
How Can You Avoid Lies?

- Use common sense. Many people hear what they want to hear—be smart! If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Don't believe it if someone tells you about a secret law or claims to have connections or special influence with any agency.
- Don't pay money to someone to refer you to a lawyer.
- Walk away if someone doesn't have a license.
- Never sign an application that contains false information, and try to avoid signing blank forms. If you must sign a blank form, make sure you get a copy of the completed form and review it for accuracy before it is filed.
- Always get proof of filing—a copy or government filing receipt—when anything is submitted in your case.
- Insist on a written contract that details all fees and expenses and make sure you receive a receipt, especially if you pay cash. If terms change, get a written explanation.
- Don't let anyone "find" you a sponsor or spouse to get you a green card—it's illegal.

Take Action If You Fall Victim!

If a consultant or even an attorney misrepresents him or herself or otherwise makes a serious error that hurts your case, you may be able to fix the problem by reporting his misconduct.

If you have a complaint about your attorney, contact the Attorney Grievance Commission at (313) 961-6585 to make a complaint.

For both attorneys and accredited representatives, you can file a complaint with DHS or the Immigration Court. For details, see www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/00profcondfaks.htm

State Bar of Michigan Lawyer Referral Service

(800) 968-0738

<http://www.michbar.org/programs/lawyerreferral.cfm>

The State Bar of Michigan Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS) is designed to assist anyone who wants to hire an attorney and can afford to pay for legal services.

State Bar of Michigan Unauthorized Practice of Law

(517) 346-6333

<http://www.michbar.org/professional/upl.cfm>

It is the unauthorized practice of law for a person to exercise legal discretion on behalf of another person, or practice law for another person, when he is not legally authorized to do so.



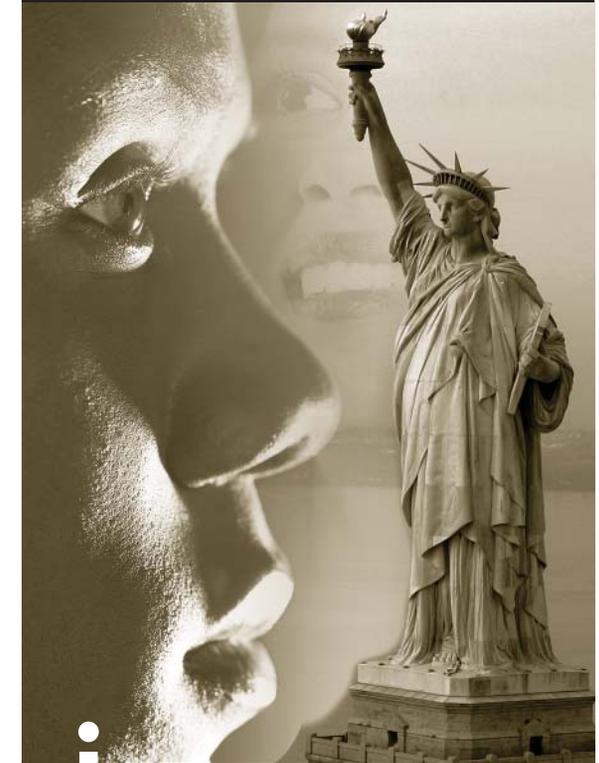
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This pamphlet may be purchased individually or in bulk from the State Bar of Michigan Membership Services Department
306 Townsend Street
Lansing, Michigan 48933-2012
www.michbar.org

You may call
1-800-948-1442 ext. 6326
to obtain price information.

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STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN



Immigration law

Don't be a victim!

Protect yourself and your family.

Consult a licensed professional.

Protect Your Family's Dreams

Many noncitizens who would otherwise qualify for immigration benefits discover they will never be successful because an immigration “consultant” destroyed their dreams. Don't let this happen to you.

While many legitimate community and religious organizations provide immigration-related services, non-lawyers who advertise as legal “consultants” or “notarios” are not authorized or qualified to help with immigration matters.

By promising too much—and knowing too little—unauthorized consultants often shatter immigrants' dreams. Many are little better than scam artists, taking their client's trust—and money—and never having to answer for the results.

It is against the law for “public notaries” or even foreign lawyers who are not licensed in the United States to provide immigration advice—even “just” filling out forms is something that only a licensed, properly trained lawyer or accredited representative should do.

Michigan Immigration Clerical Assistant Act

On October 1, 2004, the Michigan Immigration Clerical Assistant Act (“MICAA”) went into effect. The purpose of MICAA is to prevent the unauthorized practice of immigration law by requiring non-attorneys who provide immigration services or advice to register with the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, obtain a \$50,000.00 bond to protect consumers, provide written disclosures of consumer rights and information, and limit fees for permitted translation services. The penalties for violating the MICAA are severe and include criminal prosecution for misdemeanor and felony offenses and civil action by victims.

When a consultant promises to help—but doesn't deliver—the damage may not be fixable, and there may be no one to turn to. If you have a complaint about a notario or immigration consultant, contact your local bar association, consumer advocate, or local prosecutor for advice

Who Can Help With Your Questions?

Only a U.S. licensed lawyer or accredited representative is authorized and qualified to assist with your immigration case. Unlike consultants, lawyers have completed extensive education and training before being licensed to represent clients. You can verify whether a lawyer is in good standing and licensed to help you by contacting the State Bar of Michigan at (800) 968-1442 or on the web at www.michbar.org.

Lawyers are also required to maintain high ethical standards—and if they don't, you can contact your local bar association for action.

If you need help finding a qualified immigration attorney in your area, you can contact the State Bar of Michigan Lawyer Referral Service at (800) 968-0738 to speak to a lawyer referral associate.

An accredited representative works with a nonprofit community or religious organization that has been recognized as having the skill and training to assist people with their immigration matters. You can find a list of accredited representatives at www.usdoj.gov/eoir/statspub/raroster.htm

Don't be fooled! If you consult a lawyer, make sure the lawyer is licensed. If you work with an accredited representative, ask to see the accreditation.

Can't Afford A Lawyer?

Unfortunately, the government does not provide free lawyers in immigration cases; generally you must hire your own lawyer or represent yourself. Certain people may qualify for help from an accredited nonprofit organization for a small fee or even free of charge. Also, certain people may qualify for free legal services through certain programs, which you can find out about through your local Dispute Resolution Center.

Neither the Department of Homeland Security nor the Immigration Court can provide you with legal advice or representation. For more information on low-fee or pro bono help, visit www.usdoj.gov/eoir/probono/probono.htm

Know Your Rights!

If you work with a lawyer or accredited representative, you have certain rights.

- You have the right to a written contract, explaining the scope of representation and fees.
- You have the right to be kept informed about your case status and what has been filed.
- You have the right to a complete copy of any forms or documents submitted in your case.
- You have the right to an accounting of your case, detailing the total costs, as well as receipts for payments.
- You are protected under the attorney-client privilege, and anything you tell the attorney will be kept confidential (the attorney cannot report and/or threaten to report you to any local or government officials).