

PART K – CERTIFICATES OF CITIZENSHIP AND NATURALIZATION

Chapter 1: Purpose and Background

A. Purpose

All applicants who meet the eligibility requirements to derive or acquire citizenship or to become naturalized¹ United States citizens are eligible to receive a certificate from USCIS documenting their U.S. citizenship.² The burden of proof is on the applicant to establish that he or she has met all of the pertinent eligibility requirements for issuance of a certificate.

- The Certificate of Citizenship is an official record that the applicant has acquired citizenship at the time of birth or derived citizenship after birth.³
- The Certificate of Naturalization is the official record that the applicant is a naturalized U.S. citizen.⁴

USCIS strictly guards the physical security of the certificates to minimize the unlawful distribution and fraudulent use of certificates.

B. Background

In general, in order to obtain either a Certificate of Citizenship or a Certificate of Naturalization from USCIS, a person must:

- File the appropriate form and supporting evidence;
- Appear for an interview before an officer, if required;
- Meet the pertinent eligibility requirements, as evidenced by USCIS approval of the form; and
- Take the Oath of Allegiance, if required.

USCIS District Directors, Field Office Directors, and other USCIS officers acting on their behalf, have delegated authority to administer the Oath of Allegiance in USCIS administrative oath ceremonies and to issue certificates.⁵

¹ The [Immigration and Nationality Act \(INA\)](#) defines naturalization as the “conferring of nationality of a state upon a person after birth, by any means whatsoever.” See [INA 101\(a\)\(23\)](#). Accordingly, any person who obtains citizenship after birth, even if that citizenship is obtained by automatic operation of law, such as under [INA 320](#), is a “naturalized” citizen under the law. For ease of reference, this volume uses the term naturalized citizen to refer to those persons who do not acquire automatically but instead file an Application for Naturalization ([Form N-400](#)) and proceed through the naturalization process in their own right.

² A person who automatically acquires citizenship may also apply for a U.S. Passport with the Department of State to serve as evidence of his or her U.S. citizenship.

³ See [Part H, Children of U.S. Citizens](#).

⁴ See the relevant [Volume 12](#) part for the specific eligibility requirements pertaining to the particular naturalization provision, to include [Part D, General Naturalization Requirements](#); [Part G, Spouses of U.S. Citizens](#); and [Part I, Military Members and their Families](#).

⁵ See [Part J, Oath of Allegiance, Chapter 2, The Oath of Allegiance, Section B, Authority to Administer the Oath](#).

C. Legal Authorities

- [INA 310\(b\)\(4\)](#); [8 CFR 310](#) – Naturalization authority and issuance of certificates
- [INA 332\(e\)](#); [8 CFR 332](#) – Issuance of Certificates of Citizenship and Naturalization
- [INA 338](#); [8 CFR 338](#) – Contents and issuance of Certificate of Naturalization
- [INA 340\(f\)](#); [8 CFR 340](#) – Cancellation of certificate after revocation of naturalization
- [INA 341](#); [8 CFR 341](#) – Certificates of Citizenship
- [INA 342](#); [8 CFR 342](#) – Administrative cancellation of certificates, documents, or records

Chapter 2: Certificate of Citizenship

A. Eligibility for Certificate of Citizenship

In order to obtain a Certificate of Citizenship, an applicant submits to USCIS:

- An Application for Certificate of Citizenship ([Form N-600](#)), if the applicant is residing in the United States and automatically acquired or derived citizenship at birth or after birth;⁶ or
- An Application for Citizenship and Issuance of Certificate Under Section 322 ([Form N-600K](#)) for a child of a United States citizen residing outside of the United States.

The application must be submitted in accordance with the form instructions and with the appropriate fee.⁷ In addition, applications must include any supporting evidence. An Application for Citizenship and Issuance of Certificate Under Section 322 may only be filed if the child is under 18 years of age. An Application for Certificate of Citizenship may be filed either before or after the child turns 18 years of age.

If the person claiming citizenship is 18 years of age or older, the person must establish that he or she has met the eligibility requirements for U.S. citizenship and issuance of the certificate. If the application is for a child under 18 years of age, the person applying on behalf of the child must establish that the child has met the pertinent eligibility requirements.⁸

B. Contents of Certificate of Citizenship

The Certificate of Citizenship contains information identifying the person and confirming his or her U.S. citizenship. Specifically, the Certificate of Citizenship contains:

Information about the Applicant in Certificates of Citizenship

- USCIS Registration Number (A-number);

⁶ This volume uses the terms “acquired” or “derived” citizenship in cases where citizenship automatically attaches to a person regardless of any affirmative action by that person to document his or her citizenship.

⁷ See [8 CFR 103.7](#).

⁸ See [Part H, Children of U.S. Citizens](#).

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- Complete name;
- Marital status;
- Place of Residence;
- Country of birth;⁹
- Photograph;
- Signature of applicant; and
- Other descriptors: sex, date of birth, and height.

Additional Information in Certificates of Citizenship

- Certificate number;
- Statement by the USCIS Director indicating that the applicant has complied with all the eligibility requirements for citizenship under the laws of the United States;
- Date on which the person became a U.S. citizen;
- Date of issuance; and
- DHS seal and Director's signature as the authority under which the certificate is issued.

C. Issuance of Certificate of Citizenship

In general, USCIS issues a Certificate of Citizenship after an officer approves the person's application and the person has taken the Oath of Allegiance, if applicable, before a designated USCIS officer. USCIS will not issue a Certificate of Citizenship to a person who has not surrendered his or her Permanent Resident Card (PRC) or Alien Registration Card (ARC) evidencing the person's lawful permanent residence. If the person established that his or her card was lost or destroyed, USCIS may waive the requirement of surrendering the card.¹⁰

If USCIS waives the oath requirement for a person, USCIS issues the certificate after approval of his or her application for the certificate. In such cases, USCIS issues the certificate in person or by certified mail to the parent or guardian in cases involving children under 18 years of age, or to the person (or guardian if applicable) in cases involving persons 18 years of age or older.¹¹

Chapter 3: Certificate of Naturalization

A. Eligibility for Certificate of Naturalization

An applicant submits to USCIS an Application for Naturalization ([Form N-400](#)) along with supporting evidence to establish eligibility for naturalization. The application must be submitted in accordance with the form

⁹ An applicant who was born in Taiwan may indicate Taiwan as the country of birth on their Form N-400 if he or she shows supporting evidence. Such applicants' Certificates of Citizenship are issued showing Taiwan as country of birth. USCIS does not issue certificates showing "Taiwan, PRC," "Taiwan, China," "Taiwan, Republic of China," or "Taiwan, ROC." People's Republic of China (PRC) is the country name used for applicants born in the PRC.

¹⁰ See [8 CFR 341.4](#). The requirement to surrender the PRC or ARC does not apply to applicants naturalizing under [INA 322](#).

¹¹ See [8 CFR 341.5](#). See [Part J, Oath of Allegiance](#), [Chapter 3, Oath of Allegiance Modifications and Waivers](#).

instructions and with appropriate fee.¹² The applicant must establish that he or she has met all of the pertinent naturalization eligibility requirements for issuance of a Certificate of Naturalization.¹³

B. Required Contents in Certificate of Naturalization

The Certificate of Naturalization contains certain required information identifying the person and confirming his or her U.S. citizenship through naturalization. Specifically, the Certificate of Naturalization contains:

Information about the Applicant in Certificates of Naturalization

- USCIS Registration Number (A-number);
- Complete name;
- Marital status;
- Place of Residence;
- Country of Former Nationality;¹⁴
- Photograph;
- Signature of applicant; and
- Other descriptors: sex, date of birth, and height

Additional Information in Certificates of Naturalization

- Certificate number;
- Statement by the USCIS Director indicating that the applicant complied with all the eligibility requirements for naturalization under the laws of the United States;
- Date of issuance, which is the date the holder became a U.S. citizen through naturalization; and
- DHS seal and Director's signature as the authority under which the certificate is issued.¹⁵

C. Issuance of Certificate of Naturalization

In general, USCIS issues a Certificate of Naturalization after an officer approves the Application for Naturalization and the applicant has taken the Oath of Allegiance.¹⁶ USCIS will not issue a Certificate of Naturalization to a person who has not surrendered his or her Permanent Resident Card (PRC) or Alien

¹² See [8 CFR 103.7](#).

¹³ See the relevant Volume 12 part for the specific eligibility requirements pertaining to the particular citizenship or naturalization provision, to include [Part D, General Naturalization Requirements](#), [Part G, Spouses of U.S. Citizens](#); and [Part I, Military Members and their Families](#).

¹⁴ Applicants with Taiwan passports may indicate Taiwan as country of nationality on their Form N-400 (Taiwan passports show "Republic of China"). Such applicants' Certificates of Naturalization are issued showing Taiwan as country of former nationality. USCIS does not issue certificates showing "Taiwan, PRC," "Taiwan, China," "Taiwan, Republic of China," or "Taiwan, ROC." People's Republic of China (PRC) is the country name used for applicants with PRC passports.

¹⁵ See [INA 338](#). See [8 CFR 338](#).

¹⁶ See [INA 338](#). See [8 CFR 338](#).

Registration Card (ARC) evidencing the person's lawful permanent residence. If the person established that his or her card was lost or destroyed, USCIS may waive the requirement of surrendering the card.¹⁷

An applicant is not required to take the Oath of Allegiance or appear at the oath ceremony if USCIS waives the oath requirement due to the applicant's medical disability. In these cases, USCIS issues the certificate in person or by certified mail to the person or his or her legal guardian, surrogate or designated representative.¹⁸

Chapter 4: Replacement of Certificate of Citizenship or Naturalization

In general, an applicant submits to USCIS an Application for Replacement Naturalization/Citizenship Document ([Form N-565](#)) to request a replacement Certificate of Citizenship or Certificate of Naturalization. The application must be submitted with the appropriate fee and in accordance with the form instructions.¹⁹

A person may request a replacement certificate to replace a lost or mutilated certificate. A person may also request a replacement certificate, without fee, in cases where:

- USCIS issued a certificate that does not conform to the supportable facts shown on the applicant's citizenship or naturalization application; or
- USCIS committed a clerical error in preparing the certificate.²⁰

Requests to update a certificate based on a name change due to marriage or divorce may also be submitted to USCIS.²¹ In addition, an applicant who has legally changed his or her gender may apply for a replacement certificate reflecting the new gender.²² A request to change the gender on a certificate may also affect the marital status already listed on the certificate. Accordingly, any request to change the gender on a certificate that may affect the validity of a marriage under the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)²³ is elevated to USCIS headquarters.

Chapter 5: Cancellation of Certificate of Citizenship or Naturalization

A. Administrative Cancellation of Certificates²⁴

USCIS is authorized to cancel any Certificate of Citizenship or Certificate of Naturalization in cases where USCIS considers that the certificate was:

¹⁷ See [8 CFR 338.3](#). The requirement to surrender the PRC or ARC does not apply to applicants naturalizing under [INA 329](#) who qualify for naturalization without being permanent residents.

¹⁸ See [Part J, Oath of Allegiance](#), [Chapter 3, Oath of Allegiance Modifications and Waivers](#).

¹⁹ See [8 CFR 103.7](#).

²⁰ See [8 CFR 338.5\(a\)](#).

²¹ See [INA 343\(c\)](#).

²² See [Adjudicator's Field Manual \(AFM\) Chapter 10.22, Document Issuance Involving Status and Identity for Transgender Individuals](#).

²³ The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), Pub. L. 104-199, 110 Stat. 2419 (Sept. 21, 1996). See [1 U.S.C. 7](#) and [28 U.S.C. 1738C](#).

²⁴ See [Part L, Revocation of Naturalization](#), [Chapter 3, Effects of Revocation of Naturalization](#). A Certificate of Naturalization issued to a person who lawfully filed an Application for Naturalization and proceeded through the naturalization process to the Oath of Allegiance cannot be canceled under [INA 342](#). Officers should consult with local USCIS counsel in such cases.

- Illegally or fraudulently obtained; or
- Created through illegality or by fraud.²⁵

USCIS issues the person a written notice of the intention to cancel the certificate. The notice must include the reason or reasons for the intent to cancel the certificate. The person has 60 days from the date the notice was issued to respond with reasons as to why the certificate should not be cancelled or to request a hearing.²⁶ A cancellation of certificate under this provision only cancels the certificate and does not affect the underlying citizenship status of the person, if any, in whose name the certificate was issued.

When considering whether to initiate cancellation proceedings, it is important to distinguish between Certificates of Citizenship and Certificates of Naturalization. In general, USCIS issues Certificates of Citizenship to persons who automatically acquire citizenship by operation of law. If it is determined that the person in whose name the Certificate of Citizenship was issued did not lawfully acquire citizenship, USCIS can initiate cancellation proceedings.²⁷

However, such a person may have an additional basis upon which to claim automatic acquisition of citizenship. Accordingly, if that person's Certificate of Citizenship is cancelled by USCIS, but the person subsequently provides evidence that he or she automatically acquired citizenship through some other basis, the cancellation of the first Certificate of Citizenship does not affect the new citizenship claim.

By contrast, a Certificate of Naturalization cannot be cancelled if issued to a person who lawfully filed an Application for Naturalization and proceeded through the entire naturalization process to the Oath of Allegiance. In such cases, the person obtained citizenship through the entire naturalization process and his or her citizenship status must first be revoked before the Certificate of Naturalization can be cancelled. However, a Certificate of Naturalization illegally or fraudulently obtained by a person who did not lawfully file an Application for Naturalization or who did not proceed through the naturalization process may be cancelled.²⁸

B. Cancellation of Certificate after Revocation of Naturalization

If a court revokes a person's U.S. citizenship obtained through naturalization, the court enters an order revoking the person's naturalization and cancelling the person's Certificate of Naturalization. In such cases, the person must surrender his or her Certificate of Naturalization. Once USCIS obtains the court's order revoking citizenship and cancelling the certificate, USCIS updates its records, including electronic records, and notifies the Department of State of the person's revocation of naturalization.²⁹ All cases relating to cancellation of certificates should be coordinated through the USCIS OCC office with jurisdiction.

²⁵ See [INA 342](#). Under the same conditions, USCIS may also cancel any copy of a declaration of intention, or other certificate, document or record issued by USCIS or legacy INS.

²⁶ See [8 CFR 342.1](#).

²⁷ See [INA 342](#).

²⁸ See [INA 342](#).

²⁹ See [Part L, Revocation of Naturalization, Chapter 3, Effects of Revocation of Naturalization](#).