
If someone gives legal advice without a license, that is called the unauthorized practice of law (UPL). In California, only attorneys can give legal advice. If an attorney loses their license to practice, but continues to take and advise clients, that is also considered the unauthorized practice of law.

There is no cost to file a complaint. You can file a complaint regardless of citizenship, residence, or immigration status. The State Bar does not ask for or track immigration or citizenship status.



Questions?

Call the State Bar's
multilingual
complaint hotline:
800-843-9053

**Have You Been
a Victim of
Nonattorney
or Notario
Fraud?**

This pamphlet is also available in:

Spanish Español
Vietnamese Tiếng Việt
Korean 한국어
Chinese 中文
Russian Русский
Tagalog

Follow the State Bar:



Information in this pamphlet is valid as of September 2019.



The State Bar
of California

COMPLAINT FORMS

The State Bar offers unauthorized practice of law complaint forms in multiple languages.

For questions, call the State Bar's multilingual complaint hotline at 800-843-9053. The forms are also available online at (www.calbar.ca.gov).

Here are some situations where you may want to file a complaint:

» You have consulted someone about immigration who pretends to be a lawyer, but the person does not hold a license. Immigration consultants can give only nonlegal help, such as translating answers on forms. They cannot suggest answers or advise you on which forms to fill out.

» You have hired an attorney who says they can practice in California, but only holds a license in another state. Please keep in mind that in some instances attorneys who are properly licensed and in good standing in another state may practice immigration law in California.

» You discover that the attorney you hired worked on your case while their license was suspended by the State Bar.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY



Ask the person to provide you information of where they are licensed to practice law and to give you their bar number. Look them up on the State Bar's website (www.calbar.ca.gov) or call the State Bar at 800-843-9053.



Make sure to get your contract in writing as well as receipts for payments you make.



If you have already made a payment, you are entitled to **ask for an accounting of your bills.**



Be wary of those who call themselves notarios. In California, a person who is not licensed to practice law cannot legally call themselves a notario. Notarios are not attorneys and cannot provide legal advice. The law also requires nonlawyer immigration consultants to register with the Secretary of State and file a bond of \$100,000.



Keep a paper trail. If you don't have a bank account, use a cashier's check.



Be wary if someone requires cash payments.