



# News Release

July 26, 2010

## **USCIS Announces First Ten Areas of Focus for Agency-wide Policy Review** *Public Survey Informs Selection*

**WASHINGTON**— U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has announced the [results](#) of a public survey that launched the USCIS Policy Review, an unprecedented, top-to-bottom examination of the agency’s adjudication and customer-service policies. The survey results helped USCIS select the first 10 issue areas to address in the agency-wide review.

Informed by the survey responses, the agency’s needs, and input from the workforce, the USCIS Policy Review will begin by examining policies in the following issue areas: *National Customer Service Center; Nonimmigrant H-1B; Naturalization and Citizenship; Employment-based Adjustment of Status; Family-based Adjustment of Status; Employment-Based Preference Categories 1, 2 and 3; Refugee and Asylum Adjustment of Status; Form I-601; General Humanitarian; and Employment Authorization and Travel Documents.*

“As an agency, we must achieve consistency in the policies that guide us and in how we implement them for the public benefit,” said USCIS Director Alejandro Mayorkas. “To achieve that critical goal, we are partnering with the public in this major undertaking to review our adjudication and customer-service policies. We will work collaboratively toward the shared objectives of consistency, integrity, transparency and efficiency.”

In April 2010, USCIS issued a survey that asked any interested member of the public, as well as its own workforce, to help identify the issue areas that the agency should examine first. USCIS received approximately 5,600 survey responses from diverse stakeholders. Those results are now available, along with a summary developed by USCIS’s new Office of Performance and Quality.

USCIS is now establishing internal working groups to focus on each of the 10 issue areas. The working groups will include USCIS adjudicators, policy analysts, attorneys, customer-service representatives and other experts from within the agency. Throughout the Policy Review, USCIS will continue to engage with the public and seek its feedback to ensure that the resulting policies are informed, responsive and effective.

For more information on USCIS and its programs, visit [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).

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# Fact Sheet

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## **USCIS Announces First Ten Areas of Focus for Agency-wide Policy Review** *Public Survey Informs Selection*

### **Introduction**

On April 15, 2010, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) launched the USCIS Policy Review, an unprecedented, top-to-bottom examination of the agency's adjudication and customer service policies with the engaged participation of the USCIS workforce and the public. USCIS issued a survey that asked any interested member of the public, as well as its own workforce, to help identify the issue areas that the agency should examine first. Nearly 5,600 stakeholders [responded](#) to the survey, representing current immigrant and non-immigrant visa holders, employers, immigration attorneys and advocates, among others, in addition to responses from approximately 2,400 members of the USCIS workforce. Those responses helped USCIS select the first 10 issue areas to address in the agency-wide review. USCIS is now convening working groups to review the first 10 issue areas.

### **First 10 Issue Areas Under Review**

USCIS considered quantitative and qualitative feedback from the surveys along with operational and programmatic needs to select the first 10 issue areas for the USCIS Policy Review to examine:

- National Customer Service Center
- Nonimmigrant H-1B (specialty occupations)
- Naturalization and Citizenship
- Employment-Based Adjustment of Status
- Family-Based Adjustment of Status
- Employment-Based Immigrants Preference Categories 1, 2 (priority workers, professionals and holders of advanced degrees) and 3 (skilled workers and professionals)
- Refugee and Asylum Adjustment of Status
- Form I-601 (Application for Waiver of Ground of Inadmissibility)
- General Humanitarian Programs
- Employment Authorization and Travel Documents

### **Stages of Review**

The USCIS Policy Review is a comprehensive, multi-year effort with four stages.

#### **Stage 1: Information Gathering**

- **Gather existing policy documents.** The existing policy documents were collected from national and local USCIS offices. The assembled documents consist of policies from different sources, including (but not limited to) training manuals, the Adjudicator's Field Manual, operational instructions, and other guidance memoranda.
- **Organize policies according to issue area.** The policy documents were categorized into relevant issue areas.

## **Stage 2: Policy Review Surveys and Issue-Area Prioritization**

- **Distribute surveys to workforce and external stakeholders.** In April, a survey was distributed to the USCIS workforce and external stakeholders, allowing respondents to identify which issue areas they thought USCIS should review first.
- **Analyze, organize, and publish survey results.** [Survey results](#) were analyzed, sorted and presented to USCIS senior leadership to guide the selection of specific issue areas.
- **Identify topics.** USCIS selected 10 issue areas to address initially.

## **Stage 3: Completing Policy Review on Selected Issue Areas**

- **Establish issue-area working groups.** USCIS is convening working groups to review policies in the 10 selected issue areas. Subject-matter experts from across USCIS have been invited to participate in the working groups and begin their review.
- **Review by working groups.** The working groups will review the content of policy documents to ensure they reflect USCIS's commitment to consistency and efficiency. Outdated policies will be revised, updated, or deleted, and inconsistent and redundant policies will be reconciled.
- **Continued engagement with internal and external stakeholders.** USCIS will continue to engage with the public and seek its feedback to ensure that the resulting policies are informed, responsive and effective.
- **Consolidate and update policies.** After considering USCIS's goals, legal requirements, and input from the workforce and external stakeholders, the working groups will determine the appropriate course of action for each policy document under review. For example, overlapping policy documents could be consolidated, while out-of-date policy documents could be updated or deleted. In an effort to promote transparency and consistency in USCIS operations, the agency will hold public meetings with stakeholders as necessary and post drafts of many new or revised draft memoranda on its website for public comment. In addition, if the Policy Review identifies the need for proposed regulatory changes, USCIS will fully engage in the federal rulemaking process.

## **Stage 4: Consolidating Updated Policy Guidance**

- **Compile policies into an electronic resource.** As policies receive final approval, USCIS will compile them into a single electronic resource for the workforce and the public.

From time to time in the course of the agency's operations, policy issues may arise that require immediate attention outside the course of the formal Policy Review. We will continue to give these issues immediate attention as the need arises.



# Questions and Answers

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On April 15, 2010, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) launched the USCIS Policy Review, an unprecedented, top-to-bottom examination the agency's adjudication and customer service policies with the engaged participation of the USCIS workforce and the public. USCIS issued a survey that asked any interested member of the public, as well as its own workforce, to help identify the issue areas that the agency should examine first. Nearly 5,600 stakeholders [responded](#) to the survey, representing current immigrant and non-immigrant visa holders, employers, immigration attorneys and advocates, among others, in addition to responses from approximately 2,400 members of the USCIS workforce. Those responses helped USCIS select the first 10 issue areas to address in the agency-wide review. USCIS is now convening working groups to review the first 10 issue areas.

### **Questions and Answers**

#### **Q. What is the USCIS Policy Review?**

A. The USCIS Policy Review is a comprehensive review of policy, guidance, and procedures related to our adjudications and customer service. The Policy Review is divided into four stages: (1) assembling and categorizing existing policy documents; (2) deciding which issue areas to review first, with input from surveys of the workforce and external stakeholders; (3) completing a review of policies in each identified issue area; and (4) consolidating and publishing updated policy documents (as appropriate), once approved.

#### **Q. How does the Policy Review advance major goals already established for USCIS and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)?**

A. In the 2010 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR), DHS identified the effective administration of the immigration system as a key priority. In particular, the QHSR emphasized the importance of a system that produces fair, consistent and prompt decisions for the public it serves. The Policy Review is designed to ensure that USCIS meets that standard in its work.

#### **Q. How does the Policy Review relate to USCIS's responsibilities and authority under federal law?**

A. By law, USCIS is charged with setting policies and priorities for the administration of immigration services. USCIS will be reviewing those policies in our current effort. If the Policy Review identifies the need for proposed regulatory changes, we will fully engage in the federal rulemaking process. The purpose of the Policy Review is not to develop proposed changes to the immigration statutes established by Congress.

#### **Q. Will the Policy Review change USCIS policy?**

A. In many cases, yes. Working groups will evaluate policy based on USCIS goals, legal requirements and stakeholder concerns. These working groups will draft updated policy documents and proceed through USCIS's policy-approval process. If the Policy Review identifies the need for proposed regulatory changes, USCIS will fully engage in the federal rulemaking process.

**Q. What happens to existing policies during the course of the Policy Review?**

A. While the Policy Review is underway, all policies already in place remain in full force and will be honored. From time to time in the course of the agency's operations, policy issues may arise that require immediate attention outside the course of the formal Policy Review. We will continue to give these issues immediate attention as the need arises.

**Q: What prompted the Policy Review?**

A. USCIS is committed to ensuring that our policies are consistent and up to date. To that end, the agency has launched the USCIS Policy Review to examine our policies with input from the public it serves and from its workforce.

**Q. Has USCIS previously undertaken a comprehensive review of its policies?**

A: No. The effort to undertake a top-to-bottom review of our adjudication and customer service policies is an unprecedented initiative for USCIS.

**Q. How will USCIS seek the public's input during the Policy Review?**

A. In keeping with our commitments to customer service and transparency, USCIS will engage practitioners, advocates, businesses, applicants, and other interested stakeholders throughout the course of the Policy Review. The survey was the first opportunity for stakeholders to participate. As we review policies in specific issue areas, we will offer a number of further opportunities for the public to offer input. For example, in some issue areas, we will conduct public meetings to solicit stakeholders' views on specific policy matters. In many cases, we will also published drafts of new or revised policy memoranda on [our website](#) for public comment, now a regular step in USCIS's policy development process.

**Q. What did the survey ask?**

A. The survey asked any interested member of the public, as well as the USCIS workforce, to help identify the issue areas that the agency should examine first. The survey also included comment sections.

**Q. How many people responded to the survey?**

A. Nearly 5,600 external stakeholders responded to the survey, representing current immigrant and non-immigrant visa holders, employers, immigration attorneys and advocates, among others. Nearly 2,400 members of the workforce from USCIS offices worldwide also participated in the survey.

**Q. How has USCIS used the survey results?**

A. The survey [results](#) helped USCIS identify which issue areas to address first in its agency-wide review. USCIS considered quantitative and qualitative feedback from the surveys along with operational and programmatic needs to develop the initial list of issue areas for review.

**Q. In addition to the survey, what progress has USCIS made in the Policy Review?**

A. USCIS has assembled thousands of existing policy documents and categorized them into issue areas. USCIS is now convening internal working groups to begin examining and evaluating the policy documents in the first 10 issue areas.

**Q. What is the expected length and scope of the Policy Review?**

A. The Policy Review is a multi-year effort designed to work thoughtfully through thousands of policy documents, many of which overlap or complement each other, in collaboration with the USCIS workforce and external stakeholders. New policy documents, once drafted, will be submitted through the USCIS clearance process, with many posted on the USCIS website for public comment.