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Top 5 Most Common Immigration Scams

Immigration issues can be complicated and distressing, with limited resources and limited understanding of the English language, foreign nationals are the perfect prey for scam artist looking to make a quick dollar. Being caught in an immigration scam can be extremely harmful to the victim. The victim's immigration status could be in jeopardy and their chances of relief in the future can be damaged. Even people who mean well can cause problems for the immigrant later as they are not familiar with ever-changing laws.

By staying informed, foreign nationals can identify the signs of an immigration scam and take the right steps to prevent any further damage. Working with people authorized and licensed by the U.S. government will protect the foreign national from people trying to cheat them.

Below are the most common immigration scams that foreign nationals should be aware of:

1. **Public Notary Scams**– This type of scam is usually aimed at Latin American individuals. In many Latin American countries public notaries or “notario publicos” in Spanish mean something different than it does here in the United States. In other countries public notaries are legal authorities that hold special credentials. In the United States they usually only hold the power to witness signatures.

Only an attorney or an accredited representative can represent you. Public Notaries are not attorneys and they are not authorized to provide anyone with legal services relating to immigration.

2. **Visa Lottery Scams** - The U.S. Department of State manages the Diversity Visa Program, also known as the Lottery Visa or Green Card Visa. The State Department will never email you about being selected in the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program.

Scam artist will contact foreign nationals claiming that they have won a visa in some lottery. They will use this ruse to gain access to their personal information or have them wire money to a fraudulent account.

3. **Online Website Scams** – Con artist will create websites that either resemble or claim to be affiliated with the USCIS. Again, with the intent of accessing personal information or monetary compensation from the foreign national.

When trying to access USCIS online make sure that the web address includes .gov at the end. Only United States may use the .gov designation at the end of a website address.

4. **Phone Scams** – Similar to the website scam above but through the telephone. A common tactic is for the caller to present false information and have the foreign national then provide the correct information.

The USCIS will never ask you to make a payment over the phone. They also do not accept Western Union or PayPal as a payment for immigration fees. Some immigration fees can be paid online but only through “myUSCIS”.



5. **Job Offer Scams** – Promises of a job in the U.S. in exchange for an upfront payment should be viewed suspiciously and more than likely are a scam. Even if the job offer is legitimate foreign nationals are not allowed to work in the United States unless you are a lawful permanent resident, have a work permit or have an employment-related visa.

Madison Law APC offers a variety of immigration services. We believe that working closely with our clients throughout the immigration process is essential to avoiding mistakes, and ensuring the successful completion of an application.

If you are in need of any immigration services, please contact our office for your free consultation:

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References

- 1) USCIS, Common Immigration Scams - <https://www.uscis.gov/avoid-scams/common-scams>
- 2) Just Great Lawyers - <https://www.justgreatlawyers.com/articles/an-essential-guide-to-avoiding-immigration-fraud-scams-17>

