

Homeland Security/Law Enforcement Team



US Citizenship and Immigration Services Customer Service Unit

DHS-CIS

Summary:

The Customer Service Unit (CSU) comprises the most diverse in daily scope of work product, personnel, and geographical location " adjudicative unit at the Chicago Field Office.

While diverse in scope, CSU surpassed its quantitative goals by utilizing its telework capability at the same time maintaining its qualitative components that include a congressional liaison, application support centers, and officers who adjudicate immigration benefits and handle customer inquiries, naturalization/citizenship ceremonies, and parole requests for family members of the United States Armed Forces.

Description: Within three adjudicative branches of the Chicago Field Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Customer Service Unit (CSU) comprises the most diverse " in daily scope of work product, personnel, and geographical location. Components include a congressional liaison, application support centers, and officers who adjudicate immigration benefits and handle inquiries and ceremonies.

In a typical year, components of CSU perform these tasks:

- Liaison receives inquiries and questions directly from congressional offices.
- Application Support Centers, along with a CSU employee, facilitate the security of the immigration system by ensuring the right person is processed for biometrics.
- Officers adjudicate Immigration benefits including every type of application, petition, or request submitted to the Chicago Field Office, including naturalization, applications for those who derive citizenship from a parent or to replace "œgreen cards" , advance parole, and adjustment of status to become lawful permanent residents.
- Supervisors manage employees in building locations that span from as north as Waukegan, east as Michigan City, Indiana, as south as Burbank, and as west as Naperville.
- CSU assists other adjudicative units with special projects, handling backlog and interviews due to staff shortages.
- CSU exclusively handles certain USCIS programs that are launched in partnership with the Department of Defense

During the pandemic, CSU continued to perform these duties and proved to be successful with telework capability by surpassing any previous year in completion of certificate of citizenship cases, eliminating its backlog, and providing for greater employee safety and satisfaction, despite the shortcomings of not being able to perform these duties at the office.

From March to September of 2020, CSU productivity exceeded in the new environment. Supervisors designed a telework program to provide structure to officers working in an unfamiliar environment by clearly establishing goals and expectations and providing officers with the tools they needed to continue to adjudicate on a daily basis (laptops, wi-fi hotspots when needed, instructions and case work).

A staging area was established for regularly scheduled pick up of work (working from oldest filing date forward) to maintain a constant level of telework assignments that were set in advance to minimize time inside the building. Case actions were reported daily to supervisors and those assignments were electronically tracked by each individual code. Remote printing from dedicated share drive folders was established for a single employee to monitor, print, and mail correspondence.

Supervisors utilized Microsoft Teams to organize and to create a virtual space to meet and collaborate. From July to August 2020, CSU conducted 124 oath ceremonies and distributed 1,200 certificates while maintaining strict social distancing restrictions with no additional resources outside its unit.

Simultaneously, CSU maintained its public-facing profile by staying open to the public for processing by facilitating the public's need for emergency travel and ensured continued employment for residents with expired documentation and assisting the units handling naturalization to ensure that the wait times for those oath ceremonies stayed as short as possible to help with in-person customer safety.