



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF PASSPORT AND
VISA SERVICES

Code of Conduct for Members of NAPVS

September 2008

Members of the National Association of Passport and Visa Services (NAPVS) serve U.S. citizens and legal residents of the United States who need assistance with passports and visas. All individuals, companies and institutions that use our members' services do so voluntarily, and when they use one of our companies, they expect our firms to serve them honestly, efficiently and quickly. Our members are committed to fulfill that expectation completely.

NAPVS members' clients include thousands of individuals, corporations, universities, medical institutions, non-governmental non-profit organizations, financial and accounting firms, non-profit institutions, travel agencies, tour operators, cruise lines, online booking agencies, and agencies of local, state and federal government.

The following Code of Conduct is the promise that each NAPVS member company makes to every client it serves. Each NAPVS member has agreed in writing to comply with this Code of Conduct.

Any person who has questions regarding the business practices of any our members should contact our Executive Director, Rob Smith, at (301) 650-2321 or via email at rsmith@napvs.org.

Code of Conduct

1. To obtain passports and visas, each member is required to obtain personal information such as date and place of birth, social security number, credit card information, email and physical addresses and other personal information. Members make every reasonable effort to protect their client's privacy and their documents while in their possession.

Members never use this information for any purpose other than fulfillment of their services.

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2. Each member deals with the Passport Services, an agency of the United States Department of State charged with issuing passports to citizens. Passport security is important to the security of the United States and NAPVS members make every reasonable effort to protect the integrity of the passport issuance process. We comply fully with all laws, regulations and rules of Passport Services and its regional passport agencies.
3. Each member deals with the embassies and consulates of foreign governments in the United States in order to secure visas for our clients. Each country has its own rules, application forms and consular fees for the issuance of visas to enter its borders. Each member makes every reasonable effort to ensure that its visa information is current and correct. Members comply faithfully with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.
4. In marketing and promoting their services, NAPVS member firms are careful never to misrepresent themselves in any way and do not advertise they are a part of, or related to Passport Services or a foreign embassy or government.
 - a. NAPVS members do not advertise or promote themselves as being recommended by any agency of the Federal Government or foreign embassy or consulate in the U.S.
 - b. Members do not promote or advertise ourselves as “official” in such a manner to suggest in any way that they are representatives of the U.S. State Department or Passport Services.
 - c. Members do not use the words “passport agency” or any other similar terms in describing or characterizing their companies in such a manner that might mislead a person to think we are an agency of any Federal, State, or local government.
 - d. Members do not use the word “guarantee” or “guaranteed” in such a manner to suggest that they can guarantee issuance, because members do not issue or control the issuance of passports or visas and therefore cannot guarantee these documents will, in fact, be issued.
 - e. NAPVS members do not use third party recommendations when the third party is controlled by the firm being recommended, unless the third party’s website makes prominently clear that the third party is controlled by the firm being recommended.
 - f. Members do not claim to have offices where they don’t.
 - g. Members do not create URL addresses for their companies that are misleading as to the identity of the company.
5. Passport Services selects and registers firms to be awarded the privilege of submitting passport applications to Passport Services, and NAPVS has no role in that process. NAPVS has no authority to require passport and visa service firms who have not joined NAPVS to operate by the association’s Code of Conduct; however, NAPVS reserves the right at its sole discretion to withdraw the offer of membership to any firm which does not comply with the associations’ Code of

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Conduct. All members of NAPVS have agreed in writing to abide by this Code of Conduct.

6. NAPVS members understand that a breach in passport security could result in unauthorized persons entering the United States. NAPVS members handle hundreds of thousands of passport applications for clients that require member firms to perform an essential role in safeguarding the integrity of the passport issuance process. In addition to doing everything in their power to protect passport security, each member is also vigilant to use appropriate subjective measures to help detect fraudulent passport applicants and report this to the appropriate authorities at Passport Services.
7. Passport and visa applicants who use the services of our firms often do so because they must leave the country in the near future. Members make every reasonable effort to have passports and visas returned to the client within the stated time period. Members also keep the client informed on the status of the passport or visa application. When there are problems with the application, members make every effort to notify the client immediately. Members provide contact information so applicants can reach us easily. If a member inadvertently receives work intended for a different member firm, the member contacts that firm to resolve the issue in a timely manner.
8. The passport and visa representatives of our members who appear in public passport agencies and embassies and consulates make every reasonable effort to conduct themselves professionally in these agencies and to carefully follow all rules of each of the agencies. Regional public passport agencies are busy places where thousands of citizens appear to obtain a passport. Allowing our members to submit passports at these offices in behalf of citizens is a privilege. Members are especially careful to take the minimum required time of Passport Services' employees and to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Members do not advertise, promote or solicit business while in or around the public passport agencies in accordance to Passport Services guidelines. Member employees who call on regional passport agencies and embassies and consulates carry proper photo identification.
9. NAPVS members work with Passport Services and they respect this agency that issues over 12 million passports annually. When there are problems with the issuance of a passport or a mistake is made by Passport Services, our members report the objective facts to the applicant without in any way disparaging Passport Services.
10. Passport and visa applicants who use the services of member firms rely on members' Internet websites for accurate information. Members make every reasonable effort to ensure the content of their websites is current and accurate. If fees are specified on a member's website, no additional fees should be charged without clear and prominent disclosure.

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11. Members make every effort to report the correct consular fees and rules and procedures for each country's visa granting process, but sometimes countries do not give advance notice of changes and thus members do not learn of it until they submit an application. Members will notify clients as soon as they learn of such changes and make reasonable efforts to notify clients as soon as they learn of such changes and make every effort to have the client's application submitted at the earliest possible date.
12. Passport Services and embassies and consulates publish various compliance rules for the issuance of passports and visas. Members will instruct their clients to comply with all rules of passport and visa issuing authorities, and members will not take any actions that would encourage an applicant to disregard any rules. Members do not instruct or suggest to applicants ways and means of avoiding or circumventing compliance with these rules.
13. Members will not complete or change any forms or applications without the client's express instructions to do so, and members will not write an applicant's signature on any document.
14. NAPVS members treat all their employees, clients and other persons with whom their firms must interact in the conduct of their businesses in full compliance with all federal, state and local laws regarding employee/employer relations and employee/client relations.
15. As required by Passport Services, each member company will ascertain that each of its employees do not have a felony or serious misdemeanor relating to public trust. Accordingly, each member company will conduct an independent background check on all employees and any contractor that handles client travel documents using a 3rd party screening firm selected by NAPVS for its members. This background check will be conducted annually and NAPVS members will provide written verification to the NAPVS office that such screening has been conducted.
16. Our members comply with all local, state and national laws and regulations in operating our business.

NAPVS members require all of its employees who handle passports and visas to be thoroughly familiar with this Code of Conduct. This includes requiring all new employees to read and familiarize themselves with this code of conduct.

Review of Alleged Code Violations

Alleged violations of this Code by NAPVS members must be submitted in writing to the Executive Director of NAPVS. The Executive Director will review any such allegation based on available information, and at the Executive Director's discretion determine whether there is sufficient basis for referring the allegation to the Board of Directors for its review and appropriate action. Any member accused of violating the NAPVS Code of Conduct will be informed of the allegation and given the opportunity to explain its business practices and, if appropriate, voluntarily modify its business practices to comply with the Code.