



CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE JOB GUIDE

IMMIGRATION

Description

Immigration law refers to federal government policies, laws and regulations related to: (1) determining who is allowed to enter the country and for how long; (2) the naturalization process for those who desire to become U.S. citizens; and (3) detention and removal of foreign nationals who enter illegally, overstay their permitted visit duration, or otherwise lose their temporary status.

The U.S. Constitution grants Congress the exclusive right to legislate in the area of immigration. Title 8 of the U.S. Code contains most of the relevant laws, including the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). State governments are prohibited from enacting immigration laws, but recent efforts of states to require local police investigations of immigration status has created controversy and new areas of litigation.

Three federal agencies are charged with administering and enforcing immigration laws. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) investigates those who break the law and prosecutes offenders. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) handles applications for legal immigration. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is responsible for keeping the borders secure. All three agencies are part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

There are a number of different types of practices under the umbrella of immigration law, including:

Residency, Naturalization and Citizenship. Immigration lawyers regularly assist immigrants in obtaining legal status during the lengthy path to citizenship. Lawyers may also assist corporations that sponsor foreign nationals coming to work in the U.S. on special work or study visas.

Family Reunification and Unaccompanied Children. Another area of immigration law involves assisting individuals already in the U.S. under permanent or other

temporary visas to petition for their relatives to enter the country. Working with unaccompanied children, who are considered undocumented immigrant or refugee minors, has recently become a more active practice, particularly where many children are fleeing abuse or violence in their home countries. Advocates for such children act to reunite them with relatives in the U.S. and have them released into family members' custody.

Employment and Labor Rights. Undocumented immigrant workers can be at a particularly high risk for abuse and exploitation by their employers. Many may not understand that they have rights as workers in this country or may fear deportation because of their undocumented statuses. Immigration lawyers assist such individuals in obtaining the rights to which they are entitled and target abusive employers.

Asylum and Refugees. Lawyers specializing in asylum and refugee law assist individuals who are fleeing persecution in their home countries and are applying for protection in the U.S.

National Security. Immigration lawyers in the national security area work with individuals accused of terroristic activity or foreign nationals seeking security clearance to visit or work in the United States.

Qualifications

Because an immigration practice often involves working closely with individuals and families, lawyers in this field benefit from strong interpersonal skills and a passion for helping people. It is also very helpful to be fluent in a foreign language. Many immigration law employers, particularly in the Southeast, are looking for lawyers who speak Spanish, but the dominant language of immigrants may vary by area of the country and even within areas in large cities.

Types of Employers

Nonprofits:

Many legal service providers have lawyers dedicated to providing immigration law assistance to individuals, particularly in large cities and other locations that tend to have substantial low-income immigrant populations. Smaller, locally based organizations tend to provide individual representation, and larger, nationally based groups may be more involved in influencing policy and legislation. There are often opportunities at these organizations for entry-level lawyers, and the jobs present many opportunities for client contact and rapid immersion of new attorneys into the work on which the groups focus. Some of the nonprofits that perform immigration work are faith-based organizations, even though many do not require a client to share that faith in order to receive the services.

Law Firms:

Lawyers who focus on representing individuals with their immigration issues tend to be in solo or small firm practices. The immigration work in larger firms tends to be representing corporations, which work can range from assistance in obtaining visas for new employees to defending government audits.

Government Agencies:

In addition to the DHS divisions discussed above, there are employment opportunities at the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), which is part of the Department of Justice. Within the EOIR is the Board of Immigration Appeals, which is the highest administrative body for interpreting and applying immigration laws. Decisions made by it are appealable to the federal courts. There are 53 immigration courts comprising the Board, all of which employ adjudicators, attorneys and law clerks. There may also be opportunities to work with refugees and unaccompanied children in the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement and the Department of Unaccompanied Children Services, which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Job Search Strategy

Most employers for an immigration law position will be looking for (1) passion for the practice and for helping others, particularly in the nonprofit segment, (2) a demonstrated interest in international law issues, and (3) foreign language skills. It will be very helpful to have worked at an internship in the field either during the summers or during the academic year.

As you plan your path to a career in immigration law, consider the following advice:

- You will need to decide what area of immigration law you want to practice. That decision may be determinative of the type of employer you pursue. If not, then you also need to decide whether you want to go into private practice, public interest or government. You may want to apply widely and leave your options open for as long as possible.
- For your 1L summer, try to secure a position for at least part of each summer that will give you relevant experience. It can be difficult to find 1L summer jobs at law firms, so look for options like nonprofits (e.g., Atlanta Legal Aid), and government agencies (e.g., the EOIR immigration courts).
- It is even more important to find a relevant job for your 2L summer. Many small law firms do not have the resources to recruit on-campus, so you may need to make more outreach to the firms through unsolicited letters and networking. Agencies, courts and nonprofits are good options for this summer as well. Your CDO Counselor can help you search for good targets of opportunity.
- Look for summer internship positions in Symplicity or at external job posting sites listed below. You should also talk with 2Ls and 3Ls who had such internships in the past. You can get lists of summer positions held by our students during the most recent summer from your CDO Counselor.
- Many public interest and government summer jobs do not pay. However, there may be some opportunities for stipends or fellowships (see the sample list below). In the alternative, you may be able to receive course credit for summer positions. Check with Professor Alex Scherr, but do so as soon as possible and definitely before you start the job.
- You might also consider enrolling in the Civil Externship Program. There may be placements available that relate to immigration law, such as the ACLU National Security and Immigrants' Rights Project, Catholic Charities, the Latin American Association, Atlanta Legal Aid and Georgia Legal Services.
- Participate in extracurricular activities and professional organizations. You can network with helpful people at meetings, and it helps to have these affiliations on your resume. For example, watch for speeches or continuing education seminars focusing on immigration law. These will be attended by practitioners in the field and are a good place to network.

Experiential Learning Opportunities

The most effective experiential course work relevant to immigration law is to participate in the Public Interest Practicum. Although not limited to immigrant issues, students in this program work with local service organizations to provide services to disadvantaged community members, including documented and undocumented immigrants. For more information about how to enroll, see the Law School's [website](#).

Relevant Courses

For additional information about relevant courses, check the Law School's [Course Offerings](#) page for a list of courses offered and the applicable semester class schedule. Courses in Immigration Law, Refugee and Asylum Law, and Children and International Law are among the course offerings that are relevant to a career in immigration law.

Relevant Law School Activities

[Equal Justice Foundation](#)

[Public Interest Law Council](#)

[Working in the Public Interest](#)

Bar and Professional Organizations

[Georgia Bar Association Immigration Law Section](#)

[Atlanta Bar Association International Law Section](#)

[Federal Bar Association Immigration Law Section](#)

[American Immigration Lawyers Association](#)

[American Immigration Council](#)

[Southern Poverty Law Center – Immigrant Justice](#)

[National Immigration Law Center](#)

Job Fairs

[Georgia Public Sector Career Fair \(Spring\)](#)

- Takes place in Atlanta
- Last year, it included over 75 employers from the Southeast
- Registration period is in mid-January, and the job fair is typically during the third week of February
- No website; see a CDO Counselor for more information

[Equal Justice Works \(Fall\)](#)

- Takes place in Washington, D.C.
- Last year, it included over 140 employers from across the country
- Registration period is August 11–September 14, 2015, and the job fair is October 23-24, 2015

External Job Posting Sites

[American Bar Association - Careers in Immigration Law](#)

[American Immigration Lawyers Association – Career Center](#)

[American Immigration Council](#)

[ACLU Careers](#)

[National Immigration Law Center Careers](#)

[Federal Bar Association Immigration Law Section - Careers](#)

[PSJD](#)

Fellowships and Funding

[UGA Law Public Service Fellowships for post-graduation \(talk to your CDO Counselor\)](#)

[UGA Equal Justice Foundation Fellowships](#)

[PSJD Summer Funding](#)

[UGA Law Downs Loan Repayment Assistance Program](#)

[Georgia Legal Services Farmworker Division](#)

[ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project Fellowships](#)

[SPLC Two-Year Legal Fellowship](#)

[National Immigration Project Legal Fellowships](#)

Recent Jobs

The table below lists some of the employers who have hired UGA Law students in the immigration practice area. For confidentiality reasons, we do not publish the names of specific students; however, CDO may have contacts at these employers who can help you.

Name	Location	Type of Job
U.S. Department of Justice, Executive Office for Immigration Review	Atlanta, GA	Summer
U.S. Department of Justice, Executive Office for Immigration Review, Office of General Counsel	Washington, DC	Summer
Latin American Association, Immigration Department	Atlanta, GA	Summer
Catholic Social Services, Immigration Services	Atlanta, GA	Summer, Externship during school year
Georgia Asylum & Immigration Network	Atlanta, GA	Summer
Kuck Immigration Partners LLC	Atlanta, GA	Summer
U.S. Department of Justice Immigration, Atlanta Immigration Court	Atlanta, GA	Summer
YMCA International Services	Houston, TX	Post-Grad
Seyfarth Shaw LLP	Atlanta, GA	Post-Grad
Antonini & Cohen Immigration Law Group	Atlanta, GA	Post-Grad
U.S. Department of Justice Office of Immigration Litigation	Washington, DC	Externship during school year
Cooper & Julka	Athens, GA	Summer
Satterlee Stephens Burke & Burke LLP	New York, NY	Summer

Other Resources

Publications:

- [Serving Immigrants and Refugees, A Guide to Careers in the Law](#), Harvard Law School

Websites:

- [Careers in Immigration Law](#), American Bar Association
- [International Law Lib Guide](#), UGA King Library
- [National Immigration Legal Services Directory](#) (locate legal service providers in U.S.)
- [ACLU Immigrants' Rights](#)
- [Catholic Charities – Immigration and Refugee Services](#)
- [National Immigrant Justice Center](#)
- [National Immigration Project](#)
- [Immigration Equality](#) – legal services for LGBT and HIV-positive immigrants
- [Georgia Legal Services Program - Farmworkers Division](#)