

PRESENTED AT
Fundamentals of Immigration and Nationality Law

October 24, 2018
Austin, Texas

Immigration Terminology

Amanda Baran
Sarah Woelk

Amanda Baran
Immigration Policy Consultant
Arlington, VA
abaran@gmail.com

Sarah Woelk
Casa Marianella
Austin, TX
swoelk@casamarianella.org

A Selection of Important Immigration Law Terms and Acronyms

A-number	A unique number assigned to a non-citizen by the U.S. immigration system. For example, a person who submits an application to USCIS gets an A-number as does a person who is arrested by ICE .
AAO	Stands for <i>Administrative Appeals Office</i> . The AAO is part of USCIS and can consider appeals from certain negative decisions by USCIS officers.
Adjudicator's Field Manual	This is a compilation of USCIS policies and procedures. Portions of it are available to the public at https://www.uscis.gov/ilink/docView/AFM/HTML/AFM/0-0-0-1.html . Parts of it have migrated to the USCIS Policy Manual. https://www.uscis.gov/policymanual/HTML/PolicyManual.html Eventually the USCIS Policy Manual will replace the Adjudicator's Field Manual.
Admissibility	This refers to whether a person is eligible to enter the U.S. Some individuals who are already in the U.S. must be admissible in order to obtain certain immigration benefits. The grounds of inadmissibility are set out in section 212 of the INA (8 U.S.C. §1182). Waivers are available in some circumstances.
Affidavit of support	Certain applications must include an affidavit of support to demonstrate that the applicant will not become a public charge .
AILA	Stands for <i>American Immigration Lawyers Association</i> . As the name suggests, it is a national association of immigration lawyers.
Adjustment of status	Adjustment of status is the process by which a person who is already in the United States and who meets eligibility requirements can apply for permanent resident status (a green card) in the U.S. <i>Cf.</i> Consular Processing .
AOS	<i>See</i> Adjustment of Status .
USCIS Application Support Center	An Application Support Center ("ASC") is a USCIS office that provides finger printing services and takes photographs in connection with pending applications.

Arriving alien	The term refers to someone who has sought admission at the border. Some people who are already in the U.S. are considered arriving aliens, such as individuals who arrive at a POE seeking asylum.
Asylee	An asylee is a person who has been granted asylum. Asylum can be granted only to a person who is in the United States. <i>Cf.</i> Refugee .
Asylum	Asylum is a form of protection granted to a person in the U.S. who has shown a fear of persecution in his or her home country based on political opinion, race, religion, nationality or membership in a particular social group.
BALCA	Stands for <i>Board of Alien Labor Certification Appeals</i> . BALCA, which is part of the DOL , mainly reviews denials of PERM labor certification cases.
BIA	Stands for <i>Board of Immigration Appeals</i> . The BIA is part of the EOIR . The BIA considers appeals of decisions by Immigration Judges. BIA decisions can be appealed directly to federal circuit courts.
BIA Accredited Representative	The BIA accredits qualified non-lawyers to represent aliens on behalf of recognized non-profit organizations. Some accredited representatives may represent individuals before DHS only. Others may represent individuals before both DHS and EOIR .
Biometrics	A person who files an application with USCIS will generally receive a notice of a biometrics appointment. At the appointment, USCIS will take fingerprints and photographs.
Border Crossing Card	A Border Crossing Card is a visa issued to Mexican citizens only. As a stand-alone document, it can be used to visit border areas for periods of less than 72 years. It can function as a regular tourist (B1/B2) visa if presented with a valid Mexican passport.
Cancellation of Removal	Cancellation of removal is a former of relief that may be available to people in removal proceedings. The requirements are different for permanent residents and non-permanent residents, but in either case eligibility depends on having lived in the United States for a certain number of years, among other things. A person who is granted cancellation of removal remains or becomes a permanent resident.

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First appeared as part of the conference materials for the
2018 Fundamentals of Immigration and Nationality Law session
"Immigration Agencies and Basic Immigration Terminology"