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USCIS Faces Challenges Meeting Statutory Timelines and Reducing Its Backlog of Affirmative Asylum Claims

Date Issued	Wednesday, July 3, 2024
Submitting OIG	Department of Homeland Security OIG
Other Participating OIGs	Department of Homeland Security OIG
Agencies Reviewed/Investigated	Department of Homeland Security
Components	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
Report Number	OIG-24-36
Report Description	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) did not adjudicate affirmative asylum applications in a timely manner to meet statutory timelines and to reduce its existing backlog. At the end of fiscal year 2023, USCIS had more than 1 million asylum cases pending determination. Of those, USCIS had more than 786,000 affirmative asylum cases pending determination for a period longer than 180 days from the date of filing. This occurred because USCIS did not have sufficient funding, staffing, and planning to complete its affirmative asylum caseload. USCIS received limited appropriated funding and primarily relied on application fees. However, in 2023, USCIS determined that its fee-funded revenue was not sufficient to support staffing needed to fully execute adjudication and naturalization services. This shortage forced USCIS to prioritize certain types of work over resolving its backlog of affirmative asylum cases and also resulted in USCIS setting performance goals at levels too low to timely adjudicate new claims within the statutory limits and address the existing affirmative asylum backlog.
Report Type	Audit
Agency Wide	Yes



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United States

Number of Recommendations 2

Questioned Costs \$0

Funds for Better Use \$0

Open Recommendations

This report has 2 open recommendations.

Recommendation	Significant Recommendation	Recommended Questioned Costs	Funds for Better Use	Details
1	No	\$0	\$0	We recommend the Director of USCIS develop and implement a multi-year operational plan that will enable USCIS to adjudicate new affirmative asylum claims consistent with the law and reduce the backlog. The plan should include clear priorities and goals, appropriate staffing levels, an analysis of funding, and how that funding will be generated.
2	No	\$0	\$0	We recommend the Director of USCIS prepare and submit annual budget requests consistent with the established multi-year operation plan as outlined in Recommendation 1.

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