



Why This Matters

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) processes requests for immigration benefits. Fraud detection in the immigration benefit caseload is important to ensure program integrity and national security. Concern has been expressed that Immigration Services Officers, who process immigration benefits, may experience pressure to process cases quickly to meet workload demands. Such pressure could adversely affect fraud detection efforts and national security.

DHS Response

USCIS concurred with eight of our 11 recommendations. For the three recommendations where USCIS did not concur, alternate ideas were suggested that could address the intent of the recommendations. USCIS intends to take additional steps to improve the interaction between employees who adjudicate cases and those who work on fraud detection. Also, improvements are planned to address Immigration Services Officers' performance measures so that the quality of their work is emphasized. Finally, revisions will clarify existing policies to maximize the ability to detect fraud and improve the immigration benefit system.

For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202)254-4100, or email us at DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@dhs.gov

The Effects of USCIS Adjudication Procedures and Policies on Fraud Detection by Immigration Services Officers

What We Determined

USCIS has taken important steps to improve the immigration benefit issuance system. Nonetheless, some Immigration Services Officers and managers throughout USCIS suggested that further improvements would enhance the fraud detection mission and reduce the possibility that immigration benefits were granted inappropriately. These concerns were similar to historic immigration benefit production pressure concerns expressed prior to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security.

We determined that certain changes could decrease concerns about program integrity. First, Immigration Services Officers could be allowed to interact more with fraud detection staff. This facilitates training and discussions about cases. Second, improvements could be made to ensure that Immigration Services Officers have a better understanding of how their performance will be evaluated, which should supplement USCIS efforts to create performance measurement standards that emphasize fraud detection and quality decisions. Third, policy can be developed to decrease confusion in certain areas, such as when requests for evidence are needed to clarify the information that an applicant or petitioner submits in an immigration benefit request.

What We Recommend

Our recommendations to the Director of USCIS included steps that would:

- 1) Promote better collaboration and cross training between Immigration Services Officers and Immigration Officers in support of fraud detection efforts.
- 2) Develop additional quality assurance or supervisory review procedures to strengthen identification of all names and aliases of individuals seeking an immigration benefit.
- 3) Solicit comments from Immigration Services Officers and supervisors regarding the new performance measures.
- 4) Develop standards to permit more time for an Immigration Services Officer's review of case files.
- 5) Develop a policy to establish limitations for managers and attorneys when they intervene in the adjudication of specific cases.