



Embassy of the United States of America
100 Duke & Young Streets, Kingston, Georgetown, Guyana

Installment Seventy-Four

Ask the Consul – Immigrant Visa Interview Preparation

The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Georgetown is continuing to work hard to help prepare Guyanese immigrant visa applicants planning to migrate permanently to the United States for their visa interviews at the Embassy. After conducting a variety of initiatives aimed at educating immigrant visa applicants, the Consular Section has observed significant improvement in visa processing times. Most notably, over 50% more immigrant visa applicants are now being approved within a week of their interviews than was the case as recently as September 1st, 2008. There are still a variety of reasons why individual cases may be delayed. However, this edition of Ask the Consul aims to further educate immigrant visa applicants about interview preparedness by addressing two topics that commonly cause delays in visa issuance: DNA testing and passport problems.

Q: My friend who recently migrated to the U.S. took a DNA test to prove he qualified for his visa. How do I know if a DNA test might be helpful in my upcoming case?

The most common visa categories used by Guyanese planning to migrate to the U.S. usually rely on family relationships, either parent-child or brother-sister. The consular officer who conducts your visa interview therefore may recommend you undergo DNA testing to prove your relationship with either your petitioning relative in the United States or possibly another person in your family for a variety of reasons. Before your visa can be approved, the interviewing consular officer will need to verify that each applicant in a visa case has the relationship – usually biological – to qualify for the visa. Civil documents such as birth and marriage certificates and a verbal interview sometimes satisfy this requirement. However, often times more information is required in order to establish family relationships and a DNA test may be useful to qualify you for the visa.

Q: I think I need to take a DNA test, but will it hurt?

DNA testing is usually a painless procedure in which your DNA sample is collected by simply rubbing a cotton swab against the inside of your cheek. Some labs will require a small blood sample; however, when selecting a lab you may wish to inquire which sample collection procedure they employ. Procedures for undergoing DNA testing are listed on the U.S. Embassy's web site at: http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/visas/ivs/dna_testing.html.

Q: My birth certificate has my name misspelled, should I get a new one?

The best way to ensure that your immigrant visa case is not delayed is for you to secure newly issued civil documents that are free of errors and that clearly identify you and any family relationships material to your visa application. For further information, please refer to www.travel.state.gov or <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov>.

Q: My passport is starting to show some wear. Will that be a problem at my immigrant visa interview?

It may be – the Consular Section will not place U.S. visas in damaged passports. Some wear is acceptable, but passports with separating photo pages or ripped or missing visa pages will likely need to be replaced. Please also ensure your passport still has blank pages. Passports which do not have space left for a visa and U.S. entry stamp will not be acceptable.

There are other passport problems which could delay your visa issuance, yet are easily avoidable. A visa cannot be placed in an adult's passport when a child is also affixed. If your young child is in your passport, you should request that the child be removed from your passport and granted her own passport. Remember that every person traveling to the U.S. requires their own passport, even newborns. Finally, your passport must not expire within six months of your visa issuance date. If this deadline is approaching, you should either secure a new passport or request to renew your existing one.

“Ask the Consul” is a bi-weekly column from the U.S. Embassy answering questions about U.S. immigration law and visa issues. If you have a general question about visa policy please email it to us at AskGeorge@state.gov. We select questions every other week and publish the answers in Stabroek News and on our website at http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/guyana/ask_con.html. For more information about visas please see <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov> or <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/>.

Other than the questions we select, we DO NOT respond to questions sent to Ask the Consul. Please contact the visa inquiries unit (email visageorge@state.gov or call 225-7965 between 8 am and 4 pm Monday through Friday) if you have questions about a specific case.