

5 ways state officials can protect the public from notario fraud



Partner with nonprofit groups to establish trust with immigrants who might fear contact with local officials.

Officials, such as police officers and district attorneys, can build trust with fraud victims by collaborating with local organizations that already work with immigrants and understand the concerns people have about engaging with law enforcement. These groups can help develop procedures and resources to address the community's needs and encourage families to report harmful business practices. For example, Building One Community, a CLINIC affiliate in Connecticut, hosts a program that helps police officers talk with immigrants in a safe setting. Read more in "Building trust with a cup of Joe" at cliniclegal.org/cupofjoe.



Enact comprehensive laws that specifically target notario fraud.

Some states do not regulate who may provide immigration services to the public. Many more do not criminalize immigration services fraud or provide ways for victims to recover the money they lost. Without appropriate laws in place, state agencies cannot hold individuals accountable for harming customers. Providing victims with incentives, such as a right to sue perpetrators in civil court, could increase reporting.



Strengthen internal confidentiality policies to help victims feel comfortable reporting fraud.

Adopt policies that prohibit local agency employees from collecting information about victims' immigration status or sharing it externally. This could help reduce victims' fear and encourage them to cooperate with local officials in their investigation.



Make complaint procedures accessible.

Online forms and hotlines specifically designed for reporting incidents can help the public report notario fraud. These reporting tools should be available in multiple languages. Then, residents can provide the tips law enforcement agents need to crackdown on these activities. The New York state Immigration Services Fraud hotline and complaint forms are good examples to model after. Find them online at ag.ny.gov/immigration-fraud/contact-us.



Educate consumers on how the existing laws protect them.

Many consumers do not know their state provides protections against immigration services fraud or they do not know how to report scams. State officials should launch campaigns to explain these existing protections. Community organizations can step in to provide training that helps consumers identify qualified legal help for their immigration needs. Together, they can improve consumer protection.