

Instructions for Contacting USCIS on Individual Cases

FOD Nieves Cardinale requests that AILA members contact USCIS supervision in the first instance on your cases. You should send inquiries to her and Section Chiefs Dyer and Zackaricz in the same email, as instructed previously (see below). FOD Cardinale states that AILA members should not be reaching out to USCIS Counsel as it only complicates matters and that USCIS is trying to avoid duplicating work efforts in resolving the inquires. She understands that contact with counsel is necessary in some cases, such as mandamus actions.

FOD Signature Authority and Case Review

Recently, HAR CIS has issued some NOIDS and denial notices where a Supervisory Immigration Services Officer has signed in the FOD's signature block. I inquired about the FOD's signatory authority. She stated that she has delegated her signature authority to SISOs and Section Chiefs. I also inquired whether the FOD reviews NOIDS and denials. She does review some cases. She does not review each and every one. FOD Nieves requests that you bring issues related to NOIDS and denials to her attention.

Case-Related Contact Information for HAR CIS:

Use the following protocol to contact HAR CIS directly on your case-related questions:

1. The subject line of your inquiry should use the following format: AILA Inquiry/ [Applicant Name]/ [A No.]
2. Address all inquiries to all of the following three HAR CIS Officers:
 - a. FOD Nieves Cardinale: Nieves.Cardinale@uscis.dhs.gov
 - b. Amanda Dyer: Amanda.Dyer@uscis.dhs.gov
 - c. Joseph Zackaricz: joseph.m.zackaricz@uscis.dhs.gov.

HAR CIS Rescheduling Requests:

Send your HAR interview reschedule requests to Nora.J.Blossom@uscis.dhs.gov.

LOCAL PRACTICES – CONNECTICUT

1. USCIS HARTFORD FIELD OFFICE INQUIRY PROCESS:

You can submit an AILA inquiry as follows:

1. The Connecticut Chapter of AILA has worked with the Hartford Field Office to establish a process of submitting case inquiries. Members can submit their case inquiries directly to HAR CIS (instead of sending them through the USCIS liaisons). The procedure for submitting a case inquiry is as follows:
 - a. The subject line of your inquiry should use the following format: AILA Inquiry/[Applicant Name]/[A No.]
 - b. Address all inquiries to **ALL** of the following **THREE** people (regardless of case type):
 - i. FOD Nieves Cardinale: Nieves.Cardinale@uscis.dhs.gov
 - ii. Amanda Dyer: Amanda.Dyer@uscis.dhs.gov
 - iii. Joseph Zackaricz: joseph.m.zackaricz@uscis.dhs.gov

Although it is not required, we have noticed that responses tend to be more timely when the chapter chair is copied on the e-mail inquiries.

2. USCIS HARTFORD FIELD OFFICE – INFOPASS PILOT PROGRAM:

The Field Office Direction has discretion to schedule InfoPass appointments directly (without the involvement from the National Customer Service Center). In an emergency, AILA members can follow the “Inquiry Submissions Process” (above) to request an emergency appointment notwithstanding the official policy (of going through the national number).

3. EOIR HARTFORD – IMPACT OF THE SHUTDOWN:

Hartford EOIR recommends that if you are scheduled to attend any hearing in the next week or two, bring an extra copy of any filings that you sent to the court during the shutdown period (12/22/18 through 1/25/19). Staff is working hard to match the filings that were received during that period to their respective files, but it is possible that a filing may be missed or delayed in being matched.

Hartford staff is working hard to reschedule the cases that were scheduled for hearings during the shutdown. They hope to have impacted cases rescheduled and noticed by mid-February.

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4. EOIR HARTFORD – SCHEDULING:

New NTAs are being processed by staff as they are received.

The Hartford judges have different caseloads and calendars, so an exact prediction of the scheduling of merits hearings is hard to make. Generally speaking, merits are currently being set around mid-2021 and into 2022 (depending on the judge). Both of the judges have scattered availability well before that and may be able to fit cases into those holes in the calendar; the judges will attempt to fit cases impacted by the shutdown into those holes, so attorneys should not expect for the cases during the shutdown to immediately go out as far as 2021 (though it is a possibility).

The Hartford judges are utilizing the status docket for cases where respondents must provide an update to the court on pending relief filed with another agency (e.g., I-130, I-360, UAC I-589). Generally, the judges will not allow a matter to transfer to the status docket until the attorney has submitted proof that the matter is filed with the other agency and any updates are outside of the attorney and/or respondent’s control.

Attorneys handling matters pro bono are allowed to inform the clerk of this at the start of a master hearing so that they can have their case heard first on the docket, rather than wait to be called based on where they fall on the sign-in sheet.

5. EOIR HARTFORD – ASYLUM HEARINGS FOR AGED-OUT UACs:

The Hartford judges are deferring to the Asylum Office as to whether the Asylum Office still has jurisdiction over an asylum claim filed by a UAC over the age of eighteen.

6. U VISAS:

There is proposed legislation in Connecticut that would have law enforcement handle U visa certification requests more expeditiously. The proposal made by CT AILA defined “expeditious” as 60 days, or 14 days if the person was in detention or removal proceedings or someone would age out. The final language has not been introduced and no public hearings are scheduled.

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