



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS to Take Action to Address Asylum Backlog

[Versión en español](#)

Release Date: Jan. 31, 2018

Agency Will Focus on Processing Recently Filed Applications

WASHINGTON — U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced today that the agency will schedule asylum interviews for recent applications ahead of older filings, in an attempt to stem the growth of the agency’s asylum backlog.

USCIS is responsible for overseeing the nation’s legal immigration system, which includes adjudicating asylum claims. The agency currently faces a crisis-level backlog of 311,000 pending asylum cases as of Jan. 21, 2018, making the asylum system increasingly vulnerable to fraud and abuse. This backlog has grown by more than 1750 percent over the last five years, and the rate of new asylum applications has more than tripled.

To address this problem, USCIS will follow these priorities when scheduling affirmative asylum interviews:

1. Applications that were scheduled for an interview, but the interview had to be rescheduled at the applicant’s request or the needs of USCIS;
2. Applications pending 21 days or less since filing; and
3. All other pending applications, starting with newer filings and working back toward older filings.

Additionally, the Affirmative Asylum Bulletin issued by USCIS has been discontinued.

“Delays in the timely processing of asylum applications are detrimental to legitimate asylum seekers,” said USCIS Director L. Francis Cissna. “Lingering backlogs can be exploited and used to undermine national security and the integrity of the asylum system.”

This priority approach, first established by the asylum reforms of 1995 and used for 20 years until 2014, seeks to deter those who might try to use the existing backlog as a means to obtain employment authorization. Returning to a “last in, first out” interview schedule will allow USCIS to identify frivolous, fraudulent or otherwise non-meritorious asylum claims earlier and place those individuals into removal proceedings.

For details on how we will schedule interviews, go to our [Affirmative Asylum Interview Scheduling](#) page.

For more information on USCIS and its programs, please visit uscis.gov or follow us on Twitter ([@uscis](#)), YouTube ([/uscis](#)), and Facebook ([/uscis](#)).

- USCIS -

Last Reviewed/Updated: 01/31/2018

