

Recommendation #16
I-131 Refugee Travel Document

On June 10, 2005, the Ombudsman recommended that USCIS *(i) revise 8 CFR Sec 223.3(a)(2) to extend the period of validity for refugee travel documents from 1 year to 10 years and (ii) establish a policy of adjudicating I-131 applications for refugee travel documents and reentry permits within 6 weeks, the same amount of time it takes a U.S. citizen to acquire a passport.*

On December 27, 2005, USCIS responded to the Ombudsman's recommendation. We explained in detail the reasons why we could not agree with the recommendation. A refugee travel document is only issued to a person granted refugee status or asylum in the U.S. Under the current statutory construct both refugee and asylum status are limited to one year, at the end of which the individual must apply for adjustment of status to permanent residence. It would be inappropriate to issue a travel document for a period of time that exceeds the person's status. As part of our transformation initiative, we hope to be able to let customers choose between several service level options because we recognize that no matter how fast the average, some customers need expedited service.

The Ombudsman did not have any follow-up to the USCIS response and we consider this recommendation closed.