

Protecting Yourself from Immigration Fraud

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Frequently Asked Questions

At Catholic Charities of Northwest California, we want our community to feel safe, informed, and supported. Immigration scams can be scary, especially when someone is trying to help their family or build a better future.

If you have questions, we are here to help.

What is Immigration Fraud?

Immigration fraud happens when someone pretends to be an authorized immigration aid or lawyer to take your money, personal information, or important documents.

Some individuals may even pretend to work for trusted organizations like Catholic Charities, but they do not. They are scammers.

These scams hurt people and families who are simply trying to obtain an immigration benefit. You deserve honest help from people you can trust.

Does Catholic Charities Know This is Happening?

Yes. We are aware of these scams, and we are taking them seriously.

We are working with the Santa Rosa Police Department and other local partners to help protect our community and raise awareness.

If someone has used our name or claimed to work with us, please contact us right away at (707) 578-6000, or visit us in person at 987 Airway Ct., Santa Rosa, CA.

How Can I tell if Someone is a Real Immigration Services Provider?

Here are a few important things to look for:

- They work out of well-established locations/offices, not temporary offices
- They are a licensed attorney or DOJ-accredited representative/DOJ-recognized office
- You can easily find information about their legal services and accreditations in official websites such as Department of Justice, State Bar Associations, or nationally recognized immigration legal organizations such as CLINIC or ILRC, among others

- They do not ask to meet in public places such as coffee shops, parking lots, or restaurants. They will also not ask to meet in private locations such as temporary offices and/or residential houses.
- They will not have offices in places where non-social services are offered alongside immigration legal services, such as tax preparation offices, mail services, or markets.

If something feels wrong, trust your instincts. You can always call us if you are unsure.

What is a Notario?

This is very important to understand.

In many countries, a “notario” is a legal professional. In the United States, that is different.

Here, a notary public is not a lawyer and cannot give immigration legal advice.

Some people use the title “notario” to mislead families into trusting them. This can seriously hurt someone’s immigration case.

What is the difference between filling out forms and giving legal advice?

Some people are allowed to help fill out forms. But only a licensed attorney or accredited DOJ representative can:

- Explain your legal options
- Tell you which forms to file
- Give legal advice
- Help if something goes wrong with your case
- Legally represent you, which means they can communicate with USCIS on your behalf and receive copies of your letters, receipts, and case updates directly from USCIS

If someone who is not a lawyer or a DOJ Accredited Representative is giving legal advice, that is a warning sign.

What are Some Signs of a Scam?

Be careful if someone:

- Contacts you only through WhatsApp, Facebook, or social media to offer immigration help. CCNWC uses social media to share information and events, but we never use it as a communication tool with clients. We always reach out phone, text, email, and regular mail services
- Wants to meet somewhere other than a real, permanent office

- Promises guaranteed results
- Pressures you to pay cash right away without providing an official receipt
- Avoids questions about their credentials or cannot show proof

If any of these happen, pause before giving money or personal information.

What if I think I Was Scammed?

Please do not feel embarrassed. Scammers can be very convincing.

If you think this has happened to you:

- Contact your local law enforcement and file a report.
- If the alleged scammer claims to be a Catholic Charities of Northwest California staff member, please contact us immediately. We will help guide you on your next steps

The sooner you report it, the sooner we can help protect yourself and others.

How can I contact Catholic Charities of Northwest California?

We are here to help.

You can visit ccnwc.org or contact our team at (707) 578-6000 if you have questions or concerns.

If something does not feel right, ask. There is no question too small.

For more than 70 years, Catholic Charities of Northwest California has served our community with care, dignity, and compassion. We are committed to helping families find support they can trust.

Protecting Yourself from Immigration Fraud

At Catholic Charities of Northwest California, we are here to help you and your family with honest, reliable support. We are partnering with the Santa Rosa Police Department to investigate immigration fraud and protect our community.



What is Immigration Fraud?

Someone pretends to be an authorized immigration aid or lawyer to take your money, personal information, or important documents.

Forms vs. Legal Advice

Some people can help fill out forms, but **only** a licensed attorney or DOJ representative can:

- ✓ Explain your legal options
- ✓ Tell you what forms to file
- ✓ Give legal advice.
- ✓ Help if something goes wrong
- ✓ Act as your representative with USCIS

Does CCNWC Use Social Media to Offer Services?

NO! We do not reach out through WhatsApp, Facebook, or social media ads to offer our services. If you get a message like this **DO NOT** respond. Contact us directly.

How Can I Tell if Someone is Real?



They work out of well-established locations/offices, not temporary offices



They are a licensed attorney or DOJ-accredited representative/DOJ-recognized office



Their credentials are listed on DOJ, State Bar, or CLINIC websites



They never ask to meet in coffee shops, parking lots, or restaurants

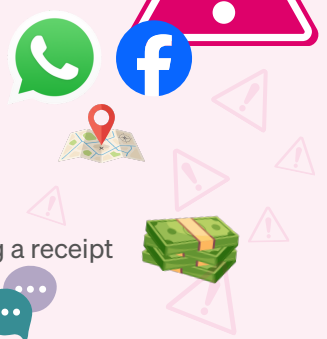


They do not operate out of tax preparation offices, mail services, or markets



Signs of a Scam

- ✗ Contacts you on WhatsApp, Facebook, or social media
- ✗ Wants to meet somewhere other than a real office
- ✗ Promises guaranteed results
- ✗ Pressures you to pay cash without providing a receipt
- ✗ Avoids questions or won't show proof of credentials



ccnwc.org | (707) 578-6000

We are here for you!



Call if you have questions.



Ask if you're unsure.



Get help you can trust.