

# Glossary of U.S. Immigration Related Terms

*This list was compiled from US government websites.*

**Accredited Representatives** -- Individuals who are connected to Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA)-recognized organizations. These representatives can charge or accept only very small fees for their legal services, which includes representation before USCIS.

**Adjustment of Status** -- The process to apply for lawful permanent resident status (also known as applying for a Green Card) for someone present in the United States.

**Affidavit of Support** – A legally enforceable contract to show they have adequate means of financial support and are not likely to rely on the U.S. government for financial support. This form is often used in parole decisions for people in immigration detention.

**Alien** — Any person not a citizen or national of the United States.

**Alien Registration Number or Alien Number (A Number or A#)** — A unique seven-, eight- or nine-digit number assigned to a noncitizen by the Department of Homeland Security. Also see “USCIS Number.”

**Asylee** — Someone in the United States who is found to be unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality, or to seek the protection of that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Persecution or the fear thereof must be based on the alien’s race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

**Bond Proceedings** -- An immigration court hearing on a request to determine or redetermine a bond set by the Department of Homeland Security. Bond proceedings are separate from other immigration court proceedings.

**CBP**— An abbreviation for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, an agency of the Department of Homeland Security.

**CBP One™** -- A mobile application that serves as a single portal to a variety of CBP services. Through a series of guided questions, the app directs each type of user to the appropriate services based on their needs.

**Child** -- Generally, an unmarried person under 21 years of age, including: a child, a stepchild, provided that the child was under 18 years of age at the time the stepchild relationship occurred; a legitimated child, a child born out of wedlock, and a child adopted while under 16 years of age.

**Conditional resident** — Any alien granted permanent resident status on a conditional basis (for example, a spouse of a U.S. citizen or an immigrant investor) who must petition to remove the conditions of his or her status before the second anniversary of the approval date of his or her conditional status.

(U.S.) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) — An agency of the Department of Homeland Security that is responsible for securing the homeland by preventing the illegal entry of people and goods while facilitating legitimate travel and trade.

DACA — Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, a program launched in 2012. For more information, go to the [Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(DACA\)](#) page.

DAPA—Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents, a program launched in 2014. For more information, go to the [Executive Actions on Immigration](#) page.

Deferred action — A use of prosecutorial discretion to not remove an individual from the country for a set period of time, unless the deferred action is terminated for some reason. Deferred action is determined on a case-by-case basis and only establishes lawful presence but does not provide immigration status or benefits of any kind. DACA is one type of deferred action.

DHS — An abbreviation for the Department of Homeland Security

DOJ — An abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Justice

DOL — An abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Labor

Department of Homeland Security — Department of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government charged with homeland security: preventing terrorism and managing risks to critical infrastructure; securing and managing the border; enforcing and administering immigration laws; safeguarding and securing cyberspace; and ensuring resilience to disasters.

Department of Justice — Department of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government with the primary responsibilities to enforce the law and defend the interests of the United States according to the law; to ensure public safety against threats foreign and domestic; to provide federal leadership in preventing and controlling crime; to seek just punishment for those guilty of unlawful behavior; and to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans.

Department of Labor — Department of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government that fosters and promotes the welfare of the job seekers, wage earners, and retirees of the United States. The Department administers a variety of Federal labor laws including those that guarantee workers' rights to safe and healthful working conditions; a minimum hourly wage and overtime pay; freedom from employment discrimination; unemployment insurance; and other income support.

Employer Sanctions— Series of civil fines or criminal penalties for violation of regulations that prohibit employers from hiring, recruiting or referring for a fee aliens known to be unauthorized to work in the United States, or continuing to employ aliens knowing them to be unauthorized, or hiring an individual without completing Form I-9.

Employment Authorization Document (Form I-766/EAD) — A general term used to describe a card issued by USCIS on Form I-766 with the title “Employment Authorization Card” to aliens who are authorized to work in the United States in order to evidence their employment authorization. The card contains a photograph of the individual and sometimes his or her fingerprint. An alien who has been issued this card usually has open-market employment authorization, but there are exceptions.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)— Agency that enforces federal laws that prohibit discrimination against a job applicant or employee because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.

E-Verify — An Internet-based system that compares information from an employee's Form I-9 to data from Department of Homeland Security and Social Security Administration records to confirm employment authorization.

EOIR – Abbreviation for Executive Office for Immigration Review.

Executive Office for Immigration Review -- Part of the Department of Justice that is responsible for immigration courts and the Board of Immigration Appeals.

FERM – Abbreviation for Family Expedited Removal Management

Family Expedited Removal Management – A process for certain families who are placed in expedited removal in which they are supervised using electronic monitoring and curfews.

ICE — An abbreviation for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, an agency of the Department of Homeland Security

(U.S.) Immigration and Customs Enforcement — The principal investigative arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, ICE's primary mission is to promote homeland security and public safety through the criminal and civil enforcement of federal laws governing border control, customs, trade, and immigration.

Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), Public Law 99-603, 100 Stat. 3359 (enacted November 6, 1986) — An Act of Congress passed into law in order to control and deter illegal immigration to the United States. Its major provisions stipulate legalization of undocumented aliens who had been continuously unlawfully present since 1982, legalization of certain agricultural workers, sanctions for employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers, and increased enforcement at U.S. borders.

Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) — An Act of Congress that, along with other immigration laws, treaties, and conventions of the United States, relates to the immigration, temporary admission, naturalization and removal of aliens

INA — An abbreviation for the Immigration and Nationality Act

INS — An abbreviation of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which was abolished in 2003. Its functions are now performed by three agencies of the Department of Homeland Security— U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), ICE and CBP.

IRCA— An abbreviation for the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Public Law 99-603, 100 Stat. 3359 (enacted Nov. 6, 1986).

LPR — An abbreviation for lawful permanent resident

Labor Certification— Department of Labor certification required for U.S. employers seeking to employ individuals whose immigration to the United States is based on job skills or nonimmigrant temporary workers coming to perform services for which qualified authorized workers are unavailable in the United States.

Lawful Permanent Resident — Any person not a citizen of the United States who is residing in the U.S. under legally recognized and lawfully recorded permanent residence as an immigrant. Also known as "Permanent Resident Alien," "Resident Alien Permit Holder," and "Green Card Holder."

Nonimmigrant — An alien who is admitted to the United States for a specific temporary period of time. There are a variety of nonimmigrant categories, each exists for a specific purpose with specific terms and conditions. Nonimmigrant classifications include: foreign government officials, visitors for business and for pleasure, aliens in transit through the United States, treaty traders and investors, students and others.

Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices— A section within the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice that enforces the anti-discrimination provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1324b, which protects U.S. citizens and employment-authorized individuals from employment discrimination based on citizenship or immigration status, or based on national origin with respect to hiring, firing and recruitment or referral for a fee, and discrimination during the employment verification process.

Parole — Immigration and Nationality Act section 212(d)(5)(A) gives the Secretary the discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to “parole” for “urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit” an alien applying for admission to the United States. Although it is most frequently used to permit an alien who is outside the United States to come into U.S. territory, parole may also be granted to aliens who are already physically present in the U.S. without inspection or admission.

Permanent Resident Card (Form I-551)— Also known as the green card or alien registration card, this card is issued by USCIS to aliens as evidence of their lawful permanent resident status in the United States. For Form I-9, it is acceptable as proof of both identity and employment authorization. Although some Permanent Resident Cards contain no expiration date, most are valid for 10 years. Cards held by individuals with conditional permanent resident status are valid for two years.

Port of entry — Any location in the United States or its territories that is designated as a point of entry for aliens and U.S. citizens. All district offices and service centers are also

considered ports because they become locations of entry for aliens adjusting to immigrant status.

**Provisional Waiver** — Waiver for individuals who are otherwise inadmissible due to more than 180 days of unlawful presence in the United States, based on a showing of extreme hardship to certain U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident family members, which allows the individual to return after departure for an immigrant visa interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate. For more information, go to the [Provisional Unlawful Presence Waivers](#) page.

**Refugee**— Generally, any person outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Persecution or fear of persecution must be based on the person's race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. For a legal definition of refugee, see section 101(a)(42) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

**Temporary Protected Status (TPS)** — The Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a foreign country for TPS due to conditions in the country that temporarily prevent the country's nationals from returning safely, or in certain circumstances, where the country is unable to handle the return of its nationals adequately. The Secretary may designate a country for TPS due to the following temporary conditions in the country: ongoing armed conflict (such as civil war); an environmental disaster (such as earthquake or hurricane); or other extraordinary and temporary conditions.

**Unaccompanied Child (UAC)** - A child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States; has not attained 18 years of age; and, with respect to whom, there is no parent or legal guardian in the United States, or no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody.

**USCIS** — An abbreviation for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, an agency of the Department of Homeland Security.

**USCIS Number**— A unique, 9-digit number assigned to a noncitizen by the Department of Homeland Security that is listed on the front of Permanent Resident Cards (Form I-551) issued after May 10, 2010. See also Alien Registration Number or Alien Number.

**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services**— A federal agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States. Its functions include, but are not limited to, granting employment authorization to eligible aliens, issuing documentation of alien employment authorization, maintaining Form I-9, and administering the E-Verify employment eligibility verification program.

**Visa** - A U.S. visa allows the bearer to apply for entry to the U.S. in a certain classification (e.g. student (F), visitor (B), temporary worker (H)). A visa does not grant the bearer the right to enter the United States. The Department of State (DOS) is responsible for visa adjudication at U.S. Embassies and Consulates outside of the U.S. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) immigration inspectors determine admission into, length of stay and conditions of stay in, the U.S. at a port of entry.