

FSVS FACT SHEET: Working with U.S. Immigration Attorneys

NOTE: the information below is provided as general information only. It is not legal advice.

Immigration law is complex, and the stakes for many people are very high. If you are reading this information sheet, it is likely that you have encountered a situation that requires legal advice our office is unable to help you with, so we are advising that you find a qualified immigration attorney to assist.

When seeking immigration advice, it is important to look for attorneys who have experience with exactly your type of case. Ideally, you should look for someone who has a large volume of similar cases, and is respected by others in the profession. Don't stop at just one referral, and don't just pick the cheapest (it will be much more expensive to fix any errors made by a sub-par practitioner).

It is important that your attorney is not only knowledgeable, but also experienced and respected in the field. If your case is especially complex, your attorney will need to draw on professional resources. Your attorney's reputation with government agencies, and with other attorneys, can thus be crucial to the success of your case.

There are many good immigration attorneys in Los Angeles, so you may need to speak to several before choosing one. Some may turn down your case if they don't feel they can help you. Above all, if anything about an attorney or their practice makes you uncomfortable, **do not** engage that attorney's services.

Each law practice sets its own fees and rates for service. Many immigration attorneys offer an initial consultation that is either free, or a minimal charge that is applied towards legal fees if you engage that attorney. Legal fees are often on a "flat rate" schedule, meaning that you are not charged hourly but by the specific type of matter the attorney is engaged to prepare. Additionally, most firms will work out an affordable payment plan.

Additional Resources for Legal Consumers

American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA): This is the professional organization for Immigration Attorneys. They also run a referral service, which can be found on their website at: <http://www.aila.org/default.aspx>

California State Bar Association: http://www.calbar.ca.gov/state/calbar/calbar_home.jsp

Los Angeles County Bar Association: has an excellent referral service, which can be reached through their website: <http://www.smartlaw.org/>

Martindale- Hubbell Directory: This respected directory can be accessed at: <http://www.martindale.com/>

Attorneys

We have listed a few attorneys below. These are some with which FSVS has worked in the past and/or has knowledge of the excellence of their reputations and special expertise with immigration for higher education. However, we can't recommend one specifically for your situation. Please feel free to give us feedback about your experiences with them (good or bad). We also welcome hearing about your experiences with other attorneys as well, so that we can locate good resources (or be informed of poor resources as well).

IMPORTANT NOTE: Any attorney you engage should at minimum hold membership in both the State Bar in which they practice and AILA (the American Immigration Lawyers Association). However, such memberships are not a guarantee of the quality of service.

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Please note: The information above is provided as general information only. Please perform your own research when seeking an immigration attorney to engage on your case.