

AILA Citizenship Day FAQs
April 18-19, 2009

Q: How do we know how many volunteers to recruit?

A: This is, unfortunately, totally an unknown. Experience has shown, however, that more participants come in the morning than in the afternoon so be sure to be as fully staffed in the morning as possible.

Q: How do we deal with 100 people waiting in line when we arrive?

A: Don't panic. It is not at all uncommon for participants to be waiting in line at the door before you even arrive to set up. Some chapters give participants numbers so that they will have an approximate time for their appointment. Others schedule appointments beforehand at specific times. (This method works best if your local CBO partner will agree to handle the scheduling.) For some, the line can move inside to one or more rows of chairs. The main thing is to have a plan so that your volunteers will not be overwhelmed.

Q: Should volunteers sign their names as the person who "prepared the form" on the last page of the N-400?

A: This is entirely up to the chapter and the individual volunteer. It is certainly acceptable for a volunteer to provide his/her contact information, but many chapters prefer to complete the form identifying "AILA Chapter X Citizenship Day 2009" or by using a pre-made stamp. This is a great option that many Citizenship Day volunteers prefer.

Q: Do we need to enter G-28's?

A: Most chapters do not enter G-28's for the services that are performed at Citizenship Day. One chapter, however, requires that if an attorney volunteer takes a case they met with at the clinic, necessitating a G-28, that the case be taken on a pro bono basis. This is distinguished from a situation in which an attorney who is a Citizenship Day volunteer is later contacted via the referral list provided for a client they did not see. In such an instance, the chapter does not require that the case be taken on a pro bono basis.

Q: Should we plan to have Know Your Rights (KYR) or any other political education going on while clients wait to be seen?

A: This is a great idea and it keeps participants engaged while they wait to be seen by an attorney, but is certainly not required for a successful event. Many resources are available from a variety of sources to help you plan and present an effective KYR presentation if your chapter chooses to do so.

Q: What is the appropriate policy regarding having materials available for distribution at the site? (AILA's, Others')

A: This is entirely up to the chapter to decide. Some chapters have determined that this role should be left up to the local CBOs. Others choose to include a space that allows many different CBOs (whether helping with the event or not) to set up tables with a variety of information. Still others directly promote immigration advocacy at Citizenship Day. Choose whatever option works for your area.

Q: Should we plan to have a children's area?

A: This is by no means required, but you may find it helpful to have some toys and/or coloring books on hand to entertain your younger participants while their parents are speaking to an attorney.

Q: What should the staffing ratio be of non-lawyers to lawyers?

A: We recommend that you try to recruit 2-3 non-lawyers for every attorney volunteer plus at least one translator for each lawyer (the translators will be working with the volunteers some of the time).

Q: How do we handle media, both in advance and on the day of the event?

A: It is a good idea for every site to have a designated media coordinator through which all press inquiries are directed. You may be surprised, even if you do not seek press, they may hear about your event and want to call for information. On the Citizenship Day website (www.aila.org/citizenshipday), you will find Press Materials that include both talking points and sample press releases. Some chapters send out a press release a few weeks before the event and then follow that up with another release a few days before the event. The press release that the national office will circulate is also online. Our release will go out on in early April. Chapters should feel free to utilize the national release as a template if they wish. Regarding media on the day of the event, every site should have a designated media coordinator at the sites through which all inquiries are directed. Please also remember that you will need to decide how to handle requests to film or photograph participants during the event. Some will prefer not to appear on camera.

Q: How should we train volunteers?

A: The Citizenship Day website also contains sample power point presentations that you may use to develop your trainings - both for attorneys and non attorney volunteers. It is important to separate these two groups. In addition, AILA is in the process of developing a national webinar training that will be made available to the participating chapters. We hope to schedule the training for early April.

Q: How should we handle participants who have criminal issues? Should we have attorneys on site or just have them available by phone? Should we simply hand out the referral list?

A: This is another issue that is handled differently by various chapters. Any of the above options is appropriate and your chapter should decide what option is most comfortable for your members. The most important thing is to be prepared for how you will handle this issue because it will certainly come up. If you do plan to handle the issue, make sure that any advice given is based on the actual criminal record, not just what a client may recall. These are very serious issues that can lead to a deportation if not handled correctly and should always be reviewed by an attorney experienced in these issues.

Q: How should we handle fee waivers? Should we complete them on site or refer them out?

A: Most chapters choose not to handle fee waivers due to the amount of time they usually involve. Often, your local CBO partners regularly handle these waivers and will do so at no charge, so they can be a great referral source.

Q: Who should be on our referral list? What should the minimum requirements be? What other information should we include (i.e., attorney offers reduced fee or sliding scale, Spanish-speaking, criminal proficient)?

A: This is also up to your chapter to determine. Some chapters choose to require a minimum number of years in practice, or a statement that the attorney has handled a minimum number of naturalization cases; others simply ask the chapter membership who would like to be on the referral list. It is particularly helpful, however, to include the ancillary information suggested above, and perhaps even to create a separate “criminal proficient” referral list, as these are the most complex cases that will usually need a skilled attorney to review.

Other helpful tips:

- If at all possible, try to get into the space where you will be holding the event the night before to begin setting up.
- Be SURE to have the participants sign the **Limited Legal Advice Agreement** (see B-9 of the online materials). *We are currently exploring whether AILA National can make this document available in Spanish.*
- Be sure to have a computer available at the site so that you can confirm whether or not the participant registered for the selective service.
- Determine how you will handle, photos, checks/money orders, mailing. Some chapters use chapter funds or a fee for Citizenship Day to cover these costs; others prefer to simply leave the photos and mailing up to the participant.
- Plan lunch breaks. It sounds trivial, but once you are caught up in the logistics of planning this event it's easy for lunch to slip your mind! Some volunteers may wish to keep working through their lunch break, but taking a brief respite

is beneficial to participants as well as volunteers. It increases volunteers' concentration and energy for the afternoon, and reduces mistakes.

- Please collect data from your site on the number of volunteers (both attorneys and non attorneys) and individuals served. AILA National uses this information in the promotion and publicizing of Citizenship Day. Also, be sure to maintain a list of volunteers both for thank yous and for recruitment for next year's event!
- Remember to have the participants fill out a survey that asks about their experience at Citizenship Day.
- HAVE FUN!!