

**KNOW THE DIFFERENCE: LAWYER VS. ACCREDITED
REPRESENTATIVE**

You have the right to be represented in your immigration case by a licensed attorney or by an accredited representative of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). The DOJ recommends having this support from the very beginning of your application to make sure your case is handled safely, responsibly, and according to the law.

Licensed Attorneys

Attorneys can represent someone in immigration cases, as long as they are licensed and in good standing in any U.S. state, territory, or the District of Columbia.

Accredited Representative

An Accredited Representative is authorized by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), under 8 C.F.R. § 1292.2(d), to provide legal assistance in immigration matters through a recognized organization. Although not an attorney, this professional is officially permitted by the DOJ to perform, within a nonprofit organization, functions similar to those of an immigration lawyer in administrative proceedings. Their responsibilities include:

- Provide legal guidance on immigration matters;
- Represent immigrants before USCIS and, in some cases, at interviews and administrative hearings;

- Complete and review official forms;
- Sign Form G-28 and other forms as a preparer and official representative;
- Prepare and review documents, such as petitions, statements, and evidence;
- Attend and represent the immigrant in immigration interviews;
- Explain rights, responsibilities, and next steps throughout the process.

Can I Represent Myself in My Immigration Case?

You can represent yourself in your immigration case. However, the Department of Justice emphasizes the importance of having an accredited representative or an attorney to handle your case.

Some nonprofit organizations provide legal guidance and can help you find an attorney or accredited representative to file your case.

WHERE TO FIND FREE OR LOW-COST HELP WITH IMMIGRATION IN NEW YORK CITY

New York City has several trusted organizations that offer free or low-cost legal guidance for immigrants. Most of these institutions have licensed attorneys or DOJ-accredited representatives, ensuring safe and authorized legal assistance. Here are some options available:

Imigra Foundation

Imigra Foundation is a nonprofit organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and registered as a 501(c)(3). It offers affordable immigration services with multilingual support (Portuguese, Spanish, and English), including:

- Family petitions;
- Adjustment of status (Green Card);
- Work visas (EB-3);
- Extension or change of immigration status;
- Humanitarian cases, such as VAWA (Violence Against Women Act – for survivors of domestic violence), among others.

Leading the team is Kelly Fontoura, an accredited representative recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and authorized under 8 C.F.R. § 1292.2(d) to represent clients before immigration authorities, providing professional, ethical, and reliable support.

📍 Address: 12 E 41st St, Suite 1401, New York, NY 10017
📞 Phone: (646) 590-2476
📱 WhatsApp: (347) 870-4216
🌐 Website: www.imigrafoundation.org

The organizations and accredited representatives mentioned are recognized under the authority of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), in accordance with the rules of the Recognition and Accreditation (R&A) Program, governed by 8 C.F.R. §§ 1292.11–1292.20. Learn more: <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognition-accreditation-program>

ActionNYC

A New York City program that connects immigrants with free attorneys and legal representatives throughout the city.

📞 Hotline: 1-800-354-0365

🌐 Website: www.nyc.gov/actionnyc

Legal Aid Society – Immigration Law Unit

Provides free legal assistance to low-income immigrants, including asylum cases, deportation defense, and family petitions.

📍 Address: 199 Water Street, New York, NY 10038

🌐 Website: www.legalaidnyc.org

CUNY Citizenship Now!

A City University of New York project that provides free assistance for citizenship, Green Card applications, and DACA.

📍 Offices: Various CUNY campuses

🌐 Website: www.cuny.edu/citizenship-now

New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)

Provides free or low-cost immigration services, with an initial screening available by phone.

📞 Screening Line: (212) 613-5000

🌐 Website: www.nylag.org

Catholic Charities Community Services (CCCS)

Provides immigration legal services at affordable rates or for free for low-income immigrants.

📍 Address: 80 Maiden Lane, 13th Floor, New York, NY 10038

🌐 Website: catholiccharitiesny.org