



USCIS CONTACT CENTER IS MORE A SOURCE OF FRUSTRATION THAN ASSISTANCE

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The [USCIS Contact Center](#) purports to provide tools for checking case statuses online, correcting notices that contain mistakes or were never delivered, and connecting applicants to a representative for live support. However, the Contact Center is more often a source of frustration than assistance. We outline some of our firm's experiences with the Contact Center, and provide suggestions for improving its services.

One common set of issues occurs when an attorney attempts to place a call or e-request on behalf of a client. USCIS refuses to speak with even the managing attorney of the firm if a different attorney has submitted a Form G-28. Difficulties arise when the attorney of record has departed the firm or is otherwise unavailable, and other attorneys are then unable to utilize the Contact Center to assist a client. Even when the alternate attorney on the case submits a Form G-28, the Contact Center often is unable to track the submission of a new Form G-28 and refuses to speak with the alternate attorney. In some instances, USCIS will speak with an alternate attorney if the client is also on the call. This arrangement, however, defeats the purpose of a Form G-28 by forcing the client verbally give permission for representation over the phone, and is highly inconvenient when an attorney cannot be physically in the room with a client or arrange a conference call.

Additionally, USCIS only allows certain interested parties to a case to utilize the Contact Center to make queries. Only the petitioner or an attorney/accredited representative can submit e-requests in connection with a Form I-129 or I-140 petition, for example. USCIS will not respond to requests placed by the beneficiary of such petitions, although the beneficiary may be more sensitive to

delayed receipt notices or misspelling on approval notices, and in a better position to raise these issues to USCIS than the employer.

Further, the USCIS Contact Center is not always responsive to requests, even when they are placed by a recognized party. Our office has observed instances of receipt notices that contain errors failing to get corrected, even after multiples calls and e-requests from the attorney of record. When USCIS does not timely rectify errors of this kind and issues an approval notice still containing a misspelling, applicants are forced to file a Form I-824 and pay the considerable \$465 filing fee to seek a correction. The processing time for an I-824 ranges from a few months to upwards of 24 months.

Delays in processing applications have become endemic. Applicants do not get an employment authorization document issued in time and can lose their job. Also, obtaining advance parole to travel takes several months. One can use the USCIS Contact Center to make an [expedite request](#) under its articulated criteria. Unfortunately, most expedited requests get denied even though they fit the criteria

The problems with the USCIS Contact Center have widely been observed. On February 28, 2022, 47 members of Congress wrote a letter to DHS urging it to make improvements to the Contact Center. *See AILA, Forty-Seven Members of Congress Urge DHS to Make Improvements to USCIS Contact Center*, AILA Doc. No. 22030300 (Feb. 28, 2022), <https://www.aila.org/infonet/urging-dhs-to-make-improvements-to-uscis-contact>. Among the improvements suggested by the members of Congress were providing accurate and accommodating callback windows for customers submitting requests through InfoMod, allowing law firm staff other than the attorney of record to make requests through the Contact Center, making the criteria used to grant appointments through InfoMod public, and offering walk-in availability for emergency requests at local USCIS offices.

Notwithstanding its shortcomings, the USCIS Contact Center has facilitated positive outcomes for some individuals. The USCIS 800 number has been helpful in getting corrected notices sent to applicants, or in this firm's experience, ensuring that beneficiaries to an approved I-140 receive copies of Notices of Intent to Revoke under *Matter of V-S-G- Inc.*, Adopted Decision 2017-06 (AAO Nov. 11, 2017).

(This blog is for informational purposes and should not be viewed as a substitute for

legal advice).

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