



IMMIGRANT LEGAL ADVOCACY PROJECT

## **CHANGES TO ASYLUM INTERVIEW SCHEDULING POLICY**

On January 31, the United States Citizenship Services (USCIS) announced a change in scheduling procedures for affirmative asylum cases. Effective immediately, USCIS is returning to a “Last in, First out” (LIFO) policy for scheduling asylum interviews which means that the most recently filed asylum applications will be processed first and pending cases will remain in backlog.

The Boston Asylum Sub-Office will schedule asylum interviews in the following order:

- **First priority:** Applications that were scheduled for an interview, but the interview had to be rescheduled at the applicant’s request or the needs of USCIS.
- **Second priority:** Applications that have been pending 21 days or less (filed AFTER January 8, 2018)
- **Third priority:** All other pending affirmative asylum applications will be scheduled for interviews starting with newer filings and working back towards older filings.

### **What does this mean if my case is pending?**

For applicants who filed their asylum application and may have been waiting months or years to have their asylum case scheduled, the wait is about to get much longer. Currently, each asylum office receives more asylum applications on a weekly basis than it is able to schedule for interviews. It is unlikely that the USCIS will be able to keep up with all newly filed applications, but if they do they will begin to schedule cases from the backlog starting with the most recent (late 2017) going back to 2014

### **If I file an asylum application today, when can I expect to have an interview?**

When the LIFO system was used in the past, interviews were scheduled within approximately 6 weeks. This is the timeframe provided by immigration law

### **How will this change how I prepare my case?**

Under the old policy, you could expect a delay of about four years in the Boston Asylum Office before your interview was scheduled. As a result, many people filed basic I-589 applications for asylum quickly to get in line and then prepared their declaration and supporting evidence with the help of an attorney on a slower basis.

**With the change in scheduling, you should be prepared for an interview within three to six weeks after submitted your asylum application. HOWEVER YOU MUST FILE AN APPLICATION WITHIN ONE YEAR OF ENTERING THE UNITED STATES.**

### **If my case is in backlog, can I request a quicker interview?**

The Boston Asylum Sub-Office will consider, on a case-by-case basis, urgent requests (see below) to be scheduled for an interview outside of the priority order listed above. The number of cases that are scheduled for an interview in any given month depends on the office's staffing resources and no-show rates, as well as the number of affirmative asylum receipts in that month.

- **Requesting an expedited interview** -- Expedited interviews are granted for humanitarian reasons only. You **must** include supporting or documentary evidence to support your claim that you require an expedited interview for humanitarian reasons.
- **Asking to be placed on the Short-List** – Being placed on the Short-List allows the Boston Asylum Office to contact you via phone to offer you an interview appointment on short-notice. Please note that if you choose to be added to this list and subsequently agree to appear for an interview when contacted, you are agreeing to waive the 21 day notification requirement.
- **Written requests can be made via our NEW email to [BostonAsylumOffice@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:BostonAsylumOffice@uscis.dhs.gov), fax to 617-565-9507, or mail to 15 New Sudbury St, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 600, Boston, MA 02203**

**IMPORTANT: IF YOU HAVE AN ATTORNEY, YOUR ATTORNEY MUST MAKE THE REQUEST ON YOUR BEHALF TO BE ON THE SHORT LIST.** If you have retained an attorney, you should discuss this option with your attorney and the attorney must make the request to be placed on the Short-List on your behalf. Your attorney will be contacted by phone when an interview becomes available.

For additional information on preparing your asylum application please see:

[http://www.ilapmaine.org/documents/A\\_Guide\\_for\\_Maine\\_Asylum\\_Seekers\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.ilapmaine.org/documents/A_Guide_for_Maine_Asylum_Seekers_ENGLISH.pdf) (Also in French, Spanish and Arabic)

<https://mainelaw.maine.edu/academics/clinics-and-centers/clac/refugee-and-human-rights/advocacy-and-outreach/asylum-video-series/> (videos in English and French)