PUBLICATION

USCIS Customer Service Scripts Now Published

Authors: Robert C. Divine
July 14, 2009

USCIS has posted on its web site the scripts apparently used by non-governmental, contracted customer service center workers in answering inquiries by the public to USCIS' 800 number (800-375-5283). Another victory for transparency in government.

Many years ago USCIS set up the "National Customer Service Center," staffing it through contracts with private vendors of customer service call center workers. In the past, the public has complained that the center did not answer some calls at all, left people on hold for long times, gave incorrect answers, and had inadequate case information available to them.

Over the years, USCIS has improved the scripts, had them vetted by internal counsel, competed new contracts for call center vendors, and added "tier 2" government officers to handle truly complex inquiries. As response times have improved and handling mail inquiries has proven tedious, USCIS has pushed more and more of its former inquiry channels to the call centers. USCIS has awarded contracts to more than one vendor, in effect causing the vendors to compete with each other for responsiveness.

After a long effort to make arrangements, USCIS has loaded onto its public web site the scripts that the call center workers apparently use to respond to inquiries. This makes the content available to the public in a more efficient fashion, subjects the content to public scrutiny (and thereby improvement), and helps stakeholders spot check the call centers' faithfulness to the scripts. We salute USCIS for taking this important step to public transparency and customer service.

Readers can navigate to the scripts by starting at www.uscis.gov and navigating the links to About USCIS > Electronic Reading Room > Customer Service Resource Guide.

USCIS hopes to make the scripts readily available from its home page within several months.

[Note: we have not reviewed the scripts in detail and do not vouch for their accuracy.]