

9

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# USCIS Announces a New Approach to Posting Processing Times

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# Homeland Security

Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman

January 17, 2017

Dear Stakeholder,

On January 5, 2017, USCIS announced that it will post [processing times](#) using a specific date format rather than weeks or months, and that this is the “first step in providing processing times that are timelier and easier to understand.” (See below for a copy of the USCIS announcement.) For many years, the [Ombudsman has urged](#) USCIS to explore new approaches to calculating case processing times that more accurately convey to individuals and employers how long a case will take to be adjudicated and where the case is within the processing queue.

Processing times set expectations for those submitting applications and petitions to USCIS. Accurate and transparent processing times are crucial for individuals making personal plans and for employers undertaking workforce planning. Moreover, processing times are fundamental to holding the agency accountable for timely services. They also govern whether and when a customer may seek case assistance, both from USCIS and our office. For cases 30 days past processing times, customers may make an inquiry through the USCIS call center (1-800-375-5283) or through the

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online [e-Request](#) customer service tool. After a case is 60 days past USCIS processing times, and the individual or employer has attempted to resolve the delay or problem directly with USCIS, customers may seek [assistance](#) from the Ombudsman's Office.

Before adopting this new processing time format, USCIS displayed charts with the processing time goal (e.g., 6 months), if the field office or service center was on target in meeting the processing time. If the office had fallen behind its processing time goal, the chart listed the filing date of the last case that the office completed. On Jan. 4, 2017, USCIS began posting processing times using a specific date format rather than weeks or months.

The methodology for calculating processing times, however, has not changed. USCIS continues to calculate processing times, also referred to as "cycle times," using the number of cases pending with the responsible USCIS office or service center against cases completed in that month. The calculated processing time provides an estimate of the elapsed time associated with specific types of cases (e.g., Form N-400, Application for Naturalization or Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status) that are pending with USCIS. There generally is a 45-day lag between the processing time information and when it is posted to the USCIS website. As a result, customers do not have the benefit of real-time adjudications data. Additionally, processing times do not take into account when Requests for Evidence or Notices of Intent to Deny are issued, which can add weeks or months to a case's processing time.

While this change to the format will make it easier for USCIS customers to understand processing times, more needs to be done. Processing times should use real-time data that accurately reflect the time it takes USCIS to perform adjudications, as well as the number or percentage of applications/petitions that fall outside the posted processing time. More accurate processing times will go a long way to setting realistic expectations for individuals and employers, and measuring the agency's success in meeting stated processing goals.

If you are experiencing systemic problems with the calculation of processing times, please contact the Ombudsman's Office at [cisombudsman@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:cisombudsman@hq.dhs.gov). For case assistance, please complete our request for case assistance form at <https://www.dhs.gov/case-assistance>.

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USCIS Announcement

January 5, 2017

USCIS Now Uses Specific Dates to Show Case Processing Times

Dear Stakeholder,

Starting on Jan. 4, 2017, we will post processing times using a specific date format rather than weeks or months. This is the first step in providing processing times that are timelier and easier to understand.

We post case processing times on our website as a guide for when to inquire (service request) about a pending case. For the last several years, we have posted case processing times using two different formats:

- For cases that were within our production goals, we listed processing times in weeks or months.
- For cases that were outside of our production goals, we listed processing times with a specific date.

Always refer to your I-797C, Notice of Action, and look for “receipt date” to determine when we accepted your case. If the receipt date on the USCIS [Processing Times](#) web page is after the date we have listed on your notice, you should expect to hear from us within 30 days. If after those 30 days, you have not heard from us, you may make an inquiry on your case.

We recommend using our [e-request tool](#) for all case inquiries. In addition, we have many other services and tools at [my.uscis.gov](#)

- [Check your case status and sign up for automatic case updates](#)
- [Check processing times](#)
- [Make an appointment](#)

If you move, remember to update your address for each pending case and receipt number at [uscis.gov/addresschange](#).



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