



2023 AILA Paralegals Conference and Webcast

This two-day live conference, which will be webcast simultaneously, is designed to give paralegals and support staff insight into the complexities and practicalities of immigration law, allowing them to assist their supervising attorneys and clients in the most effective ways possible. Our expert faculty will cover the breadth of what an immigration paralegal might encounter in practice, beginning with a general overview of the paralegal's role. The faculty then will provide tips on how to improve communication skills and work more efficiently, and discuss subject-matter-specific information on USCIS paperless filings, adjustment of status and immigrant visa processing, naturalization, removal, and much more. A question-and-answer period is included in each session, allowing attendees to interact with faculty and gain further insight. Don't miss this exciting opportunity to hone your paralegal skills and network with colleagues from across the country!

Note: Digital recordings of each session will be provided to all conference registrants. This will give attendees the ability to watch (or rewatch) any panels presented during the live conference.

June 19–20, 2023
Disney's Contemporary Resort
Orlando, FL

Times listed on the Program are Eastern Time (ET)

June 19, 2023

7:00 am–5:05 pm

Registration, Information, and Exhibits

7:20 am–7:30 am

Welcome and Greetings

Sandra Bruno, Paralegals Conference Vice Chair, Ithaca, NY

7:30 am–8:30 am

Role of the Paralegal

Paralegals play vital roles in the operation of law firms, nonprofits, and in-house legal teams. Panelists will discuss how the role of the paralegal is growing, as well as what paralegals can do and become aware of to better serve the firm, attorneys, and clients.

- General ethical responsibilities: duty of confidentiality, dual representation, and conflicts
- Fiduciary duties: accurate billing, timely handling of funds and refunds

(DL) = Discussion Leader

** = Invited Speakers, Not Confirmed*

All events, sessions, and conference materials are subject to change

- Client service: communicating with clients and managing deadlines
- Case management: accurate and speedy completion of case work
- Reporting and technology: using case management systems to keep client data and reports updated

Faculty:

**TBD (DL),*

**Christina Lee, Oakland, CA*

**Amanda Brown, Boston, MA*

8:30 am–8:55 am

Networking Break

8:55 am–9:55 am

Writing and Communicating More Effectively

Effective communication, both written and spoken, can make or break key relationships between a law firm and clients. It is important for any correspondence and work product to be carefully worded and presented to manage expectations while underscoring the importance of the client's matter or concern. Panelists will explore the following:

- Determining which communications may be handled by the paralegal and which require an attorney
- Best practices for preparing for and handling calls and meetings
- Tips on email tone and dealing with difficult clients
 - Response times, managing expectations, preventing and diffusing conflict
- Drafting correspondence, support letters, and affidavits

Faculty:

**R. Mark Frey (DL), AILA Publications Committee Vice Chair, St. Paul, MN*

**Cyrus D. Mehta, AILA Ethics Committee Vice Chair/AILA Benefits Litigation Committee, New York, NY*

**TBD*

9:55 am–10:20 am

Networking Break

10:20 am–11:20 am

The USCIS Move to Paperless Filings

While USCIS continues the long slog of transitioning to paperless filings, what filings can we do online now? How should we handle the myriad accounts and tools that USCIS offers to better prepare cases for our clients? Panelists will address these questions and explore the following:

- Online applications: applications that may be filed online, mechanics of filing
 - Interface with case management systems and entering a G-28
 - If it is ever better to do a paper filing
- Troubleshooting and best practices for various USCIS case status logins and accounts
- Tricks and tips for service requests
 - Using Emma to your advantage and entering e-inquiries
 - Avoiding the dreaded 1-800 number

Faculty:

**Robin D. O'Donoghue (DL), AILA USCIS HQ (Benefits Policy) Liaison Committee Chair, Cambridge, MA*

Margaret Deborah Stock, Anchorage, AK

**Brian Manning, AILA Asylum and Refugee Committee, Beaverton, OR*

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11:20 am–12:20 pm **Lunch Break and Session:**

30 Time-Saving Productivity Tips in 30 Minutes

Investing time to make life easier and work more efficiently can be both satisfying and pay tremendous dividends. Our expert panelists will help paralegals achieve these things while also allowing them to thrive and stay positive. Don't miss the wisdom our speakers will share during this high-speed, transformative panel!

- Computer productivity tips
- Favorite time-saving apps and websites
- Best practices for establishing standard processes
- How shaping your mindset can lead to increased productivity

Faculty:

**Ruby Lichte Powers (DL), AILA Author, Build and Manage Your Successful Immigration Law Practice (Without Losing Your Mind), Immigration & Technology Committee, Houston, TX*

**Vic Goel, Business Section Steering Committee/Distance Learning Committee, Reston, VA
Nadine Heitz, Lake Worth, FL*

12:20 pm–1:20 pm

Hot Topics in Removal Proceedings

The landscape of the U.S. detention and removal system is subject to constant change. Our panel of experts will help you stay in the know with important updates on the latest trends in immigration court and provide insights into how things may unfold over the remainder of the Biden administration.

- Prosecutorial discretion (PD)
 - The current status of PD
 - Changes expected in the coming months
- Keeping up with the changes in immigration court appearances
 - The post-pandemic return to in-person hearings
 - Sources of information on court procedure: what is available and determining what is reliable

Faculty:

Eliana Christina Nader (DL), AILA Removal Defense Section Steering Committee Chair, Boston, MA

Jacqueline Watson, AILA Secretary, Austin, TX

Rekha Sharma-Crawford, AILA Board of Governors/AILA Amicus Committee/AILA Removal Defense Section Steering Committee, Kansas City, MO

1:20 pm–1:45 pm

Networking Break

1:45 pm–2:45 pm

Options for Extraordinary/Exceptional Ability Individuals: NIV and IV Options

Extraordinary and exceptional ability individuals have a specific set of immigration options available to them. During this session, our expert panelists will discuss the various options for this select group of foreign nationals. Topics include:

- O and P nonimmigrant categories
- EB-1As for extraordinary ability, EB-1Bs for outstanding professors and researchers, and Schedule A Group II for exceptional ability
- National Interest Waivers
- Evaluating a case and choosing the right visa category
- Common fields in each visa category

(DL) = Discussion Leader

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Faculty:

Sandra Bruno (DL), Paralegals Conference Vice Chair, Ithaca, NY

**Leon Versfeld, Kansas City, MO*

**Nadia Zaidi, Mountain View, CA*

2:45 pm–3:10 pm

Networking Break

3:10 pm–4:10 pm

Naturalization

Our panel of experts will provide an overview of the general eligibility requirements for naturalization. They also will discuss and advise on case preparation, issue spotting, case management after filing, interview preparation, and file close out.

- Naturalization overview: basic eligibility requirements and issue spotting
- Filing procedures, form completion, and fees
- Case management and timeline after filing
- Interview preparation, including civics and English tests
 - Resource materials to prepare clients
- Oath ceremony and post–approval advice

Faculty:

Micki Buschart (DL), Kansas City, MO

Adriana Ruiz Robinson, Family Section Steering Committee/ Paralegals Conference Committee, Bethesda, MD

Laura Kelley, Doral, FL

4:10 pm–4:35 pm

Networking Break

4:35 pm–5:35 pm

Waivers: I-601/601A (Ethics)

Screening clients prior to filing an adjustment of status application or consular processing can reveal grounds of inadmissibility or ambiguous issues that need to be investigated further. Learn from the experts on this panel what tricky situations may arise and how to flag for the attorney if one of these issues occurs during the case.

- Attorney and paralegal roles in drafting and preparing a case
- Criminal and quasi–criminal issues, especially those that don’t appear on their “rap sheet”
 - How to disclose on an application or in an interview
- Drug and/or mental health issues: preparing for and disclosing at the interview, preparing for their medical exam
- Learning about multiple entries from your client, discovering other unlawful presence issues *after* the waiver is filed
- How to handle arrests and related issues that occur *after* application has been filed
- Human smuggling
 - Whether it’s worth filing the I-601A at all
 - What happens if a finding is made and I-601A is revoked

Faculty:

**Cheryl David (DL), ICE Liaison Committee, New York, NY*

Steven D. Heller, AILA DOS Liaison Committee Member Vice Chair, Lewes, East Sussex, UK

**Cesar Martin Estela, Newark, NJ*

5:45 pm–6:45pm

Welcome Reception

(DL) = Discussion Leader

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Location: TBD

June 20, 2023

7:00 am–5:05 pm

Registration, Information, and Exhibits

7:30 am–8:30 am

Hot Topics in Employment–Based Immigration

Employment–based immigration has been in constant flux throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Only recently, during the Biden administration, in fact, has some semblance of stability and normalcy been recovered. What is the current state of business immigration, and what are the hot topics you need to know?

- Consular reopenings and delays: What you can do
- Working from home: How nonimmigrant (NIVs) and immigrant visas (IVs) (including PERM) are affected
- USCIS request for evidence (RFE) trends
- Premium processing: what applies, what’s going to change and when
- DOL audits and processing delays
- Pay transparency laws

Faculty:

Alexis S. Axelrad (DL), AILA Treasurer, New York, NY

Vincent W. Lau, AILA DOL Liaison Committee Chair, Boston, MA

**Fuji Whittenburg, AILA DOS Liaison Committee Chair, Calabasas, CA*

8:30 am–8:55 am

Networking Break

8:55 am–9:55 am

Mechanics of Filing a Court Case

The paralegal’s role in preparing filings for immigration courts, the BIA, and even federal courts is often as important, if not more important, than the “legal” work on the case. Panelists will explain the fundamentals of getting your client’s applications, evidence, and briefs/motions to the court and opposing counsel.

- Immigration court
 - E-Service vs. ECAS vs. Paper ROP: what they are, how they work, and how they differ
 - Detained v. non-detained cases: what happens when the same case becomes one or the other
 - What the record does and should contain
 - How to navigate the practice manual, but also know local court rules and immigration judge preferences
- Board of Immigration Appeals
 - Stays of removal
 - Motions vs. direct appeals and availability of transcripts
 - Briefing schedules: where to find them, and what happens if you don’t receive one and miss the deadline
 - Requesting an extension: which deadlines can and can’t be extended
- Federal Court
 - Different filings immigration attorneys commonly use and where they are filed
 - Most circuits are now all electronic filing and when paper copies are still required

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- Proof of service requirements
- How to find local rules and practices
- Using the federal court electronic filing systems and how to find help

Faculty:

*Susan Girardo Roy (DL), Distance Learning Committee/EOIR Liaison Committee/
Paralegals Conference Committee, Princeton Junction, NJ*

*Annelise Maia Jatoba de Araujo, AILA EOIR Liaison Committee/Removal Defense Section
Steering Committee, Boston, MA*

**Meghann Eileen LaFountain, Middletown, CT*

**Gwynne Davis, Antonini Cohen Immigration Law Group Atlanta, GA (paralegal)*

9:55 am–10:20 am

Networking Break

10:20 am–11:20am

PERM Overview

Our expert panelists will provide an overview of the PERM program as the most common path to permanent residence, navigating the entire cycle from initiating a new PERM application to filing one. Panelists also will discuss the importance of crafting position requirements, timing considerations and deadlines, and the paralegal's role in the process.

- Overview of PERM
 - Starting a new PERM application
 - The paralegal's role
 - Timing and deadlines
 - PERM account registration (new clients)
- Crafting the Job Description
 - Job duties and requirements
 - DOL occupational sources: OOH and O*NET
 - Red flags and things to watch: why the job contents in PERM set the stage for green card approvability
- The Waiting Game: submitting the prevailing wage determination (PWD)
 - Recruitment and recruitment report
 - Importance of language
 - Timing and deadlines
 - Candidate tracking
- Anatomy of the ETA 9089
 - Tips and best practices for completing the PERM Form ETA 9089
 - 30– to 180-Day deadlines: monitoring the calendar

Faculty:

Bob White (DL), AILA DOL Liaison Committee Vice Chair, Schaumburg, IL

**Roujin Mozaffarimehr, AILA Business Section Steering Committee Chair, San Jose, CA*

*Amy Erlbacher-Anderson, AILA Business Section Steering Committee Vice Chair,
Omaha, NE*

11:20 am–12:45 pm

Lunch Break and Session:

Paralegal Careers

Being a paralegal in the world of immigration law can be a very satisfying career path, providing lots of opportunity for learning and growth. During this panel, hear from several paralegals on their career trajectories and learn about different practice settings and how they got to where they are.

- Business, family, global, and asylum/humanitarian practices: the paralegal's focus in each of these practice areas

(DL) = Discussion Leader

** = Invited Speakers, Not Confirmed*

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- In-house vs. law firm vs. nonprofit vs. emerging areas
- How tasks are divided between:
 - Paralegals, attorneys, and other support staff
 - In-house vs. external counsel
- Deciding if you should go to law school: becoming a lawyer and whether it is worth it
- Interview tips: how to prepare for interviews and negotiate for what you want

Faculty:

Carolina Theresa Curbelo (DL), Ridgewood, NJ

**Michelle L. Edstrom, Oklahoma City, OK*

**Kyle Rhodes, Legal Operations Manager, hims & hers, San Francisco, CA (paralegal)*

12:45 pm–2:15 pm

TPS, U Visas, T Visas, VAWA, and Extended Humanitarian Programs

Panelists will provide an introduction to humanitarian immigration programs and visas.

Learn to identify humanitarian options, screen clients carefully, work with vulnerable immigrant populations, and manage difficult cases through long processing times and new or changing programs and parameters.

- Working with vulnerable immigrant populations
 - Who the client is and ‘helpful’ third parties
 - Sensitive case handling
 - Engaging with law enforcement
 - Screening clients vs. providing legal advice
- Affidavit drafting for vulnerable clients
 - The effectiveness of a worksheet vs. face-to-face meeting with the client
 - Best way to organize your client’s declaration
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)
 - Confidentiality: how an immigration file can be pulled into other arenas
 - Documenting the case: abuse, cohabitation, good faith marriage, and citizenship
 - Background checks for good moral character
 - Case management after filing
- U visas
 - Eligibility requirements
 - Bona fide determination process
 - Intersection of victim’s rights and immigration law
- T visas
 - Eligibility requirements and how they differ from U Visas
 - Preparing certifications and contacting law enforcement
 - Intersection of victim’s rights and immigration law
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)
 - Predicate orders
 - Deferred action grants and work cards
 - Managing young people with long case delays
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- New parole programs

Faculty:

**Kathleen Elizabeth Irish (DL), Paralegals Conference Committee, Kansas City, MO*

Nicole Marcelle Avila, AILA VAWA, Us, and Ts Committee, Orlando, FL

**Maureen Schad, New York, NY*

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**Yliana Johansen-Mendez, Los Angeles, CA*

2:15 pm–2:40 pm

Networking Break

2:40 pm–3:40 pm

To Adjust or Consular Process, That Is the Question

As if applying for a green card wasn't complicated enough already, our current immigration system offers two different pathways to obtain a green card. Panelists will discuss the pros and cons of consular processing versus applying for adjustment of status (AOS). Topics include:

- Eligibility requirements and common risks when consular processing or applying for adjustment of status
- Where to file application forms, process, and fees
- Processing times for AOS applications versus immigrant visa interviews
- Consular post differences: contacting posts and transferring IV cases
- Appeals process for denials

Faculty:

**Jonelle Ocloo (DL), Columbia, MD*

Mark Trocinski, AILA Distance Learning Committee, Denver, CO

**Valerie K. Sprout, Shawnee, KS*

3:40 pm–4:05 pm

Networking Break

4:05 pm–5:05 pm

H-1B and L-1 Visas

H-1Bs and L-1s are the most common nonimmigrant work visas and are often used as stepping stones to future green card applications. Our panel of experts will zoom in on the basics of each visa status, navigating the standards, DOL occupational sources, employer requirements, beneficiary qualifications, and corporate structures.

- H-1B “Specialty Occupations”
 - Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes, job requirements, and beneficiary qualifications
 - American Competitiveness in the 21st Century Act (AC21) and travel issues
 - Overview of the H-1B cap
- L-1 “Intracompany Transfers”
 - Differences between L-1A and L-1B
 - Basic requirements and corporate organization
 - Filing considerations: DOS vs. USCIS
 - What makes a strong case and what types of documents should be provided
 - Timing considerations

Faculty:

Justin Russo (DL), Atlanta, GA

**Ceridwen Johanna Koski, Distance Learning Committee, Denver, CO*

Matthew D. Stump, Oklahoma City, OK

5:05 pm

Conference Concludes

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PRECONFERENCE VIRTUAL SESSIONS AND ONDEMAND RECORDINGS

In the weeks prior to the conference, three live panels will be held virtually via Zoom. All attendees are encouraged to participate in these sessions. Recordings of these sessions will be made available to all registrants.

DATE: MAY 2, 2023

Employment-Based Immigration 101

With its vast array of temporary and permanent visas available for foreign nationals who work for U.S. companies, the U.S. business immigration system is one of the most complex in the world. Our panel of experts will provide a high-level overview of employment-based temporary and permanent residency options, including discussions of documentation required and agencies involved in processing applications.

- Overview of nonimmigrant visas
- Required documentation (I-94, I-797, visa stamp, etc.)
- Agencies involved when sponsoring foreign nationals
- Permanent residency options

Faculty:

**Jeff Joseph (DL), AILA Second Vice President, Denver, CO*

**Eleanor Pelta, AILA Past President/Benefits Litigation Committee Chair, Washington, DC*

**Michelle Suzanne Canero, Miami, FL*

DATE: MAY 9, 2023

Addressing Client Needs in Vulnerable Situations

Panelists will address the issues particular to representing vulnerable populations, including tricky client communication issues, worst-case scenarios, and how to make lemonade out of lemons.

- What to do if a client is arrested
 - Whom to contact
 - Changes in strategy equal changes in process
- Communication between a paralegal and client in vulnerable situations
 - Communicating with clients in detention
 - Border issues
 - VAWA, U visas, and T visas: best practices to protect survivors
 - Keeping in contact with clients over long periods of time and addressing frustration caused by governmental delays
 - Supporting clients with mental health concerns
- How to obtain records and build a case when a client is detained
- What to do if something happens outside the scope of representation

Faculty:

**Anna Erwin (DL), Decatur, GA*

**Susan Church, AILA Federal Court Litigation Section Steering Committee, Cambridge, MA*

**Erika Elizabeth Gonzalez, AILA VAWA, Us, and Ts Committee, Los Angeles, CA*

DATE: MAY 16, 2023

USMCA-Based Visa Categories and Related Port of Entry Issues

Navigating port of entry procedures and policies is a difficult process even for experienced attorneys, as the rules are in a state of constant flux. Panelists will advise on how you can help your supervising attorney to navigate the rules and requirements of this constantly changing landscape.

- TNs
 - Canadian Citizens

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- Procedure for filing (visa-exempt)
- Documentary requirements and assembling the application
- Understanding the nuances of different TN categories
- Mexican Citizens
 - Procedure for filing (visa required)
 - Documentary requirements and assembling the application
 - Understanding visa reciprocity periods and the significance of the I-94 versus the visa validity period
- L-1s (Canadians only)
 - Where to file?
 - Individual versus blanket L visa procedures and requirements
 - Documentary requirements and assembling the petition
 - Local port of entry policies regarding processing initial L-1s versus renewals and exceptions to this policy
- Automatic visa revalidation

Faculty:

**Zabrina V. Reich (DL), CBP Liaison Committee, Buffalo, NY*

**Ramon E. Curiel, CBP Liaison Committee Chair, San Antonio, TX*

**Kathleen Campbell Walker, AILA Past President/Publications Committee/Verification and Documentation Liaison Committee, El Paso, TX*

Conference Program Committee

Claire S. Pratt, Paralegals Conference Chair, San Francisco, CA
Sandra Bruno, Paralegals Conference Vice Chair Ithaca, NY
Sarah Weston Hayes Owings, AILA Board of Governors, Atlanta, GA
Alexander Dgebuadze, Woodland Hills, CA
Kathleen Elizabeth Irish, Kansas City, MO
Danielle M. Rizzo, Buffalo, NY
Adriana Ruiz Robinson, Bethesda, MD
Susan Girardo Roy, Princeton Junction, NJ
Sang M. Shin, Houston, TX

Michael Orlando, AILA Associate Director of Professional Development, Washington, D.C.

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