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**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.

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## Questions?

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

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

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**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](http://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](http://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.**