

# Referring Students to Legal Services

The role of the citizenship teacher is to teach citizenship preparation classes. This includes preparing students to pass their Naturalization Interview. Citizenship teachers are **not** immigration lawyers. They do not have the qualifications to assist students in filling out their Application for Naturalization. They are legally bound to refrain from giving legal advice. Good citizenship teachers help their students the most by learning which local agencies are qualified to provide legal services to immigrants and giving that information to their students.

## Nationwide

One of the best national sources for finding your students legal assistance is at Welcome to the USA.gov. Their “Finding Legal Assistance” page has links to organizations and individuals recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) to provide legal services as well as agencies that provide free legal services (although not all of the agencies on the list are qualified in immigration and naturalization law.)

[www.welcometousa.gov/Immigration\\_citizenship/Finding\\_legal\\_assistance.htm](http://www.welcometousa.gov/Immigration_citizenship/Finding_legal_assistance.htm)

## Statewide

Information on state legal agencies might also be found at individual state government Web sites or the state attorney general’s Web site.

[www.usa.gov/Agencies/State\\_and\\_Territories.shtml](http://www.usa.gov/Agencies/State_and_Territories.shtml)

## In Illinois

Illinois is lucky many qualified organizations to help students along the path to citizenship. Here are two that will help Illinois teachers to know where to refer their students for more help:

- **Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.** The legal assistance page contains links to non-profit agencies in Illinois which provide free and low-costs assistance to citizenship students. <http://icirr.org/service-directory>
- **New Americans Initiative.** This is the site of Illinois’ New Americans Initiative (NAI). NAI sponsors citizenship workshops in which trained individuals will help students file their Application for Naturalization. Each workshop also includes qualified legal representatives who will help students ascertain their eligibility for Naturalization. [www.becomeacitizennow.org/](http://www.becomeacitizennow.org/)

*Note: The following page contains a list of Board of Immigration Appeals agencies in Illinois.*

The above information will help citizenship teachers know where to refer students to legal services. Knowing when to refer students to legal agencies is a little harder. The best advice is to make students aware of agencies that can help and encourage them to go there if they have committed any crimes or have other issues that might warrant assistance. Take a look at this “stop sign” form created by the National Immigration Justice Center and the New Americans Initiative to see some examples of problems that would require legal assistance. [www-old.icirr.org/nai/diy/stopsign.pdf](http://www-old.icirr.org/nai/diy/stopsign.pdf)