

A vertical traffic light is positioned on the left side of the image. It has three circular lights: a red light at the top, an orange light in the middle, and a green light at the bottom. The lights are illuminated with a glowing, concentric ring effect. The background of the traffic light is dark grey.

City of Fresno **Immigrant Affairs Committee**

# BEWARE OF NOTARIO FRAUD

When seeking immigration services, don't be fooled by shady "notarios" or "immigration consultants."

Immigration law is very complex and confusing. Dishonest individuals try to take advantage of this by deceiving those persons seeking legal status.

## What is notario fraud?

A notary public in the U.S. can only witness the signature of forms, while a “notario público” in Latin America is authorized to represent others before the government.

Unscrupulous individuals take advantage of the term and claim to be able to provide legal advice, charging thousands of dollars. This often results in missed deadlines, filing of incorrect or incomplete forms, or the filing of false claims with the government.

## Who does this fraud affect?

It directly affects not only the immigrant community, but also those citizens and legal permanent residents looking to apply for family members. These are your friends, neighbors, and members of your community.

## How can a person protect themselves from notario fraud?

Individuals (non-attorneys) can perform some immigration services if they have an Office of Legal Access Programs (OLAP) accreditation through the U.S. Department of Justice.

This list can be found at [bit.ly/doj\\_olap](https://bit.ly/doj_olap) | CA attorneys can be verified at [members.calbar.ca.gov](https://members.calbar.ca.gov)

### Notarios and consultants can:

- ✓ Translate information and questions on immigration forms for a customer
- ✓ Fill out immigration forms with answers provided by the customer and help collect supporting documents for applications
- ✓ Refer customers to an attorney without charging a fee for doing so

### Notarios and consultants cannot:

- ✗ Advise customers on what immigration benefit they qualify for
- ✗ Select or recommend which immigration form to use
- ✗ Suggest how to answer a question on an immigration form
- ✗ Refuse to return original documents, like birth certificates or passports to clients
- ✗ Charge customers for immigration forms that are available online for free