Standard Operating Procedure for Deferred Action (non-DACA)

Shoba Sivaprasad Wadhia

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/shoba_wadhia/36/
July 31, 2015

Shoba Sivaprasad Wadhia
Director, Center for Immigrants Rights Clinic
Pennsylvania State Dickenson School of Law
329 Innovation Blvd., Suite 118
State College, PA 16803

Dear Shoba Sivaprasad Wadhia:

This is in response to your Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act (FOIA/PA) request received in this office February 13, 2015 regarding internal memoranda and training materials related to the general deferred action program excluding DACA.

We have completed the review of all documents and have identified 16 pages that are responsive to your request. Enclosed are 11 pages released in their entirety and 5 pages released in part. We have reviewed and have determined to release all information except those portions that are exempt pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(6) and (b)(7)(E) of the FOIA.

☐ Exemption (b)(6) permits the government to withhold all information about individuals in personnel, medical and similar files where the disclosure of such information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. The types of documents and/or information we have withheld may consist of birth certificates, naturalization certificates, drivers’ licenses, social security numbers, home addresses, dates of birth, or various other documents and/or information belonging to a third party that are considered personal.

☐ Exemption (b)(7)(E) provides protection for records or information for law enforcement purposes which would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions, or would disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions if such disclosure could reasonably be expected to risk circumvention of the law. The types of documents and/or information we have withheld could consist of law enforcement systems checks, manuals, checkpoint locations, surveillance techniques, and various other documents.

In accordance with Department of Homeland Security Regulations (6 C.F.R. § 5.4(a)), USCIS uses a “cut-off” date to delineate the scope of a FOIA request by treating records created after that date as not responsive to that request. Therefore, in determining which records are responsive to your request, we included only records in the possession of this agency as of February 13, 2015, the date we began the search for records.

The enclosed record consists of the best reproducible copies available. Certain pages may contain marks that appear to be blacked-out information. If so, the black marks were made prior to our receipt of the file and are not information we have withheld under the provisions of the FOIA or PA.

www.uscis.gov
If you wish to appeal this determination, you may write to the USCIS FOIA/PA Appeals Office, 150 Space Center Loop, Suite 500, Lee’s Summit, MO 64064-2139, within 60 days of the date of this letter. Both the letter and the envelope should be clearly marked "Freedom of Information Act Appeal."

The National Records Center does not process petitions, applications or any other type of benefit under the Immigration and Nationality Act. If you have questions or wish to submit documentation relating to a matter pending with the bureau, you must address these issues with your nearest District Office.

All FOIA/PA related requests, including address changes, must be submitted in writing and be signed by the requester. Please include the control number listed above on all correspondence with this office. Requests may be mailed to the FOIA/PA Officer at the PO Box listed at the top of the letterhead, or sent by fax to (816) 350-5785. You may also submit FOIA/PA related requests to our e-mail address at uscis.foia@uscis.dhs.gov.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jill A. Eggleston
Director, FOIA Operations
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING DEFERRED ACTION REQUESTS AT USCIS FIELD OFFICES

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
111 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Second Floor
Washington, DC 20529-2030

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### Introduction
This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) applies to all requests for deferred action (initial and renewal) handled at USCIS Field Offices. This SOP is not intended to supersede any existing policy or guidance related to deferred action handled at USCIS Service Centers (Violence Against Women Act (VAWA); A-3, G-5, T and U nonimmigrant visa related deferred action).

### I. General Information
Deferred action is a discretionary determination to defer removal action of an individual as an act of prosecutorial discretion. A USCIS Field Office Director (FOD) may, in his or her discretion, recommend deferral of removal, but the recommendation must also be reviewed and recommended by the USCIS District Director (DD). Deferred action requests received and recommended by a DD directly do not require review and recommendation by the FOD. The final determination to defer action rests solely with the USCIS Regional Director (RD). Deferred action:
- is an exercise of prosecutorial discretion *not* an application for a benefit
- does not confer any immigration status upon an alien
- if granted, stops accrual of unlawful presence, as defined in section 212(a)(9) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)
- does not eliminate any periods of unlawful presence accrued prior to approval of or after the effective date that deferred action is terminated
- does not alter the status of any alien who is present in the United States without being inspected and admitted or the status of any other alien statutorily ineligible to adjust

### II. Request for Deferred Action
**Formal Request by Individual and/or Legal Representative**
A request for deferred action can be made in writing and signed by the requestor.\(^1\) No fee is required for a deferred action request. The requestor or his or her legal representative may either make an INFOPASS appointment to present the request, or submit the request by mail to the USCIS field office having jurisdiction over the requestor’s place of residence. To support a deferred action request, the requestor may provide:
- An explanation as to why he or she is seeking deferred action including any supporting documentation (e.g., medical information, evidence of community and familial ties and equities, conditions in the requestor’s country of origin, etc.)
- Proof of identity and nationality, including a birth certificate, a passport and/or Identification Card, driver’s license, notarized affidavit(s), school or medical records, etc.
- Any document the requestor used to lawfully enter the United States including, but not limited to, Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record, a passport with visa and/or admission stamp, and any other documents issued by other components of DHS or legacy INS
- **Form G-325A Biographic Information**
- A requestor who has legal representation must submit a properly completed Form G-28, Notice of Entry as Attorney or Accredited Representative

Prior to accepting a request, if a requestor reveals that they are in removal

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\(^1\) For purposes of this SOP “requestor” means the actual person who seeks deferral of any removal action against him/her, not an attorney or representative making the request on their behalf. The requestor may be making the request for his/her entire family unit.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING DEFERRED ACTION REQUESTS AT USCIS FIELD OFFICES
proceedings, direct them to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for submission of the deferred action request.

Requests Initiated by USCIS
An Immigration Services Officer (ISO), Supervisory ISO (SISO), FOD, or DD, may encounter cases during his or her normal course of business that they feel warrant deferred action. Cases encountered by the FOD or DD that they feel warrant deferred action will follow the procedures provided in this SOP. Cases encountered by an ISO/SISO that they believe merit deferred action:
- Must have all of the file searches and security checks completed (No referral will be made for fingerprints until after the FOD concurs with the ISO/SISO)
- Must be presented by the ISO/SISO to the FOD for his or her recommendation (the FOD may require a memo from ISO/SISO with justification);

Then,
- If the FOD makes a favorable recommendation, follow the procedures provided in this SOP
- If the FOD does not concur with the ISO/SISO recommendation, the FOD will annotate the A/T-file with a brief description of the reason for not favorably recommending deferred action, then forward to the DD for review. If the DD concurs with the FOD not to recommend deferred action, the file does not need to go to the RD. If, however, the DD feels that deferred action is warranted, follow the procedures provided in this SOP.

III. Field Office Intake
Upon receiving the deferred action request and supporting document(s), the USCIS field office will:

1. Verify that the requestor resides in the jurisdiction of the field office.
2. Search for and request any A/T-files associated with the requestor and any family member(s) included in the request.
3. If no existing A-file was located after a thorough search of the Computer Linked Application Information Management System version 3 (CLAIMS3), Central Index System (CIS) and the National File Tracking System (NFTS), create a new A-file.
4. Create a T-file for temporary storage of the deferred action request and supporting documents if an A-file exists but has not yet been received, is lost, or is digitized.
5. Initiate TECS checks for requestor and any family member(s) included in the request who are 14 years of age or older.
6. Schedule the requestor and any included family member(s) who are 14 years of age or older for fingerprints as appropriate.
7. Notify the USCIS Regional Office of the receipt of the deferred action request (see section VIII “Data Collection”).
8. Record into the Enterprise Performance Analysis System (ePAS) “Inventory” for statistical purposes (see section VIII “Data Collection”).

*If fingerprints are expired or were not previously captured, schedule for an appointment at the Application Support Center (ASC) for a 10-print biometrics capture (Code 1). No fee will be charged for the capture of such biometrics. As appropriate, the capture of biometrics may be waived pursuant to the ASC SOP.

A-File not Received or Lost
After two weeks from the initial A-file(s) request, if the requested A-file(s) is/are...
not received, the field office should notify its local records supervisor to seek express shipment of the A-file(s) from the other File Control Office (FCO). Where a related A-file has been determined to exist, no action on the request shall be made until all of the permanent A-file(s) has/have been obtained and reviewed. Where an A-file cannot be found and has been officially recorded as lost, the FOD will make a notation in the recommendation that the file is lost and proceed with the recommendation. Create a substitute file in accordance with Chapter II-05 of the Records Operations Handbook (ROH).

**Digitized A-file**

If the A-file has been digitized, the file will be reviewed in Enterprise Document Management System (EDMS). The recommendation and action on the request will be made as if the office had the physical file. The deferred action request and any documents relating to the request will remain in the T-file. Upon completion of the request, the local field office will send the T-file to the Records Digitization Facility (RDF), for interfilling of material, in accordance with Digitization Customer Guide.

### IV. Field Office Review

Upon receipt of all A/T-files associated with the requestor and any included family member(s), the field office will ensure that NFTS and CIS are updated to show receipt of the file(s) and will consolidate all files per the ROH. Field office review of the deferred action request will include, but not be limited to:

- A review of the request, supporting documents, and contents of all file(s) to check for other forms of available relief
- A search of CIS, NFTS, CLAIMS3 to ensure that all other files have been located and to see if the requestor has submitted any applications
- A review of any additional files or applications located in the above search
- The completion of security checks and resolution of any issues as provided in the “Security Checks” section of this SOP
- A determination of whether the requestor has ever been in deportation, removal or exclusion proceedings, to determine how such proceedings will impact the request
- An interview if deemed necessary by the field office

After the deferred action request is accepted by the field office and if it is determined that removal proceedings are pending against the requestor or included family member(s), follow the instructions in section VI for “Deferred Action Not Granted”.

### V. Security Checks

The following must be done before a recommendation for deferred action can be completed:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

(b)(7)(e)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VI. Recommendation and Determination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Field offices will make every effort to ensure that deferred action requests are completed within 90 days. The request along with any supporting documents will remain in the A-file, or T-file if the A-file is lost or digitized, and be routed as follows:

1. The FOD will prepare a memo with a case summary and recommendation. If recommending grant, the memo will also include a recommended duration of deferred action not to exceed (2) two years. A completed Form G-312, Deferred Action Case Summary, (Attachment 1) will also be submitted with the memo. If deferred action is recommended, the FOD will sign and date the appropriate section at the bottom of Form G-312. If not recommended, the FOD will strike out “Recommended” and write “Not Recommended” then sign and date. The case will then be sent to the DD.

2. The DD will then review the FOD recommendation, the deferred action request, and A/T-file to make his or her recommendation. If deferred action is recommended, the DD will sign and date the appropriate section at the bottom of Form G-312. If not recommended, the DD will strike out “Recommended” and write “Not Recommended” then sign and date. The DD may attach a separate sheet of paper or memo to Form G-312 if he or she has any additional comments. The A-file with Form G-312 and all attachments will then be sent to the RD.

3. The RD will review and make the final determination. If deferred action is granted, they will then sign and date the appropriate section at the bottom of Form G-312 and notate the duration of the deferred action (1 year, 2 years, etc., not to exceed 2 years). If not granted, the RD will strike out “Granted” and write “Not Granted” then sign and date. The RD will notify the DD and the FOD of the final determination, update the deferred action spreadsheet, and return the file to the appropriate field office. The Form G-312 containing the final determination and any attachments will remain in the A-file or T-file.

**Deferred Action Granted:**

1. Update ePAS for statistical count (see “Data Collection”).
2. Provide the requestor and any included family member(s) with a grant notice (Appendix A).
3. Deferred action is not an admission, however for tracking purposes; update the CIS Class of Admission (COA) code to reflect Deferred Action Status (DAS).

**Deferred Action Not Granted:**

1. Update ePAS for statistical count (see “Data Collection”).
2. Provide the requestor and any included family member(s) with a non-grant notice (if the requestor or included family member(s) is/are currently in removal proceedings, use the template in Appendix C. The template in Appendix B will be used for all others).
3. The field office will review and determine whether issuance of a Notice to Appear (NTA) is appropriate. (See most current NTA Policy.)

There is no appeal to a request that is not granted, but the requestor can submit additional evidence to request reconsideration of the determination or a new request for deferred action can be submitted.
### VII. Employment Authorization
Persons granted deferred action may apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) under Title 8 Code of Federal Regulations (8 CFR) section 274a.12(c)(14). To apply, they must file Form I-765, Application for Work Authorization, in accordance with the form instructions.

### VIII. Data Collection
Deferred action requests and final determination information will be reported in both ePAS and on the regional deferred action spreadsheet:

**ePAS Reporting**
The “USCIS ePAS Administrative Manual for Data Entry (version 1.0), July 15, 2011,” provides guidance for USCIS employees on activity and time reporting in ePAS. In accordance with this manual the counts and time for deferred action will be captured as follows:

- Upon initial receipt of any deferred action request, the field office will capture the receipt via the “Inventory” section of ePAS.
- A deferred action determination is not an adjudication; however, the field office will use the “Adjudication” section to capture the final determination information. Any officer or clerical hours spent on review and/or processing of deferred action requests will also be captured in this section.
- The “Transfer In” and “Transfer Out” portion will not be used when forwarded to the DD and RD. It is only for use when transfers to other field offices are necessary due to jurisdictional changes.

**Deferred Action Spreadsheet Reporting**
Field offices will notify the regional office POC when receiving deferred action requests. The regional office POC will update all pertinent data fields on the deferred action spreadsheet when a case is received and granted, not granted, or terminated. The deferred action spreadsheet will be posted to the ECN website, available for the regional offices to make their monthly updates under their specific tab. The National Benefits Center (NBC) will collect the data monthly and create a master rollup report by region.

### IX. Termination of Deferred Action
If the RD determines that deferred action is no longer warranted, he or she will terminate the deferred action and notify the FOD and DD of the termination. There is no appeal of the decision to terminate deferred action. Upon termination the field office will:

- Retrieve the A-file.
- Notify the individual, in writing, of the termination of the deferred action. This notice will also include information regarding the termination of any advance parole document obtained under the condition of deferred action.
- Notify the individual, in writing, of the revocation of any EAD obtained under the condition of deferred action in accordance with 8 CFR 274a.14(b).
- Place a copy of the above notifications in the A-file.
- Update the COA code in CIS to reflect Deferred Action Terminated (DAT).
- As noted previously deferred action is not an admission, however for tracking purposes CIS will be updated.
- Notify the NBC once the final EAD revocation is completed, via the NBCFIELD mailbox. Attach a copy of the termination and revocation notices to the email.
- Review current NTA Policy to determine whether issuance of a NTA is appropriate.
Once the NBC receives notification from a field office of an EAD revocation, they will update CLAIMS 3 to reflect that the EAD has been revoked.

Appendix A:

Grant Notice Template
DATE

NAME

STREET

CITY; STATE ZIP

Re: Name; Ali

Dear NAME:

This is to advise you that effective [date] you have been granted deferred action for a period of [fill in date; not to exceed two years]. The action will expire on [fill in date; not to exceed two years].

Deferred action is an exercise of prosecutorial discretion by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) not to pursue the removal of an individual from the United States. A grant of deferred action by USCIS does not confer or alter any immigration status and does not affect any period of prior unlawful presence. A grant of deferred action does not convey or imply eligibility for any waivers of inadmissibility that may exist, regardless of whether or not that inadmissibility is known to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) at the time of the request for deferred action. Likewise, deferred action cannot be used to establish eligibility for any immigration benefit that requires maintenance of lawful status. Periods of time in deferred action do, however, qualify as periods of stay authorized by the Secretary of DHS for purposes of section 212(a)(9)(B) and (C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

As a person granted deferred action, you are eligible to apply for employment authorization if you can establish an economic necessity for employment. If you wish to apply, please submit Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization. The form and filing instructions can be found on the USCIS website at www.uscis.gov. A copy of this letter and the required fee must accompany the I-765 at the time of application.

You may request continuation of deferred action by submitting a request to your local USCIS office. To avoid accruing unlawful presence we recommend that you submit your request ninety (90) days prior to the expiration of any currently authorized period of deferred action. The request should include current evidence to support deferred action continuation.

Please note, you are required to notify USCIS if you change your address. To report your change of address you must submit Form AR-11, Alien’s Change of Address Card. This form and filing instructions can be found on the USCIS website mentioned above. There is no fee associated with this form.

If you leave the United States, this grant of deferred action will be automatically terminated. A criminal conviction may also result in the termination of deferred action.

Sincerely,

NAME

District Director

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING DEFERRED ACTION REQUESTS AT USCIS FIELD OFFICES

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Appendix B:

Non-Grant Notice Template
DATE

NAME
STEET
CITY, STATE ZIP

Re: Name; All

Dear NAME:

Thank you for your request for deferred action, an exercise of prosecutorial discretion by USCIS. We have carefully considered your request and we are not able to extend deferred action to you at this time.

Denial of a request for deferred action does not necessarily mean that USCIS intends affirmatively to pursue your removal.

If applicable also include: USCIS will forward your approved I-130 petition to the National Visa Center for consular processing, or if your pending I-130 petition is approved, USCIS will forward it to the National Visa Center for consular processing.

If you require additional assistance, forms or filing instructions, we invite you to visit our website at www.uscis.gov or contact USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283.

This determination may not be appealed. However, if your circumstances change in a way that you believe materially affects the merits of your request for deferred action, you may bring those circumstances to our attention in a new request.

Sincerely,

NAME
District Director
Appendix C:

Non-Grant Notice Template (Requestor in Removal Proceedings)
DATE

NAME
STEET
CITY, STATE ZIP

Re: Name; A/

Dear NAME:

Thank you for your request for deferred action, an exercise of prosecutorial discretion by USCIS. We have carefully considered your request and we are not able to extend deferred action to you at this time.

Our records show that you are currently in immigration removal proceedings, therefore please direct your request for deferred action to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

[If applicable also include: USCIS will forward your approved I-130 petition to the National Visa Center for consular processing, or if your pending I-130 petition is approved, USCIS will forward it to the National Visa Center for consular processing.]

If you require additional assistance, forms or filing instructions, we invite you to visit our website at www.uscis.gov or contact USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283.

This determination may not be appealed. However, if your circumstances change in a way that you believe materially affects the merits of your request for deferred action, you may bring those circumstances to our attention in a new request.

Sincerely,

NAME
District Director
Hi Gebre,

FOD would agree with you. If an applicant’s proceedings are administratively closed, then the proceedings are still open. They have to be terminated. The main difference is that admin closed can be restarted, with a motion to recalendar, while terminated proceedings would generally require a new NTA.

The decision for these cases to go to ICE was made at the Headquarters level and will most likely not be found in 8 CFR. We have a template to direct applicants to ICE on page 13 of the DA SOP. Thanks.

Vicente

Vicente F. Lopez
Adjudications Officer
USCIS Headquarters
Field Operations Directorate

Good morning all,

I am raising a question of jurisdiction. I have a DA request made by an individual. Since the requestor’s removal proceeding was administratively closed by the IJ, I believe the DA request must be directed to ICE not USCIS. If this contention is correct, what is the legal authority in support of this?

Thanks,

Gebre E. Habtu, Central Regional Office, USCIS, DHS, Phone (b)(6)
Thank you, Susan. I apologize for being so late in getting back to you. Steve Kwortek was actually able to pull the information I needed on length of time that EADs are issued in certain categories from our draft Policy Manual chapter on EADs. I do have a follow up question that I hope SCOPS can assist with, however. One of the largest categories for EAD applicants from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador is based on c(10) Suspension of Deportation/ Cancellation of Removal. Since applicants are usually granted LPR status at the same time their order of removal is canceled by the judge, we assume that these are the folks who are still waiting for adjustment because the 4,000 annual cap on cancellation grants has been reached and they are in the queue for the next fiscal year. My question is this: how many times does an individual in the c(10) category file for an EAD? If the EAD is issued for one year, is there a way to determine whether individuals are repeatedly filing year after year based on c(10)?

Thank you in advance for your help on this. Please let me know if you need additional information.

Best regards,

Julie

Julie Plavsic, Policy Analyst
Int'l & Humanitarian Affairs Division
USCIS Office of Policy & Strategy

From: Arroyo, Susan K
Sent: Tuesday, September 23, 2014 8:06 AM
To: Plavsic, Julie H
Cc: Levine, Laurence D; Kwortek, Steven P (Steve); Velarde, Barbara Q
Subject: FW: question about EAD categories

Susan Arroyo
Chief of Staff
Service Center Operations
DHS/USCIS

Julie,

Your request was forwarded to me by Mike Fortes. Please do not reach out directly to Mike as non of these are his portfolio. If you need something from SCOPS, please route it through me and I will get it to the proper staffer.

With that said, I need some clarification on your Fiancee/Spouse visas. What exactly are you asking or looking for spouses are filed for as adjustment of status (c)(9) so are you looking for something else?
Also the non-DACA are done by Field Offices, you need to reach out to Field Ops for a response. The Deport. “stuff” I need to check on.

Susan Arroyo
Chief of Staff
Service Center Operations
Desk B6 (b)(6)

From: Plavsic, Julie H
Sent: Monday, September 22, 2014 12:58 PM
To: Fortes, Michael J
Subject: random question about EAD categories

Hi Mike,

I was hoping you could forward this to the appropriate person in SCOPS who might be able to answer some EAD questions. I’m trying to find out how long EADs are granted for the following categories:

- Suspension of Deportation/ Cancellation of Removal
- Withholding of Deportation or Removal
- Deferred Action (non-DACA)
- Pending Adjustment of Status
- U, T and VAWA Statuses
- Fiancee/ Spouse visas

I didn’t see any reference in the form instructions as to EADs for Deferral of Removal under CAT. Is that included in the Withholding category?

Thanks for your help!

Julie

Julie Plavsic, Policy Analyst
Int'l & Humanitarian Affairs Division
USCIS Office of Policy & Strategy

(b)(6)