Sample Policies and Procedures Manual

Policies and Procedures

Three Divisions:
1. VAWA/U-Visa Division
2. Family Based Law Division ("FB")
3. Administrative Assistant/Support Workers ("SS")

1. Telephone Calls

A. All incoming calls need to be screened by the Administrative Assistant or support staff ("SS"). The support staff should ask who is calling and what the nature of the call is. The caller will then be placed on hold while the support staff checks to see if a staff person is available to take the call (by intercom or by walking to their office). If staff is unavailable (such as being with a client or occupied otherwise), the call will be sent to a staff person's voice mail unless it is urgent.

B. Due to the high volume of calls, both new and existing clients will have to leave voicemails.

C. All calls should be returned by a staff member within 48 hours. If a client is asking a question or wanting an answer that staff does not yet have, a courtesy call will be made to the client informing them we will call them when we have more information.

D. Voicemail will need to be checked at least twice per day.

E. Clients will be given a "Program Policy" addendum in regards to our phone call return procedure.

2. Walk-in Clients

The *Immigration Legal Assistance Service* ("ILAS") staff will not take clients appointments by walk-ins. Instead, any client or potential client who walks into the ILAS office shall first speak to a secretary who will ask the person to complete a *Client Waiting In Lobby For Immigration Services* form. The client will indicate their name, date, time, and whether they are a "new client" or an "existing client." The secretary will then bring the form to the SS person for assistance.

3. Program Policy Addendum

A sheet that explains the ILAS procedures for phone calls, payments, etc. It is an addendum to the retainer and will be handed out of the consultation. A file will not be opened for the client until they contact the program and are ready to proceed. Instead, an *Open Case Memo* will be completed, and a *List of Documents* will be given to the client so they know exactly what they need in order to proceed. The consultation file will then be placed in the file cabined under the *Consultation Only* cabinet.

4. <u>Appointments</u>

All consultants must be made by an appointment. All first appointments will be given by the SS or ILAS staff if that person is occupied. All appointments will be entered into the Outlook calendar with client name, number, and type of consultation. If the appointment is in the Family Based Division, an intake form will be mailed out to the address given. The SS will instruct the client to fill out the intake form and bring it to the initial consultation. The SS will inform the potential caller that the initial consultation is $30.00 and if their case is accepted, additional fees may be assessed.

The SS will need to determine who will assist with the case by asking the following questions:

1. "Hi, my name is ___________________."
2. "How can I help you today?"
3. "In order to assist you, I can give you an appointment with our Immigration Specialist or Attorney. Although we have a Legal Immigration Program here, we do not take every type of case. I will need to ask you a few questions to see if I am able to give you an appointment."

5. <u>Consultations</u>

When perspective client arrives for consultation, the secretary will notify SS that client has arrived by handing them the <u>*Client Waiting in Lobby for Immigration Services*</u> form. The SS will allow client to enter the office area and will collect the consultation fee before the Immigration Specialist ("IS") meets with him/her.

If the prospective client brings a completed <u>*Client Intake*</u> form, the SS will review it and fill in the blanks. The SS will also accept copies of any documents the client brought, such as a green card, marriage certificate, etc.

The IS will provide the consultation and decide the following:

A. Is the case a "consultation only" because it is **out of our scope of representation**? If so, an <u>*Open Case Memo*</u> will be completed, copies of documents will be taken and the file will be considered DEAD and placed in the "Consultation Only" cabinet.

B. Is this a "consultation only" case because the **client needs time to gather additional documents** in order to proceed? If so, an <u>*Open Case Memo*</u> will be completed, copies of documents will be gathered, and file will be placed in "Consultation Only" cabinet. (See below for Consultation Only instructions.)

C. Is this a case that the IS **will accept immediately**? For example, is there a need to renew a green card, or is this a VAWA case that is ready to proceed? In these instances, a retainer agreement will be signed and an actual file will be created. This file will be placed in each IS drawer under, <u>*Researching, Type Forms*</u>.

6. <u>Consultations ONLY</u> <u>(Dead Files)</u>

Every consultation with VAWA/U VISA or Family Based Cases ("FB") will be considered a "consultation only" until client is ready or able to proceed. The potential client, along with either the Immigration Specialist or Immigration Attorney, will sign a *Consultation Only Agreement* form. A file will **not** be opened until the client contacts our office to advise that they are ready to proceed. When the client **is** ready to proceed, an *Open Case Memo* will be completed and a list of documents will be given to the client so they know exactly what they need in order to proceed.

The "Consultation Only" file will be placed in the cabinet, *Consultation Only*. When the client is ready to proceed, they should call our office and speak with the SS for an appointment and to confirm that they have all the documents that were requested by the IS. The SS will then make a 2nd appointment for the client to come in and drop off the documents, review and sign forms, to sign a new retainer, etc. An appointment will be made for the client by giving the Staff a two-week notice and time to do a 2nd evaluation and type forms. After the client comes to the 2nd consultation, the case should be worked on and filed within 10 days (MICA filing rule).

7. Opening a File

An actual file will be open if the IS has agreed to accept the case by signing a *Retainer Agreement* stating that. A file should have a *Progress Sheet* attached that states case number, client name, address, date opened, emergency contact, type of case, diary date spaces, etc. Each file should contain the following:

Left Side of File	Right Side of File
• **INTAKE** (Has basic client information)	• **CLIENT INFO SHEET**: (It has more detailed data, i.e. addresses for the last 5 years, parent information, trips taken, spousal data, etc.
• **OPEN CASE MEMO** (Explains the process that the client is going through. It has important dates and contains explanation of case).	• **DOCUMENTS NEEDED LIST**
• **RETAINER**	• **MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES**: (You can find marriage date, client birth date, parent information).
• **CONSULTATION QUESTIONAIRRE**	• **DIVORCE DECREE OF PETITIONER**: (You can find marriage date and divorce date).
• **FEES AND COST AGREEMENT**	• **DIVORCE DECREE OF BENEFICIARY**: (You can find marriage date and divorce date).
• **5 PAGES OF CASE NOTES**	• **NATURALIZATION CERFIFICATE**: (You can find Naturalization certificate number, date of naturalization, place of Naturalization, legal name) • **COPY OF PERMANENT RESIDENT CARD**: (You can find client legal name, A# or alien registration number, date person became permanent resident, manner or code in which person gained permanent residency).

An open file will remain in each *IS* cabinet labeled, *Pending with ILAS*, until filed. After case is filed, the file will be moved to the *Pending with USCIS/NVC*.

8. File Numbers

Each Staff member has his or her own file number system and each client will be given a case number if even it is a "consultation only." The file numbers will be used to type forms on *IMMPRO*. Type the file number on the client progress sheet and include the office *ILAS* logo. (The logo can be cut and pasted from another source on the computer. See Staff for assistance in doing this.)

Example: E10—08, L10—08, J10—08. The first letter is the initial of the staff member, followed by 10, then begin with 1, 2, 3 +, followed by the year.

9. Scope of Representation

ILAS will not accept every immigration case and will limit the scope of representation so that they can specialize and focus on the *VAWA/U-Visa and Family Based* cases. An updated list of cases that will be accepted will be included in the *Policies and Procedures Addendum* in the shared file.

10. Case notes

The *Case Notes* form must be in every client file, in chronological order with the most current note on top. (Case notes are placed on left-side of file). Each "case note" must include a date, the action taken on case, a PLAN of action, diary date, and staff initials.

11. Mail and Mailing Procedures

A.) The CC mailbox will be checked every other day. Mail will be dispersed into the staff mailboxes, which will be checked daily by Staff. Any mail from USCIS/NVC will need to be stamped with a "RECEIVED" stamp and the date entered. Mail must be stapled into the client file and a case notation made. A diary date must be included in the case notes and progress sheets with the next expected action to be taken on case. Staff has 48 hours to contact the client via phone and/or mail.

B.) All client applications must be mailed via certified mail with return receipt requested. Clients are responsible for the mailing fee, but ILAS will mail all applications. All mail will be mailed via Stamps.Com and will be done so before 4:30 every day.

12. Contacting Clients

Any time a client calls or a client is contacted, the conversation must be recorded in the case notes.

All client inquiries and messages will be returned within 48 hours. A potential client will be notified within seven (7) days of the initial contact about whether his/her case has been accepted.

Clients will be notified any time of correspondence from CIS, NVC, if received by ILAS. (Also see item # 10 (A) of the Mail/Mailing Procedures above).

13. Requests for Evidence (RFE)

If a *<u>Request for Evidence</u>* ("RFE") is issued, notify client immediately by phone and by certified mail with return receipt requested. Record the due date on the front of client file in RED INK as well as in Outlook calendar. Set reminders to contact client.

14. <u>Fingerprint Notices</u>

The client <u>should</u> receive a copy of a fingerprint notice sent to his/her home address. ILAS will also receive notification. <u>Upon the ILAS receiving this notice, contact the client and confirm they too received a copy at their home address</u>. If client <u>did not</u> receive the notice, he/she must come in to ILAS and pick-up the copy of this form. Make a record of this conversation in the case notes.

15. <u>Client Files, Filing Procedure</u>

All client files must be filed by the Beneficiary or the Applicant's last name. Any active cases, must have a file jacket (progress sheet) containing the following information:

- **File label** containing the client's last name, first name, and case number on it (in that order.) (In the case of multiple last names or sur names, ask the IS which last name the client goes by.)

- Sample file label:

Name (Last, First, Middle)
Case #

- Client name, address, and phone;
- Emergency contact;
- Case number;
- Date opened;
- Applications filed information and diary dates.

All cases must be filed alphabetically in locked filing cabinet. Each staff member will have own cabinet with separate drawers, labeled as:

- Closed Cases;
- Pending with USCIS; and
- Pending with ILAS.

16. <u>Typing Forms</u>

Forms will be typed by either Staff, Support Staff, or by Trained Volunteers. Once an FB client has contacted ILAS and are ready for their 2nd consultation and have confirmed they have all required documentation, the SS will schedule a 2nd appointment within a few weeks or 10 days time span. Staff will fill out the yellow form, *<u>Forms That Need To Be Typed</u>* and the client file will be placed in a cabinet folder titled, *<u>Forms That Need to Be Typed</u>*. The SS will take information from the *<u>Client Intake</u>* form and type the forms on *<u>IMMPRO</u>* to the best of their ability. SS will then highlight or make a list of missing information and call client inform them of what info they need to bring to appointment. When the client shows up to their 2nd appointment, they will meet with Staff who will review, finish, and sign forms with client.

17. Translating Documents

All birth certificates, marriage certificates, and client declarations will be translated by support staff. A deadline will be set when the document is due.

18. Open Case Memos

An *Open Case* memo must be completed within 24 hours for every consultation given.

19. Closed Case Memo

A *Closed Case* memo must be completed within 24 hours for every open case that is closed. The *Closed Case* memo must indicate the reason the file is being closed. A closing letter will be sent out to the client that explains the reason that the file is being closed.

20. Consultation Questionnaire

A *Consultation Questionnaire* must be filled out during the initial consultation addressing issues that are not in the *Client Intake* form. The *Consultation Questionnaire* will assist the Staff in writing the Open Case Memo and serve as a guide to asking relevant questions during the consultation.

21. Fees and Cost Agreement

A *Fees and Cost Agreement* form needs to be given to the client at the initial consultation. This Agreement will inform clients of the costs of USCIS/NVC and the program costs. The clients will be instructed to bring with them, to the 2nd consultation, two MONEY ORDERS (for both USCIS and ILAS) if they wish to proceed.

22. Supporting Document List

A Supporting Document List must be given to each client at the initial consultation. This list informs the clients of what documents they will need to provide to the staff for the 2nd consultation in order to proceed with the case. The Supporting Document List will be copied and put in the DEAD FILES until client calls for a second appointment.

23. Gathering Court Documents

Court documents will be gathered by support staff or volunteers. The client will be responsible for the cost and asked to pay in cash after staff agrees to obtain record.

24. Requesting Certified Court Documents from Douglas County

Staff will need to fill out a request form and a SS or volunteer will go once per week on Monday, to look up and order a court disposition. Police Reports are also ordered once per week and picked up once per week.

Each VAWA client will be asked to provide staff with $30.00 for the 2nd consultation in order to obtain court documents, mail application, etc.

25. File review

File reviews will be conducted quarterly and will be Qualitative and Quantitative. The *Quantitative Review* will be conducted by volunteers who will verify if the required documentation is in file. The *Qualitative Review* will be conducted by a local Immigration

Attorney contracted to review files. (Also see *Procedures and Policies* item # 24.) At least ten (10) open files and ten (10) closed files for <u>each</u> staff member will be reviewed each quarter.

26. Round Tables/Peer Reviews

Round tables are used for the purpose of peer reviewing cases. A roundtable will be held the First Tuesday of every month from 9:30-11:30 a.m. All staff must be present and must bring five (5) files to have reviewed by other staff. The five (5) files may be RED FLAG cases, or five (5) random cases to be reviewed. A yellow *Peer Review* form will be completed for each file and attached in front of the last case notes.

27. Naturalization Workshops

In order to maximize our resources, ILAs will host a Naturalization Workshop three times a year (every 4 months). The Naturalization Workshops will pre-register between 20-30 people each clinic in two different time slots. ILAS will utilize 10+ volunteers who will fill out the forms, copy, package, and mail. ILAS support staff will act as quality control and review all applications.

Forms included;
Client Fact Sheet
Poverty Guidelines
Fee Schedule