps and links to E-Verify website to recover E-Verify password.

**Q14. Can a person request to have a biometrics appointment earlier than their already scheduled appointment?**

A14. Biometric services appointments are expedited on a case-by-case basis. Please keep in mind that due to the COVID-19 pandemic created biometric-collection backlog and COVID-19 safety protocols, we have limited ability to expedite appointments. To request an expedited appointment, applicants should call the USCIS Contact Center at 800-375-5283 (TTY 800-767-1833).

**Q15. If the Contact Center does not decide requests for expedited processing, does that mean if an applicant is asking for urgent advance parole processing, the Contact Center must forward the case to tier 2 to schedule an appointment for processing the urgent advance parole?**

A15. In the question example, if the applicant requires emergency travel, but has a pending Form I-131, the contact center staff will review the inquiry and contact the customer to determine if they need an appointment. In any case that requires an appointment, the USCIS Contact Center Tier 1 staff will escalate the inquiry to a Tier 2 ISO for review and resolution. In most instances, like emergency travel, we will schedule the customer for an appointment where we can issue the document at an USCIS office.

**Q16. How can a person submit documents online to support their expedite requests?**

A16. USCIS does not accept online documents to support an expedite request. The expedite decision is made by the operational units within Field Operations Directorate and Service Center Operations who will work with the applicant or attorney on what is required and how to submit any documentation.

**Q17. Can applicants make an expedite request just for biometrics appointment scheduling?**

A17. Yes, applicants can request an expedited biometric services appointment, but such appointments are extremely limited due to COVID-19 protocols and they are made at the discretion of the Contact Center ISO.

**Q18. Is the Request for an Appointment Guide public? If not, can it be made public?**

A18. The Request for Appointment guide is an internal training document that is continually updated but is not for public use. Due to limited availability, appointments are determined on case-by-case basis.

**Q19. If one submits an e-request and does not receive a response back by the stated response date, what is the next step to follow up on the e-request?**

A19. If an applicant submits an e-request and SCOPS/FOD have not answered the service request and 30 calendar days have passed, the USCIS Contact Center can create a secondary/tertiary request.

**Q20. If a person experiences technical issues while trying to make a case inquiry online, how can they get technical support?**

A20. Users may contact our 800 number or submit a [webform](#). A technical Help Desk agent will contact user for assistance.

**Q21. How can payment be made to the Kiosk? Will it take checks?**

A21. The kiosks will be going live soon and will have a rolling 15 second introductory video explaining the payment options available.

**Q22. Why is help available online for typos on I-765 or I-131, but not for I-485?**

A22. Help is available for the Form I-485 using the following link: [Form I-485 help for typos](#).

The screenshot shows a webform titled "Typographic Error" with the following content:

**Typographic Error**  
Did you receive a notice, document or card from USCIS and it contains a typographic error? We can assist you in correcting the error.

**What you'll need**

- > Receipt Number
- > A-Number (if applicable)
- > Item that contains the error
- > Date when filed
- > Email Address

**Case Information**

Form Number: I485 (dropdown menu)

Form Sub Type: I485 - Family Based Adjustment (dropdown menu)

Receipt Number: [text input field]

Date Filed (MM/DD/YYYY): [text input field]

**Q23. How do I access a paper-filed case with a preexisting myUSCIS legal representative account? The online access code notice provided by USCIS for a paper-filed case can only allowed to be access by a newly opened account. I have inquired this issue through a message in the preexisting account, but the answer was that I have to open a new account in order to link the case.**

A23. If you submitted a paper-filed case with a Form G-28, received an Online Access Code, and already have an existing representative account, you could do one of the following:

- a) Withdraw the G-28 submitted by paper and then submit an e-filed standalone Form G-28 for that case so that it appears in your account; or
- b) Submit another paper Form G-28 and make sure to include the Online Account Number (found in your account profile) and information about you that matches your online account profile.

That should allow the paper-filed case to appear in your online account.

**Q24. How can I get USCIS My Account to recognize my clients who have mailed in their applications that I prepared for them and included a G-28?**

A24. Please reference the response to Question 23.

**Q25. Are USCIS technical support staff also contractors? My recent experience with the technical support staff is that they provided inconsistent information with the USCIS policy and procedure.**

A25. The Help Desk is staffed by contract employees who receive comprehensive and ongoing training to ensure they provide accurate and consistent information.