



July 16, 2007

# Questions and Answers

## **USCIS Releases SIMS Pilot Program for Inter-Country Adoption Applications**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) launched its first pilot program to test the web-based information management tool known as Secure Information Management Service (SIMS) on July 5, 2007. USCIS will use SIMS to process inter-country adoption applications in select U.S. and overseas locations in Memphis, Tenn. and Newark, N.J., and internationally in Frankfurt, Germany; Bangkok, Thailand; and Mexico City, Mexico. Filing requirements and processing dates will remain the same during the initial phase of the pilot program. Applicants will continue to submit Form I-600A (Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition), Form I-600 (Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative), and Form N-600 or N-600K (Application for Certificate of Citizenship) when required. USCIS will then create individual customer accounts in the SIMS database.

The results of the SIMS pilot program will change the way USCIS does business and will streamline outdated processes. These improvements will mean better service for USCIS customers, but will also enable USCIS to enhance security, prevent fraud, and equip the Service with the means for better interaction with state and federal agencies as well as the general public.

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:**

#### **Q. What is the SIMS Pilot?**

A. SIMS stands for the Secure Information Management Service. It is a modified web-based information management tool used to collect and process benefit applications. It was developed to support USCIS' transition from a paper-based filing system to a centralized and consolidated electronic environment that supports the agency's goals of increased focus on customer service, national security and operational efficiency. The SIMS pilot involves the deployment of a customized information management and account-based process to select USCIS offices.

#### **Q. What form/benefit types are affected by SIMS?**

A. The SIMS pilot will involve the processing of I-600A, I-600, and N-600 or N-600K applications, which pertain to the granting of citizenship in inter-country adoption cases. All new I-600A, I-600, and N-600/ N-600K applications that are filed with USCIS pilot offices on or after July 5, 2007 will be managed, processed, and adjudicated by personnel using the new SIMS tool.

**Q. When will the SIMS pilot begin?**

A. The SIMS pilot deployed on July 5, 2007. SIMS will be used by personnel to process all new inter-country adoptions cases filed with those offices participating in the pilot program (Memphis, Tenn.; Newark, N.J.; Bangkok, Thailand; Frankfurt, Germany; and Mexico City, Mexico).

**Q. What happens after the SIMS pilot program?**

A. After the SIMS pilot program, USCIS will leverage the lessons learned from processing inter-country adoptions cases to develop Agency-wide technology tools and business processes for handling all USCIS-administered benefit applications. This data will also be utilized in determining Service-wide processes and release schedules for all other USCIS applications.

**Q. How will the SIMS pilot improve the way USCIS does business?**

A. The SIMS information management technology and supporting business process will maintain all pilot inter-country adoptions case information in a single location, which will be electronically accessible to all USCIS officers within the pilot sites (access levels will vary according to user need).

**Q. What are the benefits of the SIMS pilot and the information management /account-based system?**

A. In the designated pilot locations SIMS will validate the benefits of an electronic account-based system including:

- the retrieval and re-use of information for subsequent applications filed;
- the linking of related cases and individuals;
- more effective ways of sharing information internally to verify identity, eligibility, and status

**Q. How will USCIS customers be affected by the SIMS pilot program?**

A. In the initial phase of the SIMS pilot, customers will not be directly affected. For this deployment, all customer-facing processes including application intake, biometric collection, interviews, and document issuance will remain the same from the customer's perspective. Customers will be notified in advance of any proposed processing changes.