



Telecon Recap: Application Processing Times: A Conversation with USCIS Office of Performance and Quality

Overview

On April 27, 2011, the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman's Office (Ombudsman's Office) hosted a public teleconference regarding U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) processing times and interviewed Mr. Joseph Moore, Chief of the USCIS Office of Performance and Quality (OPQ), for this conversation.

Mr. Moore provided a brief overview of the functions of OPQ, as summarized below:

USCIS established OPQ in January 2010, as part of an agency Headquarters' realignment. The Office is responsible for calculating processing times for USCIS field offices and service centers which help them to develop adjudication plans and performance goals, and set staffing levels. OPQ also analyzes data to report on immigration statistics and oversees monthly national quality assurance reviews to ensure USCIS meets quality review standards.

Questions and Answers

Where Can I Go for Additional Information on USCIS Processing Times?

Processing times are available on the USCIS Processing Time Information website. Select the field office or service center where your case is being processed. The following page will show a chart with the Form Number, Form Name, and Processing Times for all of the forms that are processed at that office. Processing times are posted on the 15th day of each month.

How Does USCIS Calculate Processing Times?

For each type of application or petition, USCIS has established processing time goals. Specific processing time calculations are based on the number of months of application or petition receipts that comprise the level of active pending cases on hand within the agency.

Mr. Moore highlighted that processing times are posted 45 days after they are reported from the field offices or service centers to allow for a quality control process that ensures the integrity of the data. Mr. Moore shared that due to the 45 day delay, some of the times may not be as helpful for applicants under certain circumstances.

He explained that USCIS strives to process cases in the order in which they are received, but some cases are completed out of sequence due to issues like the need for the applicant to submit more evidence. Such delays from the customer cause a case to be removed from the adjudication processing line and placed into a category referred to as active suspense. These suspended cases awaiting applicant action are not factored into the processing time calculations.

Why Are Processing Times Posted for Certain Applications and Petitions and Not Others?

Mr. Moore shared that only a few applications for immigration benefits are not included in the processing time tables, and this is primarily due to the low volume of applications received and related customer inquiries.

Additionally, some forms are not considered applications for immigration benefits because they only provide supporting evidence, so they are not included in the processing time tables.

When Are Actual Processing Times Posted Versus Processing Time Goals?

Processing time goals are posted if an office is processing a particular type of application in less time than the stated processing time goal.

Sometimes the volume of cases USCIS receives is larger than expected, which prevents USCIS from achieving the processing time goals. In these cases, a date will be listed in the processing time table. Customers can compare their application or petition receipt notice dates to this posted date, which represents the date of the last application or petition processed by the USCIS location handling the case, to gauge potential wait time.

How Does USCIS Develop Processing Time Goals?

Mr. Moore explained that the development of processing time goals is a very complex process because they impact many aspects of USCIS operations. OPQ is the lead office that calculates performance measures and metrics. Changing processing time goals can have fiscal implications, as lower processing time goals can sometimes require more staff to process the cases.

How Will USCIS Transformation Affect Processing Time Posts?

The USCIS Transformation Program is expected to improve USCIS' ability to calculate and post processing time information to the web.

Mr. Moore noted that the current USCIS system is paper-based, and USCIS calculates processing times by assessing the total numbers of applications pending and applications received. Through Transformation, USCIS expects to acquire the capability to identify the actual age of each case being processed within the system, which will support nearly real-time reporting of processing time information. Currently, USCIS calculates processing times based on the volume of cases, rather than the age of each individual case. Mr. Moore explained that the current times are designed to be a proxy of individual case processing times and are not intended to tell where an individual case is in the processing line.

Will USCIS Post Times for Form I-914, Application for T Non-Immigrant Status, and Form I-918, Petition for U Nonimmigrant Status?

Mr. Moore indicated that the processing times for these form types would be included with the May 15, 2011 USCIS.gov web posting.

Callers also had the opportunity to ask Mr. Moore questions, some of which are included below:

How Do Processing Times Reflect Rapid Increases in Applications or Petitions?

Mr. Moore explained that OPQ actively monitors and reports on a monthly basis the application and petition receipts processed and are able to identify increases in filings that help the office identify emerging trends or surges. By anticipating surges OPQ is better able to assess their impact on processing times. However, the processing times posted to the web do not always immediately reflect the impact of a surge in applications or petitions due to the 45 day delay in posting.

Why Is There A Difference In Processing Time for the Same Application at Different Field Offices or Service Centers?

Mr. Moore suggested that many factors may contribute to a difference in processing times between field offices or service centers, including staffing issues like the loss of employees through retirement or transfers. Sub-optimal staff levels impact the capacity to process cases, and oftentimes cause processing times to increase. USCIS tries to offset these conditions by employing overtime or moving work, when possible.

Are There Standard Processing Times for H-1B Applicants Who Have Received An RFE?

USCIS has developed performance plans and processing times for active pending applications, but not for cases that are in active suspense or on hold while a response to a RFE is pending.

Mr. Moore suggested that applicants contact the field office or service center where their application is pending for more insight into the processing of information provided in response to RFEs.

What Happens When An Applicant's Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, is Outside the Processing Time?

USCIS is required by regulation to adjudicate EAD applications within 90 days. If your EAD application is close to or beyond the processing time, you may contact the USCIS National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283 (1-800-767-1833 TDD for the hearing impaired). You also can submit a case inquiry using DHS Form 7001 to the Ombudsman's Office at cisombudsman.publicaffairs@dhs.gov. The Ombudsman's Office will look into your case and review how we may be of assistance.

The following are selected questions that were received after the teleconference:

How Does Premium Processing Impact Processing Times?

Based on the current process, USCIS is not able to distinguish between premium and non-premium cases when calculating processing times and reporting them on the website. As such, including premium processing cases in the calculation of reported times may skew the true times of non-premium processed cases.

How Do Requests for Evidence and Notices of Intent to Deny Impact Processing Times Calculations?

As described above, USCIS calculates processing times based on active pending cases. When the agency issues an RFE or NOID, a case is no longer considered actively pending, so they do not affect that calculation.

For July 2007 Filers Waiting for A Visa Number, Why Is USCIS Referring Applicants to the Posted Processing Times Even If the Cases Are Pre-Adjudicated?

USCIS tries to process cases on a first-in, first-out basis. At the same time, the agency has a policy to pre-adjudicate I-485 applications which could be approved, if there were a visa available. The USCIS National Customer Service Center, at Tier 1, will refer individuals to the posted times, but as described above, the posted times do not correspond to individual cases.

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The Ombudsman's Public Teleconference Series

The Ombudsman's Office hosts public teleconferences to share information on specific topics and to hear your comments and suggestions regarding your interactions with the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#).

Upcoming Teleconference

Application Processing Times: A Conversation with USCIS

April 27, 2011, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. EST

The Ombudsman's Office invites you to participate in a public teleconference on "**Application Processing Times: A Conversation with USCIS.**" The Ombudsman's Office will interview guest speakers from USCIS' Office of Performance and Quality on the ins and outs of posting processing times and will reserve time for your questions, comments, and suggestions.

To participate, please RSVP to cisombudsman.publicaffairs@dhs.gov.

Participation in these teleconferences is anonymous for callers.

Teleconference Recaps

- [FOIA: How Is It Working For You?](#)

Questions and Answers from Teleconferences

Links may go to www.uscis.gov.

- [Fee Waivers: How are They Working for You?](#)
- [USCIS Website Redesign: How is It Working for You?](#)
- [Change of Address: How is It Working for You?](#)
- [I-601 Waivers: How are They Working for You?](#)
- [Refugee Processing: How is It Working for You?](#)
- [USCIS Adoptions Petition Processing: How is It Working for You? \(PDF, 6 pages - 63 KB\)](#)
- [USCIS Refunds: How is the Process Working for You?](#)
- [The K3 Visa Family Unification Process: How is It Working for You?](#)
- [N-648 Medical Waivers - How are They Working for You?](#)
- [Questions and Answers on The New Naturalization Test](#)
- [USCIS Receipting Delay - How Does this Affect You?](#)
- [Temporary Worker Visas](#)
- [E-Verify in Arizona - How is It Working for Your Business?](#)
- [Visas for Nurses: How Does This Impact Your Medical Facility?](#)
- [USCIS Summer 2007 Application Surge: How is It Affecting You Now?](#)
- [CIS Ombudsman's 2008 Annual Report: Your Questions and Comments](#)
- [U Visa: One Year After the Interim Final Rule](#)
- [Teleconference on Biological Relationship Testing: Opportunities and Challenges](#)
- [Questions and Answers from EB-5 Teleconferences](#)
- [Questions and Answers from January 28, 2009 Teleconference on Motions to Reopen: How are They Working for You?](#)
- [How is USCIS Working for You? February 20, 2008](#)

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