

# Notorious Notarios

In Spanish “Notario” means a lawyer with special credentials. In the US terms has come to mean immigration scammer.

Be careful whom you hire to give you immigration advice. Only an attorney or a Board of Immigration Appeals-accredited representative can legally represent you before USCIS.

Everywhere you look (especially on the internet) there are advertisements offering immigration help. Steer clear of businesses that “guarantee” immigration benefits – nothing is guaranteed when it comes to US Immigration. There are websites galore out there claiming to be affiliated with USCIS and that charge for immigration forms. There is only one USCIS website ([www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)) and immigration forms are available for free on the website.

Another scam is for the Visa Lottery, which is only offered once a year by the US Department of State. Beware of fraudulent emails you receive and websites you visit that claim to make it easier to enter the lottery for a fee or that even identify you as a DV Lottery winner. Also, stay away from business and individuals who make reference to the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) – it no

longer exists – it was dismantled in 2003!

When choosing an attorney ensure that the attorney is a member in *good standing* of the bar of the highest court of any U.S. state, territory, commonwealth or District of Columbia. Ask to see the attorney's current licensing document, and verify through the state bar association that he or she is a licensed attorney. You can also check the "List of Currently Disciplined Practitioners." published by the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) to see who has been expelled or suspended from practicing law before USCIS.

Alternatively if you choose to use an accredited representative the person must work for a BIA-approved non-profit, religious, charitable, social service or similar organization in the United States. Her or she may only charge nominal (small) fees, if any. You can check the BIA website for the list of accredited representatives and recognized organizations.

If you believe that you have been a victim of an immigration services scam, you can report scams to the Federal Trade Commission, or file a complaint in your state.

