



Don't Forget to File Your Change of Address with USCIS: It's Not Just a Good Idea—It's the Law

By: [Lauren Twist](#), Counsel

As attorneys, we're often asked by foreign national clients: *Do I really need to notify USCIS if I move?* The answer is an emphatic **yes**—and failure to do so can have serious consequences. The importance of compliance cannot be overstated in the current climate of heightened scrutiny for immigrants.

Under federal immigration law, all non-U.S. citizens living in the United States who are required to register with immigration authorities must notify the government (typically meaning U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)) **within 10 days** of any change of address within the U.S.

The Legal Obligation: 10 Days to Notify

Section 1305 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) states that **any alien required to register under U.S. law must report a change of address to the Attorney General within 10 days of moving**. This obligation applies to nearly all noncitizens in the U.S., including:

- Green card holders (lawful permanent residents)
- Visitors and students on temporary visas
- Workers on employment-based visas
- Individuals in removal proceedings or with pending applications

For children or individuals who cannot file on their own, a **parent or legal guardian** must provide the notice on their behalf.

How Do I Notify USCIS?

Today, this notification is typically done through USCIS by completing **Form AR-11**, which can be submitted online or by mail. Many noncitizens are also required to update their address directly in their pending application or petition, in addition to filing Form AR-11.

USCIS makes it easy to do online at: uscis.gov/ar-11



Important: Updating your address with the U.S. Postal Service **does not** count as notification to USCIS. The law requires you to contact immigration authorities directly.

What Happens If I Don't Notify USCIS?

Under **§1306(b)** of the INA, failure to report a change of address can result in:

- A misdemeanor charge
- A fine up to \$200
- Up to 30 days in jail
- Removal (deportation) from the U.S., unless you can show your failure to comply was excusable and not willful

While criminal prosecutions for failing to file a change of address are rare, **USCIS can still initiate removal proceedings** for this failure—especially if it results in missed notices or immigration court hearings. The current administration has signaled a willingness to take a much more aggressive approach on immigration enforcement. It is possible this could include more serious actions for a failure to comply with regulations such as these, up to and including criminal charges and removal proceedings.

Real-World Consequences

Even though criminal penalties and removal proceedings are not commonly enforced, the **practical risks are very real:**

- **Missed Notices:** USCIS may send important correspondence (e.g., Requests for Evidence, biometrics appointments, interview notices) to your old address. If you don't respond in time, your application may be denied.
- **Removal Hearings:** If you're in removal proceedings and miss a hearing because your notice went to the wrong address, you may be ordered removed *in absentia* (in your absence).
- **Delays and Denials:** Failing to keep your address updated may cause unnecessary delays or complications in your immigration journey.



Exceptions: When You May Be Asked to Reconfirm Your Address

Under **§1305(b)**, the government also has the authority to require certain groups—such as nationals of specific countries—to confirm their current address upon 10 days' notice. While this power is rarely used, it remains available to the government and may be invoked under specific circumstances, such as during national security-related actions.

Bottom Line: File the Change. It's Quick, Free, and Could Save You Trouble.

Whether you've moved across the country or just changed apartments down the street, it's your responsibility to notify USCIS. The process takes just a few minutes and can save you from major legal headaches down the line.

If you're unsure whether you need to file or want help updating USCIS with your new address, our team at GYH is here to guide you through the process.

Disclaimer: This blog post is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Please consult an immigration attorney for advice specific to your situation.