

Avoid Notario Fraud and Immigration Service Scams

Protect Your Money, Your Identity, and Your Immigration Status

In many countries, a *Notario Público* is a trained and licensed legal professional, but in the U.S., most people advertising “notario services” are not licensed attorneys. Notarios frequently exploit people seeking legal help, putting them at risk of immigration detention, deportation, identity theft, and financial fraud.

Getting legitimate legal assistance is essential for understanding immigration options and protecting oneself and one’s family.



Who is Authorized to Provide you with Legal Advice?

Only attorneys and accredited representatives authorized by U.S. Citizens and Immigration Services are allowed to prepare legal documents such as immigration forms, give advice on legal matters, or represent clients in a legal proceeding. An accredited representative must have training and authorization from the US government to help people with immigration cases. You can look for the organization and the individual on the [government’s listing of accredited representatives](#).

- Licensed Immigration Attorneys (Verify with your state bar they are licensed – for NJ that is [available here](#))
- [Department of Justice \(DOJ\) Accredited Representatives](#) working at nonprofit organizations



Tips for Avoiding Scams

Unscrupulous individuals pretending to be “immigration consultants,” “notarios” or “attorneys,” falsely claim they can provide immigration services to targeted immigrants with limited English skills.

In the United States, a “notario” is a public notary, which is not the same thing as a lawyer or an authorized representative. Be cautious of emails and websites—official U.S. government websites end in [.gov](#).

- USCIS immigration forms are always free.
- Government agencies will never demand payment by cash, gift card, cryptocurrency, wire transfer, text message, or social media.
- Be wary of anyone demanding payment for legal services in this manner as well.
- Visit [ONA’s Know Your Rights](#) page for more information about your rights and how to avoid falling victim to fraud.



When seeking immigration legal assistance, or any legal assistance, avoid any provider engaging in this practice:

- Promises or guarantees results
- Says they have connections with immigration
- Asks you to lie or use fake documents
- Charges for USCIS forms, which are always free
- Refuses to give written contract information
- Requests money or personal information by phone, text, or social media
- Pledges to speed up your case
- Demands payment by gift card, cryptocurrency, or wire transfer and won't provide receipts



You can protect yourself by:

- Getting a referral from someone you trust for a provider that was trustworthy and effective
- Asking for a written agreement explaining services and fees
- Getting receipts for all payments and copies of everything signed
- Never signing forms you do not understand
- Never signing blank forms
- Keeping your original documents (only give copies)

File a Complaint

To report immigration scams, please contact the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs (Division) by visiting <https://njconsumeraffairs.nj.gov/file-a-complaint/>. The Division intakes reports from all people regardless of their citizenship or immigration status, and Division employees do not ask about citizenship or immigration status.