

## 6 tips to protect yourself from an immigration scam



(BPT) - Navigating the United States' immigration process is not without its challenges, especially for those who are learning to speak English. From the anxiety of trying to decide whether you qualify for a green card or another visa, to navigating the various information sources and the lingering fear that something was missed, there's always something to consider.

If any of this sounds familiar to you, you're not alone, and while you're doing your best to make sure your immigration materials are handled effectively, you must also watch out for would-be scammers.

### Spotting the scams

An immigration scam can take many forms. In some cases you may receive a phone call from an individual who claims to be an immigration official. This person will then notify you that there is a problem with your immigration record — and expect you to pay to solve the issue. In another case a scam artist may arrive at your door purporting to be from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). [They will tell you they are here to serve you a warrant and threaten to deport you.](#) Scams can be found on the web as well. In one case you may receive an email notifying you that you have [won a diversity visa lottery](#) and asking you to pay a fee to collect your winnings. In another you may mistakenly try to file your [immigration paperwork through a scam website](#) that has been set up to look like a legitimate resource but is in fact a fraud.

While the scam can look very different, the goal is always to play on the fear of losing your immigration status and use that fear to steal your money or personal information. To protect yourself and your family, Western Union offers the following tips to help you spot a scam.

### Always question cash

While cash remains a viable payment option for many transactions, you should always be wary of any individual that states you must pay cash. A legitimate government agency will accept other forms of payment as well and you should always remember that the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\) never accepts cash.](#)

### Don't wait to double-check

Whether you encounter a person on the phone or at your door, you should always verify the things they say. Don't be afraid to ask for credentials and to double-check them. [Contacting the Better Business Bureau \(if the scammer was posing as a lawyer or another private service\) or the government agency itself](#) can help you verify if the individual who contacted you really is who they say they are.

### Never pay for immigration forms

Any scenario that states you must pay for such forms is a scam. The real forms you need can be found for free on the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website.](#)


### **Keep everything**

Sure, it can be difficult sometimes to manage all of the paperwork, but you should make a habit of keeping copies of every single document you have related to your immigration status, especially copies of documents that have been filed or show correspondence with the government. These copies could be invaluable if a question arises later, and having them will give you peace of mind.

### **Extra fees do not exist**

If a proposed fee seems questionable to you, it's because it probably is. ICE will never offer to look the other way on supposed immigration violations if you pay a hefty fee. Likewise, the U.S. Department of State will not ask you for lottery fees via email.

### **Always alert authorities**

If you feel you've been the victim of an immigration scam, or you're afraid you sent money to a scam via [Western Union](#), call the company's hotline at 800-448-1492  to report it. Western Union may be able to stop the transaction, if the transfer has not been paid, and refund your money.

Learn more about immigration and other common scams and find ways to protect yourself by visiting the Western Union Consumer Protection Center at [www.wu.com/fraudawareness](http://www.wu.com/fraudawareness).