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Asylum Office Best Practice Guide

Updated June 21, 2024

By the AILA Asylum and Refugee Committee¹

The AILA Asylum and Refugee Committee attempts to update this best practices guide on a regular basis. The global COVID-19 pandemic stalled USCIS operations for an extended period, followed by a pause in most affirmative asylum interviews due to a redirection of USCIS resources to the border and to affirmative interviews for asylum seekers who are part of the Afghan Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) program. Due to the lack of affirmative interviews happening currently, some of the information in this guide is unavailable and therefore has not been updated. If practitioners in any of these USCIS asylum office locations see errors in this guide, or have access to any of the missing update information, please reach out to Randall Chamberlain at randall@rcimmigrationlaw.com.

For all asylum offices, updated addresses can be found on the USCIS office locator page, <https://egov.uscis.gov/office-locator/#/asy>. This directory also includes walk-in hours for inquiries (if any). Please note: addresses listed below for each office are subject to change. Please confirm the current address at the link above.

Each chapter’s asylum liaisons can be found on the AILA group directory on the AILA website: <https://www.aila.org/group-directory>

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¹ Special thanks to Randall Chamberlain, Cori Hash, and Christina Brown – as well as a number of local asylum liaisons - for their work on this report.

Arlington (ZAR)

Address: 1525 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22209

Contact Information:

Main Phone Number: (703) 235-4100
Fax Number: (703) 812-8455
Public Email Address: Arlington.Asylum@uscis.dhs.gov
Director: Antonio Donis
Deputy Director: Graham Doeren

Walk-in/Public Inquiry Hours

Thursdays, 8:00-10:00am

Reschedule Requests

Email: ZARRescheduleRequest@USCIS.DHS.gov

Expedite Requests

Email: ZARExpediteRequests@uscis.dhs.gov

Short-Notice List: None

Supporting Documentation:

Documents should be submitted 7 to 10 days prior to the interview. They should be submitted online if the case was filed online. Otherwise, they can be sent by mail to the main address or by email to ArlingtonAsylum@uscis.dhs.gov. If sent by email, a copy should be taken to the interview for the file.

Decision Delivery

Currently all decisions are mailed to applicants.

Remote Attorney Appearance

Available by phone. Attorney must complete a request form at least 10 days before the interview. If the form is received later, the interview may be rescheduled, and it would be considered an applicant-caused delay.

Boston (ZBO)

Address: John W. McCormack Federal Building, 5 Post Office Square, 14th Floor, Boston, MA 02109

Contact Information:

Main Phone Number: (617) 574-3600
Fax Number: (617) 574-3601
Public Email Address: BostonAsylumOffice@uscis.dhs.gov
Director: Meghann Boyle
Deputy Director: Rachael Sundborg

Walk-in/Public Inquiry Hours

Fridays, 8:30am-12:00pm

Reschedule Requests:

Requests to reschedule must be in writing. It is best to email or fax a letter requesting to reschedule as soon as possible. The Boston Asylum Office will approve a first request to reschedule. It is still important to give a bona fide reason for the request, but it should be approved. Once an interview has been rescheduled, it becomes the first priority for scheduling purposes. Thereafter, a second request must contain evidence of the reason for the request. The office uses the good cause standard for the second reschedule request and the exceptional circumstances standard for the third reschedule request. The reason to reschedule a second time has to be more than simply stating the need for more time to prepare. Please do not send generalized requests for second or third reschedule requests. Be specific and provide supporting evidence.

Expedite Requests

If there is a reason to fast track the case, contact the Boston Asylum Office directly in writing (mail, email, or fax—pick one mode of communication). The Boston Asylum Office will only consider expedite requests where there is an emergent reason, such as a family member who has been threatened in the home country or for some medical emergencies. You must provide documentation, if possible, of reasons for expediting an interview. It is best to fax the emergency expedite request.

Short-Notice List:

Separate from the expedite list, there is a “short notice” list. If an attorney's case is interview-ready and they can go forward on a few days’ notice, let the asylum office know. The Boston Asylum Office keeps a list of available substitutes to keep their interview schedule full. One should normally submit a letter requesting that a case be placed on the “short notice” list, along with all of the additional documents one expects to submit. The client should also be prepared for an interview because notice can be as short as one day or as long as two weeks. The asylum office will call the attorney and offer an interview slot. As of August 2023, there are over 400 cases on the short list, and few are currently being scheduled. When scheduled, they are prioritizing the oldest cases, not by when the short list notice request was filed. Normally, once a short notice request is made, the asylum office will send a notice verifying that the case has been

placed on the short notice list. Members may call the Boston office to confirm the case is on the short list.

Supporting Documentation:

Documents may be hand-delivered during walk-in hours or by mail. Additional/supporting evidence must be submitted at least 7-10 business days before the interview. The asylum office does not automatically reschedule if additional or supporting evidence is late-filed. Please two-hole punch the top and fasten with two-prong fasteners, binder clips, or rubber bands (no binding of any kind). Put tabs along the left side or the bottom. The index and cover letter should have the client's full name and A-number. Be selective with the supporting documents and evidence. Include the country reports that are relevant and probative, and when submitting country conditions, consider what holds the most weight (DOS reports, UN reports, respected NGOs with subject matter expertise, recognized and credible media outlets). Please include an annotated index with the country conditions packet and include the title of the report, a summary, and the link to access the report online. It is helpful to also include excerpts of the most important points of each piece of the research in the index for the asylum office to examine.

Decision Delivery

The Boston Asylum Office has been trying to have cases ready for written decisions for pick-up within two weeks of interview, but many cases are still being mailed. Most OAW cases take longer to clear security checks and are then mailed out.

Remote Attorney Appearance

Available, by phone.

Chicago (ZCH)

Address: 181 W. Madison Street, Suite 3000, Chicago, IL 60602

Contact Information:

Main Phone Number: (312) 849-5200
Fax Number: (312) 849-5201
Public Email Address: chicago.asylum@uscis.dhs.gov

Kenneth Madsen – Chicago AO Director – 312-849-5225
Brendan Corcoran – OAW Section Chief – 312-849-5001
Jennifer Lorio – Affirmative Asylum Section Chief – 312-849-5295
Stephanie Smith – CFI/RFI Section Chief – 312-849-5236
Amy Stern – APSO Section Chief – 312-849-5279

Walk-in/Public Inquiry Hours

None

Reschedule Requests

Please alert the Chicago Asylum Office immediately if an interview needs to be rescheduled. Rescheduling requests must be made in writing and sent via mail, hand delivery, or fax. You may also contact the Chicago Asylum Office by email at chicago.asylum@uscis.dhs.gov. The request for a rescheduled interview must include the reason(s) for the request and why the applicant or attorney cannot appear on the scheduled date. UC cases will be granted one (1) interview reschedule as a matter of discretion due to the unique circumstances of these applicants.

Expedite Requests

To request expedited processing of a case, contact chicago.asylum@uscis.dhs.gov with your client's name, A-number, an explanation of the need for expedited processing, and evidence in support of the request. If you request expedited processing, ensure that the case file is complete and that all relevant documents have been provided to the asylum office. If there are changes to the I-589, you may provide an updated I-589 to the officer at the interview to reduce the amount of time devoted to making edits to the application at the start of the interview.

Short-Notice List:

The Chicago Asylum Office maintains a "short list" for individuals willing to travel to Chicago on short notice to fill any last-minute openings in their affirmative asylum interview schedule. To place a client on the "short list," e-mail chicago.asylum@uscis.dhs.gov.

Supporting Documentation:

The Chicago Asylum Office pre-assigns officers to cases a week before the interview. Attorneys may submit additional supplementary documents to the Chicago Asylum Office on Wednesday through Friday prior to the interview. These documents will be added to the file for review by the pre-assigned officer. Attorneys in circuit ride locations should submit two copies of any supplemental documentation at least two weeks prior to the interview. If this is not possible, bring two sets of supplemental documentation to the interview. If there is information you want

to ensure that the officer reviews prior to the interview (i.e. supplemental affidavit), scan and e-mail the document to the asylum office: E-mail: chicago.asylum@uscis.dhs.gov Subject Line: [DATE] Interview in [LOCATION] – Supplemental Filing Content: Provide the client’s name, A-number, date and time of the interview. DO NOT send the entire supplemental filing, only the essential pieces (i.e. do not send voluminous country condition information).

Decision delivery

Most decisions are mailed out, but some decisions are scheduled for pick up.

Remote Attorney Appearance

Available, by phone.

Requests to transfer unserved NTAs to EOIR

The point of contact is Jennifer Lorio. You can reach her through the ZCH jurisdiction email, which is zchjurisdiction@uscis.dhs.gov. All emails that come into that inbox are reviewed, and emails will be processed as quickly as possible.

Houston (ZHN)

Address: 16855 Northchase Drive, Second Floor, Houston, TX 77060

Contact Information:

Main Phone Number: (281) 248-5500
Fax Number: (802) 860-6958
Public Email Address: Houston.Asylum@uscis.dhs.gov
Director: Brian Hemming
Deputy Director: Position Open

Walk-in/Public Inquiry Hours

Thursdays, 12:00-3:00pm

Reschedule Requests:

Requests to reschedule an asylum interview should be emailed to the public email address above. The email should contain the client's name, A-number, date of interview, and a copy of your G-28, if not already on file. Requests should be submitted as early as possible and provide a reason for rescheduling. As a matter of practice, the first request will generally be granted; however, any subsequent requests to reschedule the same case will not be granted absent good cause.

Expedite Requests:

Expedite requests should be submitted via email to the public email address listed above. The subject line of the email should clearly state it is an expedite request. The email should contain the client's name, A-number, date of interview, and a copy of your G-28, if not already on file. Expedite requests should be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation, for example as medical records for the applicant or family member. All expedite requests are reviewed by the Director and a decision on the request will be issued in a "reasonable time." Expedite requests are granted based on the grounds for the request; how long an application has been pending is not a factor in the decision.

Short-Notice List:

The Houston Asylum Office does not currently maintain a short-notice list.

Supporting Documentation:

Documentation is required to be submitted at least one week before the interview date. Documents may be mailed to the Houston Asylum Office at Houston Asylum Office PO Box 670626, Houston, TX 77267. Smaller submissions may be submitted via email to the public email address, although attorneys should also bring additional copies to the interview to be safe. Supporting documents for I-589s filed online should also be submitted online, however attorneys should bring additional copies to the interview if the documents were submitted close in time to the interview.

Decision Delivery:

While some decisions are still being issued in person, the majority are being mailed to the applicants.

Remote Attorney Appearance:

Attorneys may appear remotely by telephone. Attorneys must complete [Form G-1539](#) and submit at least 10 days before the interview. If received later, the interview may be rescheduled, and it would be considered an applicant-caused delay.

Other: Use this address on your GPS or directions app to get you to the retail center parking lot in front of the building: 12190 Greenspoint Dr, Houston, TX 77060.

Los Angeles (ZLA)

Address: 14101 Myford Road, Tustin, CA 92780-7020

Contact Information:

Main Phone Number: 714-368-5700
Fax Number: (714) 368-5799 Fax submissions of 25 or fewer pages per case will be accepted.
Public Email Address: losangelesasylum@uscis.dhs.gov
Director: Unknown²
Deputy Director: Unknown

Walk-in/Public Inquiry Hours

None

Reschedule Requests

Email LosAngelesAsylum@uscis.dhs.gov with as much advance notice as possible. All requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The applicant/attorney should include any appropriate evidence specific to their circumstance and reason for requesting to reschedule.

Expedite Requests

Requests for expedited interviews are reviewed in the order they are received and on a case-by-case basis. If you believe that exceptional circumstances warrant immediate scheduling of a case, please submit a written request for an expedited interview to Congressional Liaison Catherine Mueller (Catherine.g.mueller@uscis.dhs.gov) and include evidence of exceptional circumstances. For urgent requests, please contact ZLA management.

Short-Notice List:

The standby list is CLOSED. Currently, there are 616 cases on the standby list. There are no plans to reopen the standby list at this time.

Supporting Documentation:

ZLA policy requires that all supplementary documents be submitted, by mail, fax (25 pages or less), email (5 pages or less), in-person on Wednesdays with a pre-scheduled appointment, or at myUSCIS, if applicable, at least one week prior to the date of the interview. This includes written declarations, identity documents, country of origin reports, and all other documentary evidence. Applicants who seek to submit documentation in person on the day of the interview, either to the officer or at the window, risk having their cases rescheduled, and the delay will be attributed to the applicant. Limited exceptions to this policy may be made on a case-by-case basis, but only with the approval of the Duty Officer. Applicants will need to show good cause for the untimely submission and that the same-day review of the documents would not significantly burden the interviewing officer.

² If you have the missing information on the Los Angeles Asylum Office, please contact Randall Chamberlain at randall@rcimmigrationlaw.com.

For cases filed via a myUSCIS online account, applicants and attorneys can submit additional documents to their application through their myUSCIS online account. The documents should be clearly labeled “amendment” or “supplemental documents.” It is also recommended that they notify the office via email at LosAngelesAsylum@uscis.dhs.gov. Only Email submissions of five pages or fewer per case will be accepted.

Decision Delivery:

ZLA generally seeks to serve case decisions to applicants who receive in-person decision pick-up (“PUSH”) notices two weeks after completion of the interview. If an applicant is in lawful immigration status, the interview was completed during a circuit ride, or the decision will not be ready in two weeks, ZLA generally provides a mail out notice to the applicant. ZLA seeks to serve mail-out case decisions as soon as practicable.

Remote Attorney Appearance:

The Remote Attorney Appearance Program remains in effect. Please see the public facing instructions for remote appearances in the “Having your attorney or representative participate in your asylum and/or NACARA interview from a remote location via video or telephone” section at: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-and-asylum/asylum/preparing-for-your-asylum-interview>.

Miami (ZMI)

Address: 1501 Biscayne Boulevard, Suite 300, Miami, FL 33132

Contact Information:

Main Phone Number: 786-456-2900
Fax Number: 786-456-2900
Public Email Address: Miami.Asylum@uscis.dhs.gov
Director: Unknown³
Deputy Director: Kimberly Aguilar, kimberly.m.aguilar@uscis.dhs.gov

Walk-in/Public Inquiry Hours

Wednesdays, 9:00-10:30am (although practitioners report these hours are not always recognized).

Reschedule Requests

Via email or Fax (better practice to use both)

Expedite Requests

By Fax, mail or email

Short-Notice List:

By Fax, mail or email

Supporting Documentation:

At least 7-10 days before the interview. By Fax, mail or email.

Decision Delivery:

Depends on the officer/supervisor

Remote Attorney Appearance:

Yes

³ If you have the missing information on the Miami Asylum Office, please contact Randall Chamberlain at randall@rcimmigrationlaw.com.

New Orleans (ZNO)

Address: 2424 Edenborn Avenue, Suite 300, Metairie, LA 70001

Contact Information:

Main Phone Number: (281) 931-2100

Fax Number:

Public Email Address: neworleans.asylum@uscis.dhs.gov.

Director: Latoya Beck, latoya.s.beck@uscis.dhs.gov, (504) 219-3140

Deputy Director: Unknown⁴

Other contacts: Janet McKnight, Supervisory AO,
janet.r.mcknight@uscis.dhs.gov; Kathleen Tonkovich, Supervisory AO,
kathleen.m.tonkovich@uscis.dhs.gov

Walk-in/Public Inquiry Hours

Thursdays, 8:00am-12:00pm

Reschedule Requests

By email or mail

Expedite Requests

By email or mail

Short-Notice List:

YES, by email or mail

Supporting Documentation:

Send to office one week prior to interview.

Decision Delivery: Unknown

Remote Attorney Appearance: Unknown

⁴ If you have the missing information on the New Orleans Asylum Office, please contact Randall Chamberlain at randall@rcimmigrationlaw.com.

New York (ZNY)

Address: 1065 Stewart Avenue, Suite 200, Bethpage, NY 11714

Contact Information:

Main Phone Number: (516) 261-0000

Fax Number:

Public Email Address: NewYork.Asylum@uscis.dhs.gov

(NOTE: ZNY accepts inquiries by email, but all responses are by USPS.)

Director: Mathew Varghese

Acting Deputy Director: Nicole Romano-Ferreira

Walk-in/Public Inquiry Hours

None

Reschedule Requests

By email: NewYork.Asylum@uscis.dhs.gov

Expedite Requests

By mail or email: NewYork.Asylum@uscis.dhs.gov. Rarely granted.

Short-Notice List:

NO

Supporting Documentation:

Two copies (two-hole punched) of supporting documents should be submitted the day of the interview. Cases are not assigned to officers in advance.

Decision Delivery:

Mostly by mail. Decisions can take many months, sometimes years. Remote CFIs are the first priority for officers' time.

Remote Attorney Appearance:

Other Information:

Food is permitted in the waiting room. There are no food/drink vendors near the office.

Newark (ZNK)

NOTE: Applicants who reside in the jurisdiction of ZNK but East of the Hudson River (mainly Manhattan and the Bronx) are generally interviewed at the Manhattan Sub-Office. However, this policy is not always followed. Be sure to look carefully at the interview location on the notice. The Manhattan Sub-Office is managed by the Newark Office, with the same procedures.

Address: Gateway 3, 100 Mulberry Street, Suite 199, Newark, NJ 07102

Manhattan Sub-Office Address: 201 Varick Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 629, New York, NY 10014

Contact Information

Main Phone Number: (973) 848-3100

Fax Number: (973) 848-3101

Public Email Address: newarkasylumofficemailbox@uscis.dhs.gov

Director: Sue Raufer

Deputy Director: Mollie Isaacson

Walk-in/Public Inquiry Hours

Newark – Fridays, 9:00am-1:00pm; Manhattan - None

Reschedule Requests

By email: newarkasylumofficemailbox@uscis.dhs.gov

Expedite Requests

By email: newarkasylumofficemailbox@uscis.dhs.gov

Short-Notice List

You can request to be added to this list by email: newarkasylumofficemailbox@uscis.dhs.gov.

However, the office is not currently calling any cases from the short-notice list.

Supporting Documentation

Documentation is required to be submitted by mail or email (for shorter submissions) at least one week before the interview date. Large submissions the day of the interview may result in the interview being rescheduled.

Decision Delivery

Mostly by mail. Decisions can take many months, sometimes years. Remote CFIs are the first priority for officers' time.

Remote Attorney Appearance:

Other Information:

Food and drinks are not permitted in the waiting room, but this is not strictly enforced. There are restaurants and fast-food outlets near both offices.

San Francisco (ZSF)

Address: 75 Hawthorne Street, 7th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105

Contact Information:

Main Phone Number: (415) 575-1300, (415) 865-3587 and (415) 865-3586
Fax Number: (415) 575-1393
Public Email Address: SanFranciscoAsylum@uscis.dhs.gov
Director: Danielle Lehman, Danielle.E.Lehman@uscis.dhs.gov
Deputy Director: Drew Sieminski, Drew.S.Sieminski@uscis.dhs.gov
Section Chief for Affirmative: Kristen Hatanaka, Kristen.A.Hatanaka@uscis.dhs.gov

Walk-in/Public Inquiry Hours

Fridays, 9:00am-12:00pm

Reschedule Requests

Email: sfasylumreschedulerequests@uscis.dhs.gov

Expedite Requests

Email: ZSFexpediterequests@uscis.dhs.gov

Short-Notice List:

Email: SanFranciscoAsylum@uscis.dhs.gov

Supporting Documentation:

Should be received by the Asylum Office 7-10 days before the interview (usually the Monday of the week before the interview is scheduled). Can email a copy of the documents to: SanFranciscoAsylum@uscis.dhs.gov but then should bring a hard copy of the documents to the interview.

Can also mail to:

USCIS
San Francisco Asylum Office
PO Box 77530
San Francisco, CA 94107

Only need to submit one copy of the documents.

Decision Delivery:

All decisions are currently being mailed out.

Remote Attorney Appearance:

Yes, counsel can appear by phone by making a request no less than 10 days before interview to: ZSFRemoteAttorney@uscis.dhs.gov

Interview Location

As of May 2024, asylum interviews are also being held at 1301 Clay Street, Suite 170N, Oakland, CA 94612. Attorneys should review the interview notice to confirm whether the interview is scheduled at the San Francisco Asylum Office or at the temporary office location in Oakland.

Tampa (ZTP)

Address: 3924 Coconut Palm Drive, Tampa, FL 33619

Contact Information:

Main Phone Number: (813) 372-2000
Fax Number: (813) 467-5890
Public Email Address: Tampa-Asylum@uscis.dhs.gov
Director: Gabriel Garcia-Cay
Deputy Director: Unknown⁵
Chief of Staff: Yomara Lizasoain

Walk-in/Public Inquiry Hours

Wednesdays, 9:00–10:30 AM

Reschedule Requests

Email: Tampa-Asylum@uscis.dhs.gov

Expedite Requests

Via e-mail: Tampa-Asylum@uscis.dhs.gov, by mail, or in person on Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Short-Notice List:

Via e-mail: Tampa-Asylum@uscis.dhs.gov, via mail: USCIS Tampa Asylum Office, 3924 Coconut Palm Drive, Tampa, FL 33619, or in person on Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Supporting Documentation:

At least 7-10 days ahead of the interview. Via e-mail: Tampa-Asylum@uscis.dhs.gov, via mail: USCIS Tampa Asylum Office, 3924 Coconut Palm Drive, Tampa, FL 33619, or in person on Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Decision Delivery:

If the applicant lives within 2 hours of the Tampa asylum office, they will be given an in-person pick-up notice. If not, by mail. UAC and OAW cases by mail.

Remote Attorney Appearance:

Yes

⁵ If you have the missing information on the Tampa Asylum Office, please contact Randall Chamberlain at randall@rcimmigrationlaw.com.