

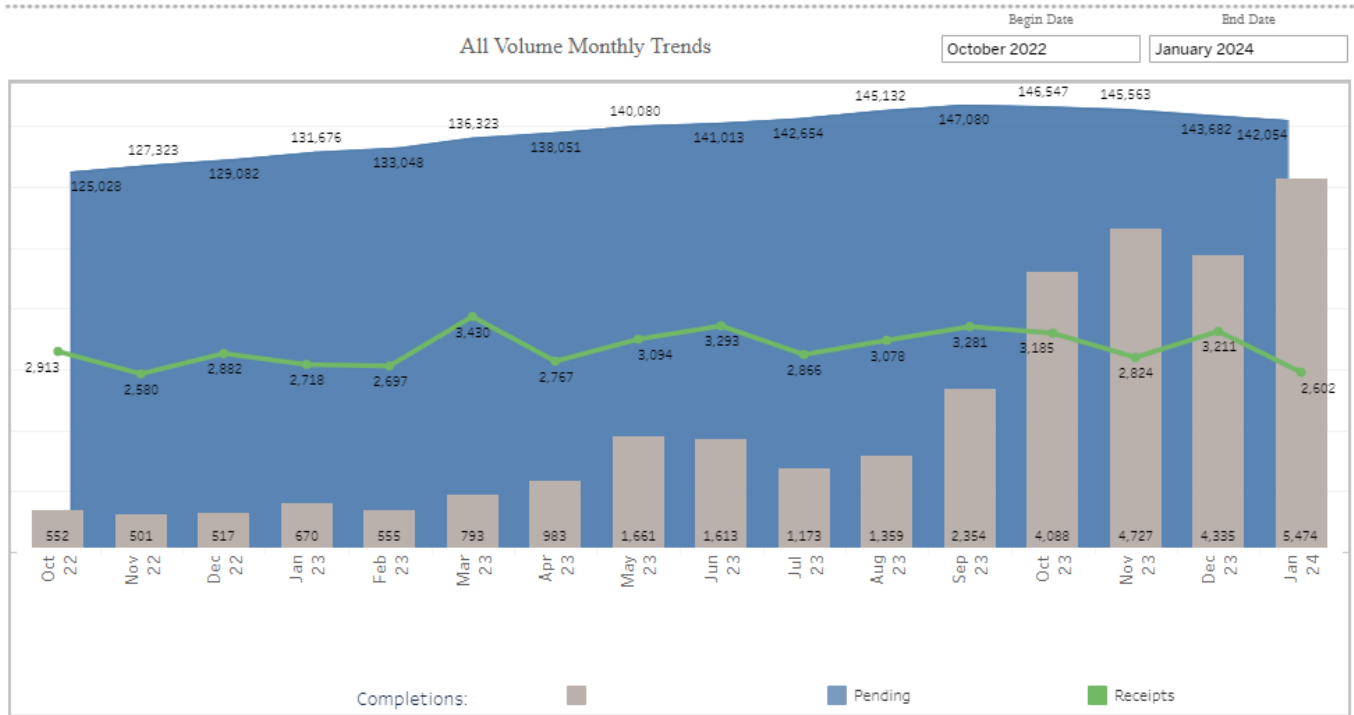


# Humanitarian, Adjustment, Removing Conditions and Travel Documents (HART) Service Center - Frequently Asked Questions

## **Form I-601A. Application for Provisional Unlawful Presence Waiver**

**Q1. Applications for Provisional Unlawful Presence Waivers (Form I-601A) are taking 44 months to process. What is your target processing time, and when do you expect to reach that target because of the HART Service Center?**

A1. As of January 2024, we are processing 80% of Form I-601A applications within 43.5 months, according to our [Check Case Processing Times](#) webpage. We do not currently have a short-term [cycle time goal](#) for Form I-601A. However, we are committed to reducing processing times for Form I-601A, and to that end, we continue to digitize this workload and to hire, onboard, and train officers adjudicating this form type. As the HART Service Center hires and trains new officers, we expect processing times will decrease. The number of Form I-601A decisions the HART Service Center issues has already increased. HART Service Center's goal was to reach a 95-98% staffing level by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2024. HART will reach this goal in advance of the end of the fiscal year, and we will have all receipted Form I-601A scanned in early calendar year 2024. However, it is too soon to estimate what the reduced processing time will be or how soon we will reach it.



**Q2. Can you provide a hiring update?**

A2. Hiring and training new staff is a top priority for the HART Service Center. As of the end of FY 2023, 327 employees onboarded at HART, including officers, supervisors, and analysts. We met our hiring goals, achieving 79% staffing in FY 2023. We are on target to reach our goal of 95-98% staffing in FY 2024. At the end of its first year of operation, it was 86% staffed. An additional 34 employees (7%) have been selected and are waiting to onboard.

**Q3. Do officers review and adjudicate Form I-601A electronically or on paper?**

A3. Because Form I-601A cannot be filed online, the Lockbox receives and receipts paper-based Form I-601A and then scans and digitizes them before assigning and transferring them to an adjudicating officer who reviews electronically.

**Q4. Will I be able to file Form I-601A electronically in the future?**

A4. We are constantly expanding our online services and tools, including the ability to file certain forms online. However, we do not currently know when Form I-601A will be available for online filing.



**Q5. Will other service centers, in addition to the HART Service Center, adjudicate Form I-601A?**

A5. Only the HART Service Center adjudicates Form I-601A. The HART Service Center also adjudicates:

- Form I-918, Petition for U Nonimmigrant Status, bona fide determinations;
- Form I-360, Petition for Amerasian, Widow(er), or Special Immigrant; and
- Form I-730, Refugee/Asylee Relative Petition.

We have stopped adjudicating these four forms at other service centers. If these forms were pending at other service centers, we have transferred them to the HART Service Center.

**Form I-918, Petition for U Nonimmigrant Status (U Visa)**

**Q6. Can you provide an update on U visa bona fide determinations and processing times?**

A6. As of Sept. 30, 2023, you can access processing times for all HART-based forms at [egov.uscis.gov/processing-times](https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times). The processing times posted for Form I-918 reflect the time range from receipt to the issuance of either a bona fide determination grant notice or a notice that we will consider the petition for waiting list placement. Currently, petitions filed in January 2019 are under bona fide determination review.

USCIS is actively working to decrease U visa bona fide determination processing times by increasing the HART Service Center resources and pursuing procedural and operational enhancements. For example, on Aug. 11, 2023, we updated the USCIS Policy Manual to provide that we may review and determine whether a qualifying family member's petition for U nonimmigrant status is bona fide and, if already filed, adjudicate their Application for Employment Authorization (Form I-765) when the principal petitioner receives a bona fide determination, even if the principal petitioner has not filed Form I-765.

USCIS has also permanently reassigned officers who were identified by the other service centers as subject matter experts in the U bona fide determination process. These officers will focus on backlog reduction for U nonimmigrant status petitions awaiting bona fide determinations.

**Q7. I have clients who have had bona fide determination letters for a year or more, but their application for employment authorization is still pending. Why is it taking so long if the person already has a bona fide determination?**



A7. Generally, we adjudicate any Form I-765 filed concurrently with Form I-918 or I-918A directly after we grant bona fide determination. This means current processing times for Form I-765 in these cases correspond to the Form I-918 and I-918A bona fide determination processing times. However, if a petitioner files their Form I-765 **after** receiving a bona fide determination, we will adjudicate it in order of receipt date. This may delay processing times.

To avoid processing delays, we encourage U nonimmigrant status petitioners and their qualifying family members to file Form I-765 with their Form I-918 and Form I-918A initial filing.

**Q8. The policy manual states there is no method for appealing a bona fide determination decision. If we believe a decision was made in error (or if there is no reason given for a bona fide determination denial), what can a petitioner do?**

A8. The non-issuance of a bona fide determination Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is not a final agency action, so USCIS does not accept or process motions to reopen or reconsider, appeals, or requests to re-apply for a bona fide determination EAD. If a petitioner does not receive a bona fide determination EAD and deferred action, we evaluate them for waiting list eligibility; if we deem them eligible for waiting list placement, they may be able to obtain employment authorization and a grant of deferred action. Unlike the bona fide determination process, officers may issue a request for evidence or a notice of intent to deny to gather additional information necessary to adjudicate for waiting list placement. Addressing deficiencies during the waiting list process allows USCIS to evaluate and adjudicate petitions as efficiently as possible.

USCIS completes a full adjudication for any qualifying family member who will not receive a bona fide determination EAD. The full adjudication includes issuing requests for evidence to address any deficiencies or concerns in the qualifying family member's record, but it is not an adjudication for waiting list placement. If the qualifying family member resolves the deficiencies or concerns in the record, USCIS issues a bona fide determination EAD and grants deferred action to the qualifying family member. If additional evidence provided by the qualifying family member does not resolve the deficiencies or concerns, then USCIS does not issue a bona fide determination EAD and generally places the qualifying family member's petition with the principal petition back in line to wait for a final statutory cap adjudication.

**Q9. If an attorney withdraws from a U visa case, how does USCIS communicate with a petitioner while ensuring confidentiality?**



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A9. If an attorney withdraws from a U visa filing, they must mail a letter to the USCIS office that has jurisdiction over the filing. If they are also representing qualifying family members, they must also mail a withdrawal letter for each qualifying family member they are representing. As a best practice, this letter should confirm the preferred mailing address of the petitioner and qualifying family members.

Unrepresented petitioners and qualifying family members may send signed, written inquiries to the appropriate address from the table below.

If your case is located at the:	Then mail your signed, written inquiry to:
Nebraska Service Center	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Nebraska Service Center ATTN: I-918 P.O. Box 87918 Lincoln, NE 68501-7918
Vermont Service Center	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Vermont Service Center ATTN: Humanitarian Division 38 River Road Essex Junction, VT 05479-0001

USCIS can communicate directly with petitioners if their attorney or accredited representative withdraws representation via U.S. Postal Service mail or if the petitioner sets up an Infopass appointment at a local field office. Visit the [Contact Us](#) webpage and look under “Inquiries for VAWA, T, and U Filings.”

### **Q10. Is the HART Service Center only doing bona fide determinations for Forms I-918, or will the HART Service Center officers also make waiting list determinations?**

A10. The HART Service Center conducts all bona fide determination reviews. Generally, if a case is not granted a bona fide determination, USCIS will transfer that case to the Vermont or Nebraska Service Center for full waiting list adjudication. However, if the



HART Service Center officer who determines the petition will not receive a bona fide determination grant is waiting list trained, then that officer will also complete the waiting list adjudication.

**Q11. Should we email both service centers for change of address for pending Forms I-918 (and associated Forms I-192 and Forms I-765) that are split between the Vermont Service Center and the Nebraska Service Center?**

A11. Represented petitioners with forms pending at both Vermont and Nebraska Service Centers do not need to email both centers. If you have filings pending at both service centers, attorneys and accredited representatives should use the email hotline for the center **where the petition was filed**. This service center will change the address for any filings pending at that location and then transfer the change of address request to the other service center. Find the hotline email addresses at the [Victims of Human Trafficking and Other Crimes](#) webpage, under “Case Inquiries.”

**Q12. Will the HART Service Center adjudicate Form I-765 applications for derivatives of U visa cases that have received a bona fide determination?**

A12. Yes, the HART Service Center adjudicates Form I-765 for U nonimmigrant status petitioners, including qualifying family members, who have received a bona fide determination. Generally, we adjudicate Form I-765 immediately after the bona fide determination grant if the petitioner filed Form I-765. If the Form I-765 was filed after the bona fide determination grant, we will adjudicate Form I-765 in order by receipt date.

**Q13. Can you explain the division of labor between the HART Service Center and the Vermont and Nebraska Service Centers for Form I-918? Do all Forms I-918 initially go to the HART Service Center, and then the HART Service Center will send them back if they cannot make a bona fide determination?**

A13. We are providing a flow chart to illustrate this process. Please see the attached I-918 Flow Chart Service Center.

**Q14. Can we request biometrics appointments for U or T visas at the HART Service Center?**

A14. Generally, petitioners do not need to request biometrics appointments for T or U visa filings because the receipting service center will automatically schedule any required biometrics appointments at intake, after entering your data and issuing a



receipt notice. Petitioners usually will receive a biometrics appointment within 30 days, but scheduling time frames may vary slightly based on the number of incoming receipts.

If you need to reschedule a biometrics appointment, see the [Preparing for Your Biometric Services Appointment](#) webpage under “Rescheduling Appointments” to find instructions for the online self-service tool. This online tool is available to T visa applicants, U visa petitioners, and their qualifying family members.

The HART Service Center does not have a physical location and cannot provide in-person services such as biometrics collection.

### **Form I-730 Asylee Relative Petition**

#### **Q15. Does the HART Service Center process Form I-730 refugee petitions or only Form I-730 filed by asylees?**

A15. Jurisdiction for processing and adjudicating Form I-730 is currently divided among Service Center Operations Directorate, Refugee, Asylum and International Operations, and Field Operations Directorate. Procedures differ depending on whether the beneficiary is outside of or in the United States and whether the petitioner was admitted as a refugee or granted asylum.

The HART Service Center processes following-to-join asylee Form I-730 petitions (FTJ-A) when the beneficiary is outside the United States. If a Form I-730 FTJ-A beneficiary is outside the United States in a location that has a USCIS international office, the HART Service Center will forward their petition to the USCIS international office for interview and adjudication via the Department of State National Visa Center (NVC). If a Form I-730 FTJ-A beneficiary is outside the United States in a location without a USCIS international office, the HART Service Center will forward the petition to the U.S. embassy or consulate for interview via the NVC. As [announced in January 2023](#), all Form I-730 petitions should be filed at the Texas Service Center (TSC). There are no plans for the HART Service Center to process refugee-based Forms I-730.

Since 2017, RAIO has had jurisdiction over following-to-join refugee Form I-730 petitions (FTJ-R). Form I-730 FTJ-R petitions are received by the TSC and then forwarded to the Form I-730 Processing Unit at the RAIO Asylum Vetting Center to complete processing and adjudication.

Since 2018, all Form I-730 petitions with beneficiaries inside the United States are adjudicated by USCIS’ FOD at USCIS field offices. Petitioners with beneficiaries inside the United States file Form I-730 with the TSC. The TSC forwards FTJ-A petitions to the USCIS field office with jurisdiction over the beneficiary’s location to complete





processing and adjudication. The TSC forwards FTJ-R petitions with beneficiaries inside the United States to the Asylum Vetting Center for initial domestic processing. After initial domestic processing, the Asylum Vetting Center forwards the petitions to the domestic field office that has jurisdiction over the beneficiary’s location, if appropriate.

**Q16. Who at USCIS handles Form I-730 inquiries?**

A16. To ask about a Form I-730 petition being processed at a service center, the Asylum Vetting Center, or a domestic field office, you may submit a [case inquiry online](#).

You can also mail inquiries for Form I-730 petitions at the Asylum Vetting Center:

If you are sending your inquiry ...	Then address it to ...
By U.S. Postal Service	DHS/USCIS Form I-730 Processing Unit Asylum Vetting Center P.O. Box 57100 Atlanta, GA 30308-0506
By FedEx, UPS, or DHL	DHS/USCIS Form I-730 Processing Unit Asylum Vetting Center 401 W Peachtree St NW, Ste 2500 Atlanta, GA 30308

For Form I-730 petitions pending at a USCIS international office, please contact the USCIS international office processing your petition. You can find contact information at the [USCIS International Immigration Offices](#) page.

**Form I-360 VAWA**

**Q17. Why does the HART Service Center forward some VAWA self-petitions to the Vermont Service Center?**

A17. Currently, the HART Service Center is a hybrid service center with virtual adjudication capabilities that coordinates with existing service centers for certain administrative support. Therefore, the HART Service Center mails Form I-360 VAWA self-petitions to the Nebraska Service Center (NSC). The NSC will receipt them and then





ship them to the Vermont Service Center for pre-adjudicative preparation. The Vermont Service Center will then send them to the HART Service Center for adjudication.

**Q18. Does the HART Service Center process all Form I-360?**

A18. No, the HART Service Center does not process all Form I-360 classifications. The HART Service Center only adjudicates the VAWA-based [Form I-360](#).

## General Process Questions

**Q19. What training is given to officers to refer to the scanned forms for accuracy instead of relying on the data entered at the USCIS Lockbox? How are the supporting documents grouped when they are scanned, and what care is being taken when scanning to ensure that pages are not sticking to each other?**

A19. Service centers have provided detailed Record of Proceeding (ROP) requirements for applicable form types to Lockbox, and packages are manually arranged according to that guidance before scanning. Generally, the ROP used by Lockbox mirrors the ROP used by the Service Centers.

The Lockbox service provider performs a quality check on a percentage of processed work to ensure that documents are appropriately processed, both before scanning and before shredding and shipment.

USCIS' Office of Intake and Document Production also manages a quality assurance program that conducts quality control review to ensure that images are clearly scanned, all data is visible, the document is oriented upright and face forward, and the entire document is captured in the scan.

There is no specific training given to officers to refer to scanned forms versus relying on Lockbox-entered data. However, USCIS form training materials and adjudication procedures instruct officers to review the required forms and systems necessary to make an adjudicative decision. Officers are trained to review scanned forms, submitted evidence, electronic systems searches, and if necessary, paper-based forms or physical and digital A-Files. Officers then ensure that adjudication systems are updated, if needed, to accurately reflect information.

**Q20. For scanned (or unscanned) petitions, does USCIS prefer single-sided or double-sided filings from attorneys?**



A20. Single-sided submissions are always preferable and recommended in USCIS' [Tips for Filing Forms by Mail](#), which says "All forms and supporting documents submitted must be single-sided, standard 8½ x 11 letter-size pages."

**Q21. Will the HART Service Center provide filing tips for the form types they adjudicate, especially to guide applicants, considering that adjudications are virtual? We are used to filing paper application packets, but scanned packets might present different challenges for officers to adjudicate.**

A21: Thank you for the suggestion. Although the HART Service Center is a virtual service center, many of the filings for its product lines are paper-based. For this reason, we recommend organizing filings according to [Tips For Filing Forms by Mail](#). Additionally, each form webpage has a section for "Checklist of Required Initial Evidence."

**Q22. How do we get in touch with you regarding culturally sensitive trainings?**

A22. The USCIS workforce, including adjudicators at the HART Service Center, regularly receives specialized training to ensure cohesive and consistent adjudication of these forms. Trainings for VAWA form types educate officers, including HART Service Center officers, on all eligibility and evidentiary requirements. In addition to form type training, officers receive 8 U.S.C. § 1367 protection training, victimization awareness training, and vicarious trauma training as required and appropriate for this sensitive workload.

We value input from stakeholders who have experience building trust with the communities we serve, and we appreciate the offer from experts in the advocacy community to discuss these trainings. We look forward to engaging further on this topic to ensure our trainings are as comprehensive and culturally sensitive as possible. If you have feedback or suggestions, please email [public.engagement@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:public.engagement@uscis.dhs.gov).

**Q23. Are you processing petitions "first in, first out," based on when the HART Service Center receives a petition or the receipt date?**

A23. The first in, first out (FIFO) adjudication process is generally based on the filing receipt date, with limited exceptions. Some cases will fall out of strict FIFO order if some elements necessary to make an adjudicative decision (for example, background checks, fingerprints, responses to requests for evidence) are pending. After these pending requirements are complete, the cases will be placed back in FIFO order for adjudication. The approach is more accurately described as "first in, first ready."



## Customer Service

### **Q24. How can we ask case-specific questions about forms being adjudicated by the HART Service Center?**

A24. The [USCIS Contact Center](#) has information about how to get help with your individual case. The transition to the HART Service Center does not affect existing customer service channels. If you have questions about a pending VAWA based I-360 or I-918, follow customer service instructions at USCIS' [Contact Us](#) webpage under "Inquiries for VAWA, T, and U Filings."

Follow the filing instructions in the "Where to File" section on each form's webpage. Any changes to filing locations will be posted on webpages for each form and announced to stakeholders via GovDelivery updates, web alerts, and updates to the USCIS website. To register for alerts and updates, visit USCIS' [Alerts](#) webpage.

### **Q25. What is best way to address recurring, possibly systemic errors or problems, for example when we see multiple examples of the same issue?**

A25. You may email [uscisfeedback@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:uscisfeedback@uscis.dhs.gov). Please note this email box accepts inquiries only for:

- Administrative, technical, systems, or operational issues that could indicate a trend or theme affecting case processing on a larger scale;
- Pending requests for an urgent appointment with the Contact Center, if you have not received a response within the specified time frame (24-72 hours);
- Pending request for appointment for proof of legal permanent resident status with the Contact Center if you are now experiencing an emergency.

If your inquiry is regarding an operational or processing trend, it will be shared with the appropriate USCIS office. If your inquiry is regarding an already pending request for an appointment at the Contact Center, you will receive a response as soon as we can provide one.

USCIS is committed to addressing your concerns, but we cannot respond to specific case inquiries that do not meet the requirements above through this mailbox. We may forward your inquiry, as appropriate, to relevant parties within the agency. Please refer to the [Contact Center](#) to get help with individual cases.

### **Q26. Will you be creating a HART Service Center website?**



## U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

*Public Engagement Division*

A26. There are no current plans for a HART Service Center-specific webpage. You can find information about all service centers at [USCIS Service Centers](#).

**Q27. Will the HART Service Center be designated as the service center on receipt notices?**

A27. No, the HART Service Center will not have a designated filing unique receipt number identifier. Filings will continue to use the same designators that are currently being used dependent on where they are filed (YSC, SRC, LIN, EAC).

**Q28. Will the HART Service Center have its own customer service component in the future that may help with Contact Center and congressional inquiries?**

A28. The HART Service Center will continue to coordinate with existing service centers and existing channels for customer service. Stakeholders should continue to use existing channels.