The background of the page features a faded, light blue-tinted image of the Statue of Liberty. The statue is positioned centrally, with its crown and torch visible. The overall aesthetic is clean and patriotic.

U.S. NAVY

**2024 Guide to
Naturalization
Applications
Based Solely on
Qualifying
Military Service**

(8 U.S.C. 1439 and 1440)

1. Introduction.

The Department of Defense and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) examined ways to streamline the processing of certain naturalization (citizenship) applications for Service Members (SM(s)). Several changes have been implemented which should substantially reduce the time for processing applications. Consequently, much of the application processing before filing with USCIS will now be done at the SM's command, and all naturalization applications based upon qualifying military service will be sent to a unified processing center, regardless of the SM's residence. The Navy has determined that the Legal Assistance Division, Office of the Judge Advocate General, (OJAG-Code 16), is the Navy representative for immigration matters concerning SMs.

- This guide outlines the procedures for completing naturalization applications for Navy SMs based solely upon qualifying military service. Information and forms regarding the naturalization process can be found here, <https://www.uscis.gov/military/naturalization-through-military-service>.
- Applications for naturalization that are not solely based upon qualifying military service are not discussed in this guide. Assistance with applications that are not solely based upon qualifying military service is available from the nearest Legal Assistance (LA) Region Legal Service Office (RLSO). Visit this link to find your nearest LA RLSO: [Legal Assistance | U.S. Navy JAG Corps](#).
- The SM's command appointed Command Citizenship Representative (CCR) is the primary source of assistance for SMs who want to submit citizenship applications. The LA RLSOs are available to provide guidance to the SM and the CCR. The LA RLSO is responsible for training the CCRs to assist the SMs with completion of Forms N-400 ("Application for Naturalization") and N-426 ("Request for Certification of Military or Naval Service").
- With the aid of the CCR, the SM will complete Form N-400 and Form N-426 as discussed below in parts 3 through 13. The CCR will guide the SM and submit Form N-426 to the SM's chain of command for proper certification and, once certified, to the appropriate USCIS office.
- For additional assistance, SMs can contact USCIS directly via a toll-free help line. The help line was created specifically for SMs and connects them with naturalization specialists who can assist with specific interest items such as: (1) checking the status of Form N-400;

(2) changing a mailing address or notifying USCIS of a new duty station; (3) obtaining information about posthumous citizenship for a deceased SM; and (4) submitting an application for expedited processing of N-400 and N-600 applications.

- Toll-Free Help Line: 877-CIS-4MIL (877-247-4645) or DSN 809-4-OFF-DSN, if overseas. Hours: M-F, 0800-1600 (CT), excluding federal holidays.

2. Overview.

There are a number of categories of persons who are eligible to apply for United States citizenship. This guide only applies to the following two categories of SMs:

- Those who have been in the United States Armed Forces and have served for at least 1 year at any time; (8 U.S.C. §1439) and
- Those who have been in the United States Armed Forces and have served during periods of military hostilities. (8 U.S.C. §1440). Visit [Naturalization Information for Military Personnel \(uscis.gov\)](https://uscis.gov/naturalization/military) to confirm whether the military service occurred during hostilities.

The **first category** permits naturalization for persons who have served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States for an aggregate of at least one (1) year *at the time of submitting the application*. *There is NO provision for “early filing” under this section.*

Such SMs may be naturalized without having to fulfill the residence and physical presence requirements that apply to other application categories, provided that such applications are filed while the SM is still in the military service or within six months after termination of such service. The SM must also be a lawful permanent resident of the United States at the time of the examination and demonstrate good moral character and attachment to the principles of the Constitution of the United States for at least five years prior to filing the application and continuing until the time of the Oath of Allegiance. (See 8 U.S.C. § 1439(a) *et seq.*)

The **second category** authorizes naturalization of persons who have honorably served in the Armed Forces of the United States during periods of military hostilities (including any period as may be designated by the President in an Executive Order pursuant to 8 U.S.C. §1440(a)). In such cases, the SM must satisfy the permanent residence requirement by either: (1) lawful admission to the United States for permanent residence after enlistment or induction into the Armed Forces of the United States; or (2) the SM need only have enlisted, been inducted, re-enlisted, or extended service in the U.S. armed forces in the United States, the Canal Zone, America Samoa, or Swains Island, or, on or after November 18, 1997, on board a public vessel owned or operated by the United States for noncommercial service, whether or not the SM has been lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence. The SM must also demonstrate good moral character and attachment to the principles of the Constitution of the United States for at least one year prior to filing the application and continuing until the time of the Oath of Allegiance. (See 8 U.S.C. § 1440(a) *et seq.*)

In both instances, the SM must submit a completed Form N-400 and a completed Form N-426. SMs residing overseas also must submit a fingerprint card and two passport style photographs. Once the application and associated documents are received and processed by USCIS, the SM must submit to a USCIS interview, and pass an English and civics test. Afterwards, if the application for naturalization is granted, the SM will be scheduled to take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States.

3. Obtaining the Forms.

The primary USCIS forms are Form N-400 (“Application for Naturalization”) and Form N-426 (“Request for Certification of Military or Naval Service”). These forms are available on the USCIS website at <https://www.uscis.gov/forms/all-forms>.

4. Filing the Forms.

The first step in the naturalization process is filing Form N-400. **Though USCIS accepts mailed applications and forms, SMs are STRONGLY encouraged to create a USCIS account at https://myaccount.uscis.gov/users/sign_up_to_file_their_N-400. Filing online gives SMs access to the USCIS Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) where they can easily receive USCIS case status alerts via secure messages, view all correspondence, monitor their case status, update their personal information, and upload evidence.** After Form N-400 is filed online the SM will then be able to upload the signed Form N-426 into ELIS as evidence of qualifying military service or simply hand-carry the signed Form N-426 to their USCIS interview. **CAUTION:** If the SM does not file Form N-400 online then both Form N-400 and Form N-426 MUST be mailed or delivered TOGETHER to USCIS for filing. Forms mailed to USCIS will eventually be uploaded by USCIS staff to ELIS during the ordinary course of business, however, they will only be accessible to the SM after the SM has created a USCIS account online.

5. Completeness and Accuracy of the Forms.

It is vital that all forms be thoroughly completed before submission. Incomplete forms are returned or rejected by USCIS, causing substantial delays in the application process. Each form on the USCIS website has a webpage with important information about how to complete the form and where to file it. If a form is not filed at the correct USCIS address there will be a processing delay. Visit [Application for Naturalization | USCIS](#) and [Request for Certification of Military or Naval Service | USCIS](#) for more detailed information.

6. Completing Form N-400, “Application for Naturalization”.

Enter the SM’s “A” number at Part 1. Then check Box “F” in Part 1 of Form N-400, indicating that the application is on the basis of qualifying military service. The SM must complete Parts 1-13 of this form accurately and truthfully. All information will be verified by USCIS. The answers provided on the N-400 will also be reviewed during the SM’s interview. Under Part 9, question 22, male SMs must explain their Selective Service registration status and, if registered, provide their Selective Service number to USCIS. If not registered, male SMs must register before filing Form N-400 if under the age of 25 or, if between the ages of 26 -31, explain the failure to register

and provide a status information letter from the Selective Service. Use this link to register or verify status with the Selective Service: <https://www.sss.gov/>.

- **Most common SM-caused processing delays:**
 - Part 1: Part 1, Question 1, Box F, must be checked.
 - Part 4: USCIS will contact the SM throughout the process; all contact information fields must be filled out completely.
 - Part 9:
 - Both question 8a and 12 should likely be checked “yes.”
 - Part 13: The SM must sign and date Form N-400. The form may be rejected if the signature is left blank.

7. Completing Form N-426, “Request for Certification of Military or Naval Service”.

The SM accurately and truthfully completes Parts 1-2 of Form N-426 then signs and dates Form N-426 at Part 2. If currently serving, the SM then submits the partially completed Form N-426 to their CCR for forwarding and completion by the authorized certifying officer within the SM’s chain of command. (See part 8 below for more information on authorized certifying officers)

- **Most common SM-caused processing delays:**
 - Part 2: The SM must sign and date. The date the SM writes must be a date that is BEFORE the date the certifying official signs in Part 3, indicating that the certifying official signed Form N-426 AFTER the SM.

Visit [Request for Certification of Military or Naval Service | USCIS](#) for more information.

8. Authorized Certifying Official’s Completion of Form N-426.

For currently serving SMs, the certifying officer must complete Part 3, verifying the SM’s name, branch of service, date the SM started military service and the character of the SM’s service. When verifying the SM’s military service the certifying officer must complete **ALL** of Part 3. Additional information regarding service may be attached to Form N-426.

Certifying officials may certify honorable service only if the Sailor is not the subject of pending disciplinary action or pending adverse administrative action or proceeding, and is not the subject of a law enforcement or command investigation; the Sailor has completed applicable screening and suitability requirements; and the Sailor has satisfied military training and other service requirements.

The first O-6 or higher in a SM’s permanent or temporary chain of command has the required authority to certify Form N-426. The policy specifically prohibits sub-delegation of the certification authority. If the certifying official is not in the Sailor’s chain of command, an endorsement in the form of a memo from the Sailor’s parent command is required to validate satisfaction of the honorable service requirements.

The authorized certifying official must fill out Part 3 of Form N-426 completely **within 30 days of submission by the SM** (see the common processing delays below for more detailed information). Note: The certifying official must **wet ink sign and date** Form N-426 and return it to the SM. Digital signatures are not allowed.

- **Most common certifying official-caused processing delays:**

- Part 3:

- The certifying official must select “honorably” or “not honorably”. This part cannot be left blank.
- A work telephone number and military email address must be provided.
- Signature: The certifying official must **wet ink sign and date**. No digital signatures will be accepted.

9. Responsibility for Transmitting Forms N-400 and N-426 to USCIS.

- **For SMs who filed Form N-400 online:**

- Once Form N-426 is wet-signed as outlined above, the SM will upload a copy of the signed Form N-426 to their online USCIS ELIS account. Though the original wet ink signed document does not need to be submitted to USCIS for SMs who have filed their N-400 online, they should retain the wet ink signed N-426 in their records in the event it is later requested by USCIS.

- **For SMs who mailed Form N-400:**

- The SM’s CCR will send a copy of the completed packet of Forms N-400 and N-426, along with any required photographs (if applicable) and fingerprints (if applicable), directly to USCIS via certified mail or by overnight service as detailed in part 14 below.
- **Please note:** If a specific USCIS office requested the certification, then the signed Form N-426 should be returned to the specific USCIS office that requested the certification.

10. Former SMs.

If you previously served in the U.S. Military, do not submit Form N-426. Submit a copy of your DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty; NBG Form 22, National Guard Report of Separation and Record of Service; or equivalent discharge document from all periods of service.

11. Obtain Two Photographs (if residing outside of the United States).

SMs residing outside of the United States are required to furnish two identical photographs of themselves.

The SM’s photos must be:

- In color.

- Taken in the last 6 months.
- White to off-white background, printed on thin paper with a glossy finish, be unmounted and unretouched.
- Size: 2 inches by 2 inches.
- Full face must be shown, frontal view.
- Head height should measure 1” to 1 3/8” from top of hair to bottom of chin, and eye height is between 1 1/8” to 1 3/8” from bottom of photo.
- The SM must print their name and “A” number very lightly but legibly on the back of each photograph taking care to not damage the image on the front of the photo.
- The SM’s head must be bare, unless contrary to their religious beliefs.
- For more specific guidance (e.g. discussing the requirements for religious attire worn on the head or the wearing of glasses), please see the U.S. State Department’s guidelines here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/how-apply/photos.html>.

12. Collect Necessary Documents.

The SM will need to include copies of several documents with the Form N-400 application. Use the document checklist at the USCIS site

https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/checklists/Military_Naturalization_Checklist.pdf to ensure the correct documents are included. Include an English translation with any document that is not already in English. The translation must include a statement from the translator that they are competent to translate and that the translation is correct.

13. Obtaining Acceptable Fingerprints (if residing outside of the United States).

SMs residing outside of the United States are required to obtain and submit fingerprint cards.

- General:
 - CCRs are strongly encouraged to assist SMs in obtaining their fingerprints.
 - If the SM was fingerprinted for a previous immigration application, USCIS will use those fingerprints, if available.
 - Electronic fingerprints remains the best method for the applicant and USCIS.
- Continental U.S. (CONUS) SMs:
 - USCIS will issue the SM a Form I-797C Notice of Action to report to a local Application & Support Center (ASC) to take their fingerprints. However, SMs may appear at any ASC at any time prior to filing their N-400 without having a receipt notice.
 - To find the nearest ASC go to <https://egov.uscis.gov/office-locator/#/asc>. An appointment is recommended, but most ASCs will take walk-ins. USCIS will allow the SM to submit their fingerprints at an ASC before filing their Form N-400.
- SMs OCONUS or Aboard Underway Ship:
 - The SM can go to the nearest Military Police Unit or security manager, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Embassy or U.S. Consulate and request two (2) sets of DARK and CLEAR prints taken on a FD-258 Fingerprint Card or comparable DOD fingerprint card.

14. Transmitting the Application Package.

- **For SMs who filed Form N-400 online:**
 - Once the rest of the package is complete and the SM and the CCR have reviewed the remaining forms and documents against the checklist referenced in part 12 above, the SM should upload the rest of the required forms and documents to ELIS and keep the hard-copies in a secure location in case later requested.

- **For SMs who mailed Form N-400:**
 - Prior to mailing the complete package, the CCR shall review the entire package with the SM using the checklist referenced in part 12 above. The SM should retain the original packet in a secure location if the CCR is handling the mailing to USCIS. *The application package should be accompanied by a cover letter, identifying the USCIS field office at which the SM would like to be interviewed if the SM is residing in the United States and it should include any periods of unavailability for the interview. The letter should also advise USCIS of the SM's current address and phone number. Note:* Though it is recommended to include the preferred interview location in the cover letter, USCIS will reach out to the SM and work with them to find a location and interview time that works best for them.

- SMs with APO or FPO addresses must also provide USCIS with a stateside address and phone number of a person who will know how to contact the SM for communications with USCIS.

- *The SM's CCR is required to add a cover letter to the package requesting expedited processing for an active duty SM.* If there is no cover sheet there will be no expedited processing of the package.

- **Regardless of the residence of the SM, the application package should always be uploaded on ELIS for faster processing.** However, if online filing is not possible or practical, then the SM or CCR should send the application package by certified mail, return receipt requested, or sent by FedEx, UPS or DHL to the appropriate address as listed in this link: [Direct Filing Addresses for Form N-400, Application for Naturalization | USCIS](#).

- Once the application is accepted and processed, USCIS will send the SM a letter scheduling the interview. If the naturalization application is approved at the interview, USCIS will send another letter to the SM to arrange an oath ceremony to complete the naturalization process (if the oath was not completed in conjunction with the interview).

15. Details about the Interview.

USCIS will schedule the SM for an interview. They will send the SM an interview notice Form I-797C containing the date, time, and place of the interview. **SMs will not receive a second notice.** At the interview, a USCIS officer will place the SM under oath and then ask questions about the SM's answers to the N-400 questions. The SM must pass a 5-part English and civics test. During

the interview, the SM's ability to read, write, speak English will be tested. The SM will also be tested about their knowledge and understanding of United States History and Government.

- **Administrative Closure of Case for Failure to Appear at Scheduled Interview:**
 - SMs should appear at the office where they are to be interviewed in advance of their scheduled interview time. If a SM fails to appear at their interview without contacting USCIS, USCIS will attempt to contact the SM and reschedule. If USCIS is unable to establish contact, their case will be "administratively closed." If this happens and the SM does not contact USCIS within 1 year to reopen the case, the application will be denied for lack of prosecution. **If the interview must be rescheduled, SMs should directly contact the office where their interview is scheduled by mail or by calling the Military Help Line (877-CIS-4MIL (877-247-4645)) as soon as possible or request their LA RLSO help them notify USCIS.** They should explain their situation and ask to have their interview rescheduled. When a new date has been set, USCIS will send the SM a new interview notice. Please note that rescheduling an interview may add several months to the naturalization process.
- **Notify USCIS of Every Change of Address:**
 - To make sure SMs receive the interview notice, SMs must notify USCIS whenever their address changes. **Many SMs endure long delays in their naturalization process because they failed to notify USCIS of a change in address.** All non-citizens in the United States are required to keep USCIS informed of any change of address within 10 days of their move by completing an Alien Change of Address (AR-11). The online change of address form eliminates the need to file the AR-11, however USCIS will continue to accept AR-11's mailed to them. SMs can update or change their addresses by visiting USCIS at: [How to Change Your Address | USCIS](#).

16. Additional Requests for Evidence from USCIS.

Provide additional documents in response to a USCIS Request for Evidence (Form N-14). In some cases, USCIS may ask the SM to bring additional documents to the interview. These documents will be listed on the SM's appointment letter. If the SM fails to bring the necessary documents, the case may be delayed or denied.

17. Notice of Decision.

After the interview, the application for naturalization will be granted, denied, or continued.

- **Granted:**
 - At the end of the interview, USCIS may advise the SM that naturalization will be granted. In some cases, the SM may be able to complete the oath ceremony the same day as the interview. Otherwise, the SM will receive a notice of when and where the oath ceremony will occur.

- Continued:
 - USCIS officer may also “continue” the case. This means the case is put on hold. If a SM’s case is continued, it will delay the naturalization process. The most common reasons for continuation are: (1) failing a part of the English and civics tests; or (2) failing to provide USCIS with required documents. When a case is continued, the SM will be asked to: (1) come to a second interview to retake the portions they failed, usually within 60-90 days of the first interview; or (2) provide additional documents.
- Denied:
 - If USCIS denies the application, the SM will receive a written notice setting forth the reasons. There is an administrative review process for individuals whose N-400 is denied. The SM may request a hearing with an USCIS officer if they feel they have been denied naturalization in error. The denial letter will explain how to request a hearing. The SM should immediately make an appointment with the nearest LA RLSO.

18. Oath Administration.

If USCIS approves the application for naturalization, the SM will either be given the oath on the same day as the interview or may be required to attend an oath ceremony at a later time to take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States.

If the SM was not given the oath on the same day that the interview was completed, USCIS will notify the SM either at the conclusion of the N-400 interview or by mail of the time and date of the ceremony. The notice is called the “Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony” (Form N-445).

In either situation, after the SM takes the Oath they will receive their “Certificate of Naturalization.” The SM is not a citizen until the Oath of Allegiance is taken. The oath is taken during the ceremony. An official will read each part of the Oath and ask the SM to repeat the words.

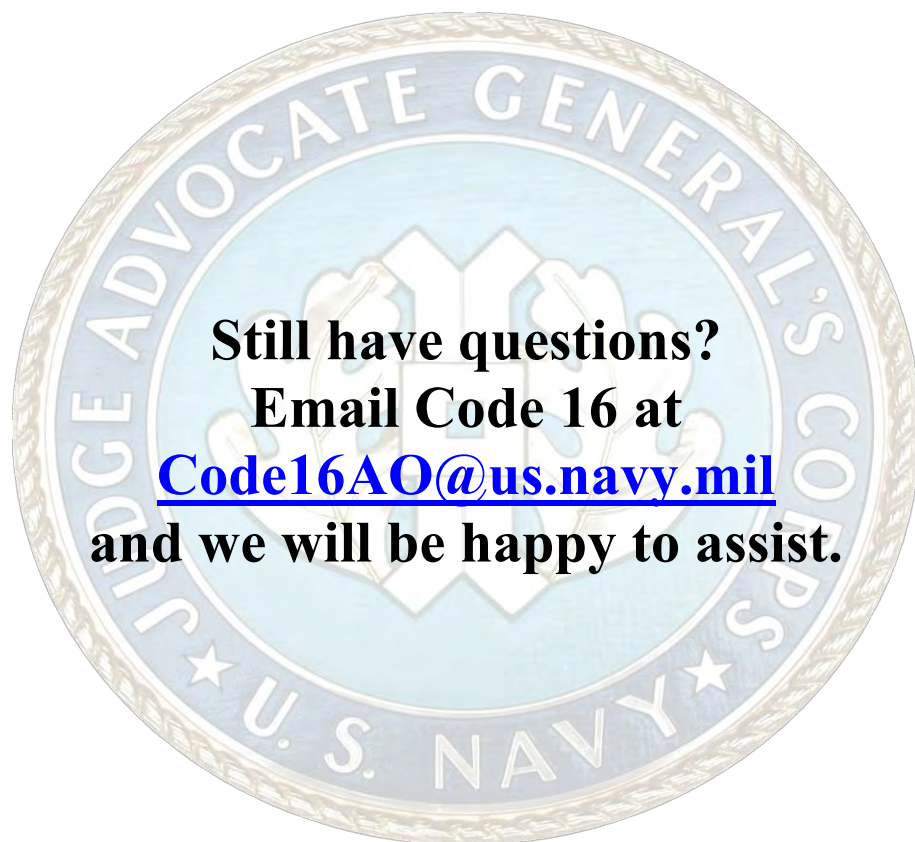
- Oath Administration Ceremony Details:
 - The SM must check in with USCIS upon arrival at the site of the ceremony. If the SM cannot attend the ceremony on the day scheduled, the USCIS notice (Form N-445) must be returned to the local USCIS office. The SM should include a letter explaining why they cannot attend the ceremony and ask USCIS to reschedule.
- Judicial Oath Ceremony Must Be Requested if SM Needs Their Name Changed:
 - If the SM needs to have their name changed when taking the Oath they ***must request a judicial ceremony***. A judicial ceremony can only take place in the United States. A name change also includes dropping one of the SM’s names. It does not include changing a maiden name to a married name. It does not include changing a name back to a maiden name if the SM is divorced and the divorce decree explicitly grants the restoration of the maiden name.

- Surrender Permanent Resident Card to USCIS at the Oath Ceremony:
 - SMs are required to surrender their Permanent Resident Cards and any other USCIS-issued documents, such as travel documents, to USCIS when they check in for their oath ceremony. SMs will receive their Certificate of Naturalization immediately following the oath administration ceremony.
- Be Prepared to Answer Some Questions about Activities between the Date of Interview and the Date of Oath Administration:
 - If more than a day has passed between the SM's interview and the ceremony, several questions will need to be answered. Those questions are located on the back of the Form N-445 notice USCIS sends the SM.

19. Important Steps to Take Immediately After Becoming a U.S. Citizen.

Once the SM has taken the Oath, they will receive the Certificate of Naturalization. The SM may use this document as proof of United States citizenship.

- It is extremely important that the SM place the Certificate of Naturalization in a safe, secure location. Cost of replacement in 2023 is \$555.00 USD and cannot be waived. In addition, if the Certificate of Naturalization is lost, it can take up to one year to receive a new certificate.
- The SM should apply for and obtain a United States passport soon after their naturalization ceremony. A passport serves as evidence of citizenship and is easier to use than a Certificate of Naturalization. If the SM needs their Certificate of Naturalization replaced and does not have a passport, there will be no evidence of citizenship during the time they are waiting for a new certificate. SMs can get an application for a passport at their oath ceremony, at most post offices, or online.



**Still have questions?
Email Code 16 at
Code16AO@us.navy.mil
and we will be happy to assist.**