



Legal Advice for International Students

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

KEARNEY INTERNATIONAL CENTER

250 CSU

TEL# 507-389-1281

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WHAT CAN A LAWYER DO FOR ME?

- Serve as your advocate, appeal an unfavorable decision by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and go to court, and argue on your behalf.
- Advise you on the immigration options available to you
- Help you make decisions about what is best for you in your circumstances
- Make sure that the correct forms are filled out in the proper way and are submitted to the appropriate government offices
- **Refer you to other qualified lawyers**

A LAWYER CANNOT :

- File papers for you that are inaccurate
- Legally get you an immigration status for which you do not qualify
- Change your “priority date,” or put you ahead of someone else in the waiting line for an immigrant visa or similar immigration benefit

I. DO I NEED A LAWYER TO ASSIST ME WITH MY IMMIGRATION QUESTIONS?

We cannot answer that question, but we can give you some items to consider.

- You are permitted, but not required, under immigration law or regulations to have an attorney prepare your paperwork. You have the right to do it yourself or hire an attorney in the same way that you have the right to file your own tax returns or have a professional do it.
- The Department of Homeland Security provides a great deal of information and copies of DHS (formerly known as the INS) forms and instructions <http://www.uscis.gov>
- All the information can be confusing, immigration laws are complex, and change often. It may not be easy to select the right form, fill it out correctly, and file it with all of the accompanying documents at the proper DHS office.
- An attorney can help you understand the benefits available to you, organize and file the right paperwork, and be present with you at most DHS interviews.

2. WHAT CAN A LAWYER DO FOR ME?

A lawyer can analyze the facts of your case, assess eligibility for benefits under the law and recommend the best procedure to follow, assist in the preparation and filing of forms for the principal applicant and/or family members, and provide counsel in immigration proceedings. A good lawyer should keep up with new laws and regulations that may affect you and be readily available to discuss your case with you.



Lawyers should tell you up front what to expect, advising you of the possibilities and risks you reasonably can expect. A lawyer should never guarantee success, as nothing in immigration is guaranteed. A lawyer should not encourage you to misrepresent facts to the government or file papers that are not true and accurate. Also, a lawyer should not promise benefits for which one is not qualified, nor claim special connections to get special treatment. Any such promises should be carefully investigated.

3. HOW CAN I FIND AN ATTORNEY?

The yellow pages in the phone book list attorneys. In the St. Paul/Minneapolis or the Mankato phone directory/yellow pages, see "Attorneys - Immigration & Naturalization Law". However, it is not necessary to engage an attorney in the Minnesota area. Most of the major immigration law firms have offices in large cities throughout the country. The leading professional association of immigration lawyers is the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), headquartered in Washington, DC (202-216-2400). A list of all AILA members nationwide can be obtained from the national office. AILA membership is an indication of the attorney's interest in immigration law, but AILA does not certify the credentials of any particular attorney. However, AILA holds a national conference annually, and the attorneys who speak at these conferences have been carefully selected by the association for their expertise in the field of immigration law. An attorney who speaks at a conference session is generally highly qualified.

Having a good lawyer is very important and it is vital that you ask the following questions: how long has the Lawyer been practicing immigration law; what percentage of the practice is devoted to immigration; has the attorney published in respected journals and/or presented at immigration conferences? Also, check on the attorney's reputation in the legal community.

3. HOW CAN I FIND AN ATTORNEY?

Always ask for references, particularly of individuals whose petitions are similar to yours, and follow up on them. Ask how satisfied they were with the attorney's handling of their case, how easy it was to contact the attorney directly and how responsive the attorney was to questions and concerns, how long the whole process took, and any other questions that can help you assess the attorney's expertise and accessibility. Consult, too, with friends who have used an attorney for the same type of petition to see how satisfied they were.

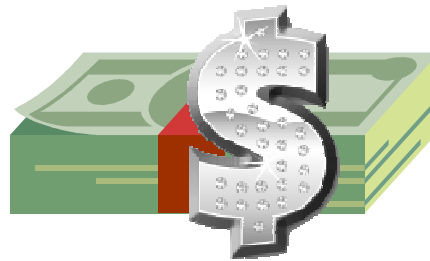
Be sure that you understand your options and the consequences as well as deadlines that you will need to follow. This is an important decision, so ask questions, get references and follow up on them.



4. HOW MUCH SHOULD I EXPECT TO PAY A LAWYER?

Some attorneys charge a fixed fee for a particular process, while other attorneys charge on an hourly basis. It is important to understand and feel comfortable with the fee agreement before leaving the attorney's office.

The attorney should always put the fee arrangements in writing. It is important to understand that attorneys charge for their expertise and the time that they and their staff spend working on a case. There may be additional fees for more complex cases. Everyone's case is different. In most cases, attorney's fees do not include costs such as filing fees to the Department of Homeland Security, which may amount to an additional several hundred dollars per person.



5. ARE THERE OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION IN IMMIGRATION ISSUES

The MSU, Memorial Library has a variety of publications dealing with immigration laws and regulations. Forms and instructions can be also be obtained from: www.uscis.gov

The central USCIS forms number is often more accessible and forms are generally mailed out quickly. The number is: 1-800-870-3676.

Some immigration attorneys have very informative web pages. Helpful information can also be obtained from the following web pages on page 8 of this booklet.

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR LAWYER

Here is a checklist of basic questions to ask before you hire a lawyer

1. What is your experience in this field?
2. Have you handled matters like mine?
3. What are the possible outcomes of my case?
4. What are my alternatives in resolving the matter?
5. Approximately how long will it take to resolve?
6. What is an estimated cost for the total bill, including fees and expenses?
7. What are your rates and how often will you bill me?
8. How will you keep me informed of progress?
9. Who else in the office will be working on my case?
10. Can junior attorneys or paralegals in the office handle some of the administrative work at a lower rate?

PEOPLE WHO WORK IN A LAW OFFICE

Partners—Usually the owners of the law firm

Associates—Lawyers employed by the law firm

Contract Lawyers—Outside lawyers that do part-time work for the firm

“Of Counsel Lawyers” - a retired lawyer that may still help the firm

Law Clerks - usually law students who help the firm

Paralegals—a person who has had legal training, but is not a lawyer

Legal Assistants—Can be anyone who assists in legal matters

Legal Secretaries: A person who handles many of the administrative details for a lawyer

Receptionists: Usually the front person in the office that handles initial contact with the outside world

Investigators—People who investigate the background on a case

Administrative Personnel— People who run the internal operations of the firm

**OTHER HELPFUL SITES THAT COULD
BE USED TO FIND AN IMMIGRATION
ATTORNEY IN MINNESOTA ARE AS
FOLLOWS:**

www.ailamndak.org/

[www.superpages.com/yellowpages/C-
Immigration+Law+Attorneys/S-MN/T-Minneapolis](http://www.superpages.com/yellowpages/C-Immigration+Law+Attorneys/S-MN/T-Minneapolis)

[www.lawyers.com/lawyers/
P~P~Minnesota~Immigration~LDS~City.html](http://www.lawyers.com/lawyers/P~P~Minnesota~Immigration~LDS~City.html)

www.immigrationlawyerlocator.com/

[http://lawyers.findlaw.com/lawyer/practicestate/Immigration%
20&%20Naturalization%20Law/Minnesota](http://lawyers.findlaw.com/lawyer/practicestate/Immigration%20&%20Naturalization%20Law/Minnesota)

[http://twincities.citysearch.com/yellowpages/directory/
Twin_Cities_MN/240/469/page1.html](http://twincities.citysearch.com/yellowpages/directory/Twin_Cities_MN/240/469/page1.html)

**UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND
IMMIGRATION SERVICES:**

www.uscis.gov

Department of Labor:

www.dol.gov

Department of State:

<http://travel.state.gov>

American Immigration Lawyers Association:

www.aila.org

Immigration Attorney Referral List

A good resource for you is the American Immigration Lawyer's search.

How to Qualify:

Attorneys listed must meet the following requirements:

Be an approved AILA member for at least 2 years.

Carry professional liability insurance with a minimum of \$100,000 of coverage.

Completed at least 9 hours of Continuing Legal Education (CLE) classes within the last year.

Licensed and in good standing with a State Bar Association.

For additional information please visit www.ailalawyer.com, or contact the AILA membership Department at (202) 216-2400.

The following attorneys in this area have been listed as resources to Minnesota State University, Mankato in the past. The International Center does not provide any recommendations. **Please research these options on your own.**

Immigration Attorney Referral List

ATTY JOHN ELLA

Mansfield & Tanick
900 2nd Avenue S. #1560
Minneapolis, MN 55402-3383
Phone: (612) – 339 – 4295
Fax: (612) – 339 – 3161

ATTY RICHARD BREITMAN

2901 Metro Drive Suite 501
Bloomington, MN 55425
Phone: (612) – 822 – 4724
Fax: (612) – 854 – 8519

ATTY MICHAEL DAVIS

1219 Mabquette Avenue, Suite #200
Minneapolis, MN 55403
Phone: (612) – 630 – 2244
Fax: (612) – 630 – 2245
Languages: Habla Espanol

ATTY ROSE GRENGS

105 5TH Avenue S # 105
Minneapolis, MN 55401
Phone: (612) – 672 – 0092
Fax: (612) – 339 – 0515

ATTY LESLEY GUYTON

ATTY NANCY A. PETERSON
Baker Court. Suite #305
821 Raymond Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55114
Phone: (651) – 641 – 8664
Fax: (651) – 641 – 8580
Languages: Habla Espanol

ATTY PATRICIA MATTOS

ATTY LOAN HUYNH
1539 Grand Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105
Phone: (651) – 698 – 8841
Fax: (651) – 698 – 5703
Languages: Habla Espanol
Portuguese
Vietnamese

ATTY STEVEN THAL

11650 Wayzata Blvd.
Minnetonka, MN 55305
Phone: (612) – 541 – 1090
Fax: (612) – 541 – 1186

ATTY GENIE HEDLUND
Hedlund Law Office
624 S 2nd St.
Mankato, MN 56001
Phone: (507) – 345 – 7145

ATTY SCOTT M. BORENE
Borene Law Firm
4602 IDS Center
Minneapolis, MN 55402
Phone: (612) – 321 – 0082
Fax: (612) – 332 – 8368

ATTY KAREN ELLINGSON
West St. Paul
St. Paul, MN 55114
Phone: (651) – 451 – 1660

**ATTY HOWARD S. MYERS
(SAM)**
Minneapolis, MN 55401
Phone: (621) – 349 – 3030

ATTY ELIZABETH THOMPSON
Minneapolis, MN 55401
Phone: (621) – 349 – 3030

**ATTY LAURA J. DANIELSON
ATTY F. SNYDER GOKEY**
Fredrikson & Byron, P.A.
200 South Sixth Street, Suite 4000
Minneapolis, MN 55402-1425
Phone: (621) – 492 – 7148
Fax: (621) – 492 – 7077

ATTY CRAIG PETERSON
Dorsey & Whitney
Suite 1500
South Sixth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55402-1498

ATTY JOHN G. BENSON
Washington Ave. Suite 328
Minneapolis, MN 55401
Phone: (651) – 373 – 7001
Fax: (651) – 349 – 2760

ATTY EDWARD J. HAYWARD
Oppenheimer Wolff & Donnelly LLP
Plaza VII, Suite 3300
45th South Seventh Street
Minneapolis, MN 55402-1609
Phone: (621) – 607 – 7280
Fax: (612) – 607 – 7100

ATTY NAOMI PERMAN
Perman Law Firm
1400 Ecolab University Ctr.
386 N. Wabasha St.
St. Paul, MN 55102-1308
Phone: (651) – 224 – 8935
Fax: (651) – 292 – 8941

ATTY AMY SCHROEDER IRELAND
Schroeder Ireland, LLC
26 East Exchange Street, Suite 316
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101
Phone: (612) .-335- 6158
Fax: (651) -.291 -1466
Web-site: www.SchroederIreland.com

ATTY ROBERT P. WEBBER
Webber Law Firm, LLC
5100 Edina Industrial Boulevard
Suite 230
Edina, MN 55439
Phone: (952)-831-5223
Fax: (952)-831-5233
Web-site: <http://webberlaw.com>

THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER DOES-
N'T ENDORSE ONE ATTORNEY OR
LAW FIRM OVER ANOTHER. **THE LE-
GAL REPRESENTATION YOU
CHOOSE IS A PERSONAL CHOICE.**



ISO/staff/Brochures