



Refugee Affairs Division

Refugee, Asylum and International Operations
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

INTRODUCTION STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

(“INTRODUCTION SOP”)

Policy Branch
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I. ACRONYMS

- PA Principal Applicant
- RAD Refugee Affairs Division
- RSC Resettlement Support Center
- UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- USCIS U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- USRAP United States Refugee Admissions Program

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of the introduction is for the Adjudicating Officer¹ to introduce him or herself to the applicants and to explain the purpose and process of the refugee interview. Additionally, the introduction is an opportunity for the Adjudicating Officer to set a non-adversarial tone and begin establishing rapport with the applicants.

III. PROCEDURES

a. Greet the Parties

Depending on the location, the Adjudicating Officer, the interpreter, guard, or other designated staff member escorts all applicants on the same case from the waiting area to the interviewing room.² If the Adjudicating Officer escorts the applicants to the interviewing room, he or she can begin setting the tone of the refugee interview.

Once in the interviewing room, the Adjudicating Officer should introduce him or herself as a representative of the United States government. The Adjudicating Officer should introduce the Interpreter, and explain that the Interpreter's job is to faithfully interpret all questions and statements to the best of his or her ability, without adding, changing, or omitting any statements.³

The Adjudicating Officer should speak clearly and distinctly, using plain and simple language.

b. Explain the Purpose of the Refugee Interview

The Adjudicating Officer should explain that the purpose of the refugee interview is for the Principal Applicant (PA) to tell the Adjudicating Officer why he or she requested refugee status. The Adjudicating Officer should also explain that the refugee interview is for him or her to review forms with all applicants and gather all necessary information to make a

¹ Adjudicating Officer refers to Refugee Officers, Overseas Adjudication Officers and any other USCIS officers temporarily detailed to adjudicate refugee cases.

² Refugee resettlement cases will often be cross-referenced with other family members. The Adjudicating Officer may choose to bring all family members of the cross-referenced cases to the interview room together in order to complete the paperwork. Generally, after the paperwork is completed, the Adjudicating Officer will conduct separate interviews for each refugee case.

³ The Adjudicating Officer should not use the interpreter's name, unless he or she requests it. This is for the interpreter's security and protection.

legal determination. The Adjudicating Officer may mention that the refugee interview differs from other interviews the applicants may have had with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the Resettlement Support Center (RSC) in that the refugee interview with a U.S. Government representative will determine if the applicant qualifies for refugee resettlement in the United States under U.S. law.

c. Explain Confidentiality

Explain that no parts of the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) application - oral, written, and documentary – shall be shared with the government of the country from which he or she is seeking refuge. If an interpreter is being used, the Adjudicating Officer should state that the interpreter also understands that the applicant’s refugee case is confidential and has taken an oath to maintain confidentiality.

In addition, the Adjudicating Officer should explain that the he or she will ask each applicant to sign a voluntary consent for release of information and that it has no effect on the final case adjudication. The Adjudicating Officer should also explain that the consent form allows for the sharing of information between U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), UNHCR, other U.S. Government entities, and other resettlement countries. The Adjudicating Officer should restate that no information regarding the applicant’s refugee claim will be shared with the government of the country from which he or she is seeking refuge.

d. Explain the Refugee Interview Process

Summarize the refugee interview process. Detail the following:

- Applicants will be expected to answer questions regarding biographical information and family composition.
- Questions will be directed primarily towards the PA, but any or all applicants may be asked to testify. The PA will be expected to answer why he or she is seeking resettlement in the U.S.
- Applicants may be interviewed separately and/or together.⁴

⁴ The Adjudicating Officer will determine who may remain at the interview, taking into consideration that some applicants may be reluctant to provide testimony in the presence of others due to the sensitive nature of the testimony, while other applicants may be reluctant to provide testimony in their absence due to anxiety or

- During the refugee interview, the Adjudicating Officer will be taking notes, which are also confidential.
- Applicants will be asked to sign documents.
- At the end of the refugee interview, the PA will be given an opportunity to provide any additional information he or she believes the Adjudicating Officer should know.

e. Explain the Decision-Making Process

Explain that only the Adjudicating Officer and his or her Supervisor are responsible for determining whether the applicants qualify for refugee resettlement in the U.S. Make it clear that the Interpreter does not have any role in the decision-making process. Advise the applicants that the Adjudicating Officer will prepare a decision letter and that the PA will receive a written decision at a later date from UNHCR or the RSC.

f. Explain the Applicants' Responsibilities

Inform the applicants that they should:

- Answer questions truthfully and to the best of their knowledge.
- Let the Adjudicating Officer know if they do not know the answer to a question or do not understand a question. Also, they should not guess or supply an answer they think the Adjudicating Officer wants.
- Let the Adjudicating Officer know if they do not understand the Interpreter.⁵
- Ask relevant questions at any time during the refugee interview.

g. Administer the Oath

i. Applicant(s)

discomfort over being alone. Eliciting testimony individually may aid the Adjudicating Officer in making a credibility determination.

⁵ If the Adjudicating Officer determines that the applicant and interpreter are having difficulty understanding each other, the Team Leader should be consulted to find a suitable replacement interpreter.

Applicants age 14 and above must be placed under oath prior to giving testimony. The Adjudicating Officer and the person(s) taking the oath or making the affirmation should stand and raise their right hand during the administration of the oath.

Oath: “Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the statements you are about to make will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?”

Some applicants may object to using the term “swear.” Reasonable modifications to the oath that accommodate religious beliefs or other preferences are permissible. The purpose of the administration of the oath is to impress upon the applicants the importance of telling the truth during their refugee interview and to ensure that the applicants understand that they are promising to tell the truth.

ii. Interpreter

The interpreter must also be placed under oath prior to commencement of the interview. If the same interpreter interprets for more than one refugee interview, the Interpreter only needs to be placed under oath once at the time of the first refugee interview.⁶ The Adjudicating Officer should explain to the applicants that the Interpreter was placed under oath at an earlier time.

Oath: “Do you solemnly swear or affirm that you will interpret all statements made during the interview completely and truthfully and that you will keep all information confidential?”

IV. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Revised by	Date	Revisions
1.0		08/19/09	Draft SOP drafted and issued by RAD Policy.
2.0	RAD Policy Branch	07/11/17	RAD Policy updated SOP; OCC/RALD edited and commented SOP.

⁶ Some Team Leaders may choose to place all interpreters under oath at the beginning of a circuit ride. In this case, the Adjudicating Officer does not need to re-administer the oath.