

NATURALIZATION & U.S. CITIZENSHIP: THE ESSENTIAL LEGAL GUIDE

18TH EDITION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW.....	1
§ 1.1	Introduction to Citizenship.....	1
§ 1.2	Overview of the Basic Requirements for Naturalization	3
§ 1.3	How to Use This Manual.....	4
§ 1.4	Contents of the Manual	5
§ 1.5	Key Definitions	6
CHAPTER 2	INITIAL DISCUSSIONS WITH CLIENTS.....	9
§ 2.1	Overview of Working with Clients to Complete the Naturalization Process.....	9
§ 2.2	Explaining Naturalization.....	11
§ 2.3	Discussing the Advantages and Disadvantages of Naturalization.....	16
§ 2.4	Reasons Why People Want to Naturalize.....	17
§ 2.5	Reasons Why People Do Not Want to Naturalize.....	17
Appendix 2-A	Naturalization Flyers (English, Spanish, and Chinese).....	21
CHAPTER 3	OVERVIEW OF NATURALIZATION, THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS, AND THE APPLICATION PROCESS	27
§ 3.1	What Is Naturalization?.....	27
§ 3.2	Considerations in Naturalizing	27
§ 3.3	The Nine Basic Naturalization Requirements	29
§ 3.4	Lawful Permanent Resident Status.....	30
§ 3.5	Age	32
§ 3.6	Good Moral Character, Bars to Naturalization, Permanent Ineligibility for Citizenship, and Discretion.....	32
§ 3.7	Attachment to the Principles of the Constitution	34
§ 3.8	English Language.....	35
§ 3.9	U.S. History and Government	35
§ 3.10	Residence in the United States	36
§ 3.11	Physical Presence in the United States.....	37
§ 3.12	Disruption of Continuous Residence (Breaking the Continuous Residence for Naturalization Purposes)	38
§ 3.13	Oath of Allegiance.....	39
§ 3.14	Overview of the Application Process	40
CHAPTER 4	LAWFULLY ADMITTED FOR PERMANENT RESIDENCE.....	43
§ 4.1	Introduction	43

§ 4.2	Ineligible for Admission as a Lawful Permanent Resident	45
§ 4.3	Inadmissible at Time of Entry or Adjustment of Status and Now Deportable	47
§ 4.4	The Continuing Validity of “Entry,” “Re-Entry,” and the <i>Fleuti</i> Exception.....	52
§ 4.5	Waivers Under § 212(k).....	56
§ 4.6	Fraud Waivers in Removal Proceedings	58
§ 4.7	Abandonment of Residence: Losing Permanent Resident Status.....	61
§ 4.8	Re-entry Permits.....	69
§ 4.9	People Who Serve or Have Served in the U.S. Armed Forces.....	71
§ 4.10	Adjudicating Naturalization Applications of Military Personnel.....	89
§ 4.11	Filipino War Veterans	91
§ 4.12	Posthumous Citizenship and Surviving Family Benefits	92
Appendix 4-A	Checklist to Help Determine if a Naturalization Applicant Might Lose Their Green Card while Applying for Naturalization	95
Appendix 4-B	Handouts for Applicants on Abandonment of Residence (English & Spanish).....	96
CHAPTER 5	RESIDENCE AND PRESENCE REQUIREMENTS AND EXCEPTIONS	101
§ 5.1	Introduction	101
§ 5.2	First Residence Requirement: Five Years of Continuous Residence	102
§ 5.3	Exceptions to the Five-Year Continuous Residence Requirement for Special Groups	104
§ 5.4	Disrupting Continuous Residence	115
§ 5.5	Exceptions to Disruptions of One Year or More.....	124
§ 5.6	Second Residence Requirement: Three Months of Local Residence.....	127
§ 5.7	Third Residence Requirement: Continuous Residence After Submitting the Application	128
§ 5.8	Fourth Residence Requirement: Physical Presence in the United States	128
§ 5.9	The Effect of Deportation/Removal Orders and Deferred Inspections	131
CHAPTER 6	GOOD MORAL CHARACTER AND OTHER STATUTORY BARS TO ELIGIBILITY	133
§ 6.1	Introduction	133
§ 6.2	The Good Moral Character Requirement: An Overview	135
§ 6.3	Statutory Bars to Establishing Good Moral Character Under INA § 101(f).....	141
§ 6.4	False Testimony	143
§ 6.5	Polygamy.....	150
§ 6.6	Alien Smuggling	152
§ 6.7	Discretionary Factors: Other Bad Acts and the GMC Balancing Test.....	157
§ 6.8	Willful Failure to Support One’s Dependents (Willful Failure to Pay Child Support).....	165
§ 6.9	Extramarital Affairs.....	167

§ 6.10	Fraudulent Receipt of Public Benefits.....	167
§ 6.11	Failure to Register for the Selective Service	168
§ 6.12	Failure to File Taxes.....	172
§ 6.13	Noncitizen Voting	174
§ 6.14	False Claims to U.S. Citizenship.....	178
§ 6.15	Deportability Issues.....	185
§ 6.16	Temporary Ineligibility to Naturalize.....	189
§ 6.17	Permanent Ineligibility to Naturalize	191
Appendix 6-A	Example of Positive Equities for Determining Good Moral Character.....	194
Appendix 6-B	Effects of Welfare Benefits to Applicants for Naturalization	195
CHAPTER 7	CRIMINAL ISSUES AND GOOD MORAL CHARACTER	197
§ 7.1	Introduction	197
§ 7.2	Dealing with Clients Who May Have a Criminal Record: Obtaining Records.....	200
§ 7.3	Deportability Issues.....	201
§ 7.4	The Good Moral Character Requirement: An Overview	207
§ 7.5	Statutory Bars to Establishing Good Moral Character	209
§ 7.6	Conviction or Admission of a Crime Involving Moral Turpitude.....	211
§ 7.7	Conviction or Admission of a Controlled Substance Offense.....	213
§ 7.8	“Reason to Believe” Drug Trafficker.....	215
§ 7.9	Habitual Drunkard and DUIs	216
§ 7.10	180 Days or More in a Penal Institution.....	220
§ 7.11	Aggregate Sentence of Five Years or More	222
§ 7.12	Prostitution	222
§ 7.13	Gambling.....	224
§ 7.14	Denial of Naturalization Based on a Discretionary Finding of a Lack of Good Moral Character.....	224
§ 7.15	Commission of, or Conviction or Imprisonment for, Unlawful Acts.....	228
§ 7.16	Effect of Probation, Parole, or Suspended Sentence	231
§ 7.17	Immigration Definition of Conviction and Effect of Post-Conviction Relief.....	232
§ 7.18	Effect of Immigration Relief	238
§ 7.19	Possible Defenses for Deportable Naturalization Applicants.....	239
Appendix 7-A	Obtaining Criminal Record Checks	247
Appendix 7-B	Good Moral Character.....	258
CHAPTER 8	THE ENGLISH AND U.S. HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT TESTS	261
§ 8.1	Introduction	261
§ 8.2	English Requirements.....	263
§ 8.3	Exceptions to the English Language Requirement.....	266
§ 8.4	U.S. History and Government: “The Civics Test”	267
§ 8.5	Special Rules on the Civics Requirement	270
§ 8.6	Re-Examination.....	272

Appendix 8-A	Preparing for the English and U.S. History and Government Tests:.....	274
CHAPTER 9	WORKING WITH APPLICANTS WHO HAVE DISABILITIES	275
§ 9.1	Introduction to Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities and the Disability Exceptions to the English and Civics Requirements	275
§ 9.2	USCIS Must Make Reasonable Accommodations to the Naturalization Process for Applicants with Disabilities	278
§ 9.3	Understanding the Disability Exceptions	286
§ 9.4	Applying for the Disability Exceptions: Preparing the N-648 Form.....	300
§ 9.5	How Advocates, Doctors, and Social Workers Can Work Together	310
§ 9.6	Applying for the Disability Exceptions: Procedural Issues.....	311
§ 9.7	Appeals of Denials of Disability Exceptions.....	320
§ 9.8	Signature on Naturalization Form and N-648 Form.....	321
§ 9.9	The Naturalization Examination and Oath of Allegiance for People with Severe Disabilities.....	322
§ 9.10	USCIS-Recognized Indicators that a Naturalization Applicant with a Disability Understands the Oath.....	330
§ 9.11	Expedited Ceremonies for Persons with Serious Illness or Disabilities.....	331
Appendix 9-A	Regulations.....	333
Appendix 9-B	USCIS E-Request Form to Request Accommodations for Disability	343
Appendix 9-C	DHS Civil Rights Complaint Form 3500 (August 2022).....	346
Appendix 9-D	Sample Letter to Medical Professional Explaining N-648 with Form Attached	353
Appendix 9-E	INS Memo, Section 312 Disability Naturalization Adjudications (April 7, 1999).....	360
Appendix 9-F	DHS Memo, Procedures for Implementing the Waiving of the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance for the Naturalization of Aliens Having Certain Disabilities (June 30, 2003)	376
Appendix 9-G	USCIS Memo, Adjudication of Form N-648, Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions to the INA Section 312 Naturalization Requirements (May 10, 2006).....	388
Appendix 9-H	USCIS Memo, Guidance Clarifying the Adjudication of Form N-648, Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions (September 18, 2007).....	405
Appendix 9-I	USCIS Memo, Revised Guidance for Determining the Sufficiency of Form N-648, Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions (December 14, 2010).....	417
Appendix 9-J	INS Memo, Guidance on Marking the Naturalization Process Accessible to Applicants with Disabilities (January 21, 2003)	433
Appendix 9-K	USCIS Policy Manual on Medical Disability Exception, 12 USCIS-PM E.3 (January 10, 2025)	446
CHAPTER 10	THE APPLICATION PROCESS AND INTERVIEW.....	459
§ 10.1	Overview of the Naturalization Process	459
§ 10.2	The Application.....	459

§ 10.3	Documentation	487
§ 10.4	Applications for People with Disabilities.....	490
§ 10.5	Expedited Naturalization Application Processing.....	491
§ 10.6	Amending the Application	493
§ 10.7	Transferring Between USCIS Districts	493
§ 10.8	Withdrawing the Application	494
§ 10.9	Preparing for the USCIS Interview	494
§ 10.10	The Interview	496
§ 10.11	What Happens After the Interview.....	498
§ 10.12	Problems in the Process.....	499
Appendix 10-A	Sample N-400 Completed Naturalization Application.....	501
Appendix 10-B	Continuation Pages for N-400	515
Appendix 10-C	Legal Worker Checklist for Naturalization Cases.....	517
Appendix 10-D	Sample Attorney-Client Letter Discussing Next Steps in Naturalization Application Process.....	518
Appendix 10-E	Sample Naturalization Application Cover Letter to USCIS.....	519
Appendix 10-F	N-400 Application Legal Review Guide.....	520
Appendix 10-G	Sample Letters Contesting INS Decision to Recommend Denial of Naturalization Application	526
CHAPTER 11	LOYALTY OATH AND NATURALIZATION CEREMONY	531
§ 11.1	Introduction	531
§ 11.2	Oath of Allegiance.....	532
§ 11.3	The Meaning of the Oath.....	532
§ 11.4	Waivers to the Oath Requirement, Expedited Oath Ceremonies, and Accommodations for Individuals with Certain Disabilities	534
§ 11.5	Modifications to the Oath Requirement	536
§ 11.6	Jurisdiction over Oath Ceremonies	540
§ 11.7	Judicial Ceremonies	541
§ 11.8	Name Changes.....	542
§ 11.9	USCIS Ceremonies	542
§ 11.10	Failure to Attend a Naturalization Ceremony	543
§ 11.11	Procedures During a USCIS or Judicial Ceremony	544
§ 11.12	Applying for a U.S. Passport.....	546
§ 11.13	Clients as Community Experts.....	547
Appendix 11-A	Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony.....	549
CHAPTER 12	GROUP PROCESSING	553
§ 12.1	Introduction	553
§ 12.2	Overview of Naturalization Group Processing.....	557
§ 12.3	The Introductory Workshop	558
§ 12.4	Applicants' Preparation for the Application Workshop.....	563
§ 12.5	The Application Workshop	563
§ 12.6	Follow Up on Applications	567

§ 12.7	Interview Preparation Workshop.....	568
§ 12.8	Request for Volunteers and Evaluations	572
Appendix 12-A Naturalization Workshop Handouts in English and Spanish.....		573
Appendix 12-B Reading a Permanent Resident Card		589
Appendix 12-C Naturalization Workshop Participant Sign-Up Sheet.....		591
CHAPTER 13 DENIALS, APPEALS, AND USCIS INACTION		593
§ 13.1	Introduction	593
§ 13.2	Denials.....	594
§ 13.3	Process and Options Before a Denial	596
§ 13.4	The Appeal Process	599
§ 13.5	Other Options when Faced with a Denial.....	606
§ 13.6	USCIS Inaction	608
Appendix 13-A Sample USCIS Decision Denying Naturalization Application		617
CHAPTER 14 CITIZENSHIP AND CHILDREN		621
§ 14.1	Introduction to Citizenship for Children of U.S. Citizens.....	622
Part One: Acquisition of Citizenship.....		624
§ 14.2	Introduction to Acquisition of Citizenship	624
§ 14.3	Who Can Acquire Citizenship at Birth Outside of the United States.....	625
§ 14.4	Using the Charts to Determine Acquisition of Citizenship	626
§ 14.5	Documenting a Claim of Acquisition of Citizenship	632
Part Two: Derivation of Citizenship.....		635
§ 14.6	Introduction to Derivation of Citizenship.....	635
§ 14.7	Who Can Derive Citizenship.....	635
§ 14.8	Using the Chart to Determine Derivative Status	636
§ 14.9	Child Citizenship Act of 2000.....	639
§ 14.10	Definition of Legal Custody under the Child Citizenship Act of 2000 for Children Who Are Legitimate	640
§ 14.11	Definition of Legal Custody under the Child Citizenship Act of 2000 for Children Who Were Born out of Wedlock (“Illegitimate Children”)	643
§ 14.12	Derivation Before the Child Citizenship Act of 2000	645
§ 14.13	Circuit Split on LPR Requirement for Derivation Before the Child Citizenship Act of 2000.....	645
§ 14.14	Definition of Legal Custody for Purposes of Derivative Citizenship Before the Child Citizenship Act of 2000	647
§ 14.15	Documenting and Applying for Derivative Citizenship.....	651
§ 14.16	Appealing a Denial of a § 320 Citizenship Application.....	653
Part Three: Citizenship Under INA § 322.....		653
§ 14.17	Introduction to § 322 Citizenship.....	654
§ 14.18	Definition of Legal Custody for § 322 Citizenship for Children Who Are Legitimate.....	658
§ 14.19	Definition of Legal Custody for § 322 Citizenship for Children Born Out of Wedlock (“Illegitimate Children”).....	658

§ 14.20	Documenting a Claim Under § 322 Citizenship.....	659
§ 14.21	Applying for § 322 Citizenship	660
§ 14.22	Appealing a Denial of a § 322 Citizenship Application.....	662
Part Four: Naturalization for Children Who Served During Hostilities and Special		
	Naturalization Provisions for Certain Children.....	662
§ 14.23	Introduction to Naturalization for Children Who Served During Hostilities	662
§ 14.24	Special Naturalization Provisions for Certain Children	663
Appendix 14-A	Acquisition of Citizenship for Children Born in Wedlock.....	666
Appendix 14-B	Acquisition of Citizenship for Children Born Out of Wedlock.....	669
Appendix 14-C	Derivation of Citizenship Chart	673
Appendix 14-D	Obtaining Evidence of U.S. Citizenship for a Child Born Abroad and Obtaining a U.S. Passport for a Child Living Abroad.....	681
Appendix 14-E	Sample N-600 Application for Certificate of Citizenship.....	697
Appendix 14-F	Sample Letter from Passport Applicant under INA 320 William Yates September 26, 2003, Memorandum: Eligibility of Children Born out of Wedlock for Derivative Citizenship.....	714
Appendix 14-G	Passport Cover Letter	716
Appendix 14-H	Sample N-600K.....	718
Appendix 14-I	INS Memo, Instructions for Processing Applications Filed by US Citizen Parents Who Cannot Fulfill the Transmission Requirements	731
Appendix 14-J	INS Memo, Instructions for Processing Application Filed by US Citizen Parents for their Adopted Children Born Abroad.....	743
Appendix 14-K	Passport Bulletin re Derivative Citizenship	745
CHAPTER 15 LOSS OF UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP		749
§ 15.1	Introduction	749
Part One: Denaturalization or Revocation of Naturalization.....		
§ 15.2	Denaturalization	751
§ 15.3	Civil Denaturalization Proceedings.....	754
§ 15.4	Denaturalization for Convictions for Naturalization Fraud (Criminal Revocation).....	764
§ 15.5	Potential Defenses to Denaturalization Proceedings	765
§ 15.6	Administrative Denaturalization Enjoined	780
§ 15.7	Consequences of Denaturalization and Relation Back.....	781
§ 15.8	Impact on Derivative Citizens	782
Part Two: Expatriation or Voluntary Abandonment of Citizenship.....		
§ 15.9	Expatriation	784
§ 15.10	Naturalization in a Foreign State.....	785
§ 15.11	Oath of Allegiance to Foreign State	786
§ 15.12	Service in Foreign Armed Forces.....	786
§ 15.13	Foreign Governmental Employment	787
§ 15.14	Renunciation of U.S. Citizenship	788
§ 15.15	Renunciation in the United States During Wartime	789

§ 15.16	Treason and Subversive Activities	789
§ 15.17	Expatriation Procedures	790
§ 15.18	Expatriation Administrative Review or Reconsideration.....	790
CHAPTER 16	IMMIGRATION REMEDIES: GAINING LEGAL STATUS FOR FAMILY MEMBERS, OUTREACH, AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING	793
§ 16.1	Introduction	794
Part One:	Petitioning for Family Members	795
§ 16.2	Introduction: Becoming a Lawful Permanent Resident Through Family	795
§ 16.3	Family Visa Petitions: “Immediate Relatives” of U.S. Citizens and the Preference System	795
§ 16.4	Family Visa Petitions: The Preference System for Relatives of U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents	796
§ 16.5	Becoming a Permanent Resident: Adjustment of Status and Consular Processing.....	798
Part Two:	Other Remedies	804
§ 16.6	Self-Petitioning Visas for Battered or Abused Spouses or Children of U.S. Citizens or Lawful Permanent Residents	805
§ 16.7	The U Visa	809
§ 16.8	Asylum and Restriction on Removal.....	810
§ 16.9	Cancellation of Removal for Non-Permanent Residents.....	811
§ 16.10	NACARA	813
§ 16.11	Cancellation of Removal for Certain Permanent Residents	814
§ 16.12	Diversity Visas	815
§ 16.13	Temporary Protected Status (TPS).....	815
§ 16.14	Prosecutorial Discretion and Deferred Action Including DACA.....	816
§ 16.15	Legalization Extension Cases and the “Late Amnesty” Provision of LIFE	820
§ 16.16	SIJS, T Visas, and Other Immigration Remedies.....	820
Part Three:	Outreach and Community Organizing.....	822
§ 16.17	Community Information Sessions: Publicizing Naturalization and Other Immigration Remedies	822
§ 16.18	Know Your Rights Sessions.....	823
§ 16.19	Lay Advocates.....	824
§ 16.20	Community Organizing: Organizing Immigrants to Educate Policy Makers and Improving USCIS, ICE, and CBP Procedures.....	825
§ 16.21	Organizing Suggestions.....	826
§ 16.22	Dreamers and DACA: An Organizing Campaign Example.....	827
§ 16.23	A Network of Immigrant-Based Committees.....	828
§ 16.24	Working with the Media.....	829
Appendix 16-A	Visa Bulletin, Immigrant Numbers for February 2025	830