

## **BOTELHO IMMIGRATION COURSES**

*The Marriage Green Card System*

# **THE FOUR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

*A preparation worksheet for marriage-based green card interviews  
in light of USCIS Policy Memorandum PM-602-0199*

**2026 Update**

Created by Attorney Joseph Botelho  
Botelho Immigration Courses | Botelho Financial Group LLC  
[www.immigration-courses.com](http://www.immigration-courses.com)

## How to Use This Worksheet

USCIS Policy Memorandum PM-602-0199 (issued May 21, 2026) directs officers to evaluate every discretionary adjustment of status application under a totality-of-the-circumstances analysis, weighing the positive and negative factors in your case. The memo itself does not prescribe any interview questions. But because the memo puts the discretionary issues front and center, we anticipate that officers will probe those issues at the interview — and the four questions in this worksheet flow directly from the memo’s reasoning. Whether your officer asks these exact questions, variations of them, or something else, preparing clear, structured, truthful answers to each will prepare you well for the discretionary questioning the memo invites.

This worksheet provides, for each of the four questions: the question itself; an explanation of why we expect USCIS to ask it; the framework for a strong answer; examples of what works and what does not; a template answer structure; and dedicated space for you to draft, edit, and rehearse your own answer.

### **Why these questions matter under the new memo**

Under PM-602-0199, USCIS officers must weigh all positive and negative factors and decide whether granting permanent residence is in the best interests of the United States. The four questions below are, in effect, the spoken version of that analysis. Your answers help the officer see the positive equities in your case and understand why adjustment from within the United States is appropriate, rather than the ordinary consular immigrant visa process abroad.

### **Recommended workflow**

1. Read through all four questions and the example frameworks before drafting any answers. You need to understand the full picture before working section by section.
2. Complete the companion Discretionary Equities Checklist and Discretionary Statement Template first. Your interview answers should align with your written statement.
3. Draft your answer to each question in the worksheet space provided. Write in full sentences, the way you would actually say it.
4. Read your draft answer out loud. Time it. Aim for 60 to 90 seconds for Questions 1 and 2; shorter answers for Questions 3 and 4 depending on your facts.
5. Rehearse with your spouse. Take turns. Your spouse should be ready for parallel questions about your relationship and your family circumstances.
6. The day before the interview, review the worksheet one final time. Bring it to the waiting room — not into the interview itself.

**Important: be truthful.**

Every answer in this worksheet must be truthful. Do not exaggerate. Do not minimize. Do not invent. The penalty for lying to a USCIS officer can include denial of your application, a permanent finding of misrepresentation under INA §212(a)(6)(C), and potentially criminal charges. The strategy is not to invent good answers — it is to organize true answers in a way that presents your case effectively.

**Important: this is educational material, not legal advice.**

This material provides general legal education for students of The Marriage Green Card System course. It does not create an attorney-client relationship with Botelho Law Group PLLC or any other attorney. USCIS policy, regulations, and adjudication practices change over time — verify current requirements before filing. For advice specific to your situation, schedule a free consultation with Botelho Law Group at 508-500-1551 or [us-immigration-lawfirm.com/free-consultation/](https://us-immigration-lawfirm.com/free-consultation/). Botelho Immigration Courses is offered by Botelho Financial Group LLC and is a separate entity from Botelho Law Group PLLC.

## QUESTION 1 — "Why are you adjusting status in the United States instead of consular processing abroad?"

### Why we expect USCIS to ask this

This is the foundational discretionary question. USCIS wants to hear, in your own words, why you are asking the agency to exercise its discretion to grant permanent residence from inside the United States — instead of following the consular immigrant visa process the memo describes as the ordinary path. Your answer is the spoken version of your sworn Discretionary Statement.

### Framework for a strong answer

A strong answer runs 60 to 90 seconds, in three parts: (1) state the primary reason — usually your genuine family ties and the human circumstances of your case; (2) give the specific, documented detail — concrete facts about who is affected and how; (3) point the officer to your Discretionary Statement as the full written explanation.

### Template answer structure

*"Officer, I am applying for adjustment of status here because [PRIMARY REASON — usually your family ties and the human circumstances of your case]. Specifically, [SPECIFIC, DOCUMENTED DETAIL — medical, caregiving, financial, or other concrete circumstance]. The time required for consular processing — currently [WAIT TIME] at [RELEVANT CONSULATE] — would mean [SPECIFIC CONSEQUENCE for your U.S. family]. I have addressed this fully in my sworn Discretionary Statement at Exhibit [X] of my package, which I respectfully ask you to consider."*

#### ✓ Example of what works

"Officer, I am applying for adjustment of status here because my U.S. citizen wife is the primary caregiver for our three-year-old daughter, who has Type 1 diabetes diagnosed last year. I assist with overnight glucose monitoring three to four nights per week. If I had to leave the United States for the eighteen-month wait time at our consulate, my wife would be the sole caregiver during the most medically critical phase of our daughter's treatment. I have addressed this with letters from our daughter's endocrinologist at Exhibit M and a detailed account in my sworn Discretionary Statement at Exhibit Z, which I respectfully ask you to consider."

#### ✗ Example of what does NOT work

"Officer, I want to stay here because I have been here for a long time and I do not want to leave. My life is here. Consular processing would be hard for me." (Generic, focused only on the applicant's

own preference rather than the family ties and humane considerations the memo weighs, no specific documentation, no cross-reference.)

**DRAFT YOUR ANSWER BELOW**

*Write your answer in full sentences. Time yourself reading it out loud. Aim for 60 to 90 seconds.*


## QUESTION 2 — "What specific factors make adjustment from within the U.S. appropriate in your case?"

### Why we expect USCIS to ask this

Question 2 is the operational follow-up to Question 1. The officer wants you to identify two to four specific, documented factors that make adjustment from within the United States the appropriate course in your case. Generic statements will not satisfy the officer. Specific, documented facts will.

### Framework for a strong answer

List two to four specific factors. For each, name the factor briefly, then reference the supporting documentation in your application package by exhibit number. Do not try to list every conceivable factor — pick your strongest and present them clearly.

### Categories of factors that work well

- Documented medical condition of a U.S. citizen child or spouse requiring your ongoing involvement
- Primary caregiver role for an elderly or disabled U.S. citizen relative
- Current State Department processing backlogs at the relevant consulate
- The 75-country immigrant visa suspension list (if your country is on it)
- Documented country conditions concerns falling short of asylum but bearing on the humane considerations
- Pending U.S. legal or family obligation requiring your availability

#### ✓ Example of what works

"Officer, there are three specific factors. First, my U.S. citizen mother is in late-stage Alzheimer's disease and I am her primary in-home caregiver — letters from her neurologist and care coordinator are at Exhibit J. Second, the current wait time at the U.S. Embassy in [country] is twenty-two months for immigrant visa interviews per the State Department website printed at Exhibit K. Third, [country] is on the State Department's current immigrant visa suspension list, which would extend that wait indefinitely. Together, these factors make adjustment from within the United States the appropriate course in my case."

#### ✗ Example of what does NOT work — and why it is self-defeating

"Officer, I would face the three-year or ten-year unlawful presence bar if I had to leave. That is why I cannot consular process." This argument asks USCIS to reward your overstay — the very failure-to-

depart the memo identifies as a major negative factor. It is self-defeating. The sound approach is to point to the genuine family ties and humane considerations that make adjustment appropriate, and to address any unlawful-presence problem through the I-601A provisional waiver process — NOT to frame your overstay as a reason you should be excused from the consular route.

**DRAFT YOUR ANSWER BELOW**

*List two to four specific factors with supporting documentation references.*


## QUESTION 3 — "Do you have family in your home country?"

### **This is the trickiest of the four questions.**

Most applicants handle this question badly. It is a trap because if you simply say yes, the officer can frame it as: "So you have family support there, you would not be alone, you should consular process." A bare yes hands the officer a ready-made argument against your case. But if you say no when family actually is there, you have a credibility problem — USCIS may have access to your family ties through prior visa applications and other sources.

### **Why we expect USCIS to ask this**

The officer is testing whether you have a viable support structure in your country of origin. If you do, the officer may use that fact to argue that returning there temporarily is not an unreasonable burden. Your answer must defuse that argument while remaining completely truthful.

### **Framework for a strong answer**

Answer truthfully (yes or no) and then immediately contextualize. Do not wait for a follow-up question — add the context in the same breath. The goal is to give the officer the complete picture in one answer rather than leaving them to fill in assumptions.

### **Template answer structure — if YES, family in home country**

*"Yes, Officer. My [RELATIONSHIP — mother / sister / etc.] live in [COUNTRY]. However, [CONTEXTUALIZE — they are themselves dependent on family support, they have their own dependents, they are not in a position to support me, I am one of the people supporting them from here, etc.]. Returning to [COUNTRY] would not place me with a support network. It would [STATE WHAT IT WOULD DO INSTEAD — separate me from the family I am responsible for here, separate me from my U.S. citizen spouse and children, etc.]."*

### **Template answer structure — if NO, no immediate family in home country**

*"No, Officer. My immediate family is here. I have no first-degree relatives remaining in [COUNTRY]. My closest ties are here in the United States with my U.S. citizen [spouse / children / parents]."*

### **✓ Example of what works**

"Yes, Officer. My mother and one younger sister live in [country]. My mother is seventy-four years old and has heart disease that limits her mobility. My sister is a single mother of two young children with limited income. They are not in a position to support me — if anything, I send them monthly support from here. Returning to [country] would not place me with a support network. It would

separate me from the family I am responsible for in the United States, which is my U.S. citizen wife and our two U.S. citizen children."

**X Example of what does NOT work**

"Yes." (A single-word answer hands the officer the argument against you. The officer may follow up with: "So you have support there. Why are we not having you consular process?")

**DRAFT YOUR ANSWER BELOW**

*Truthful direct answer plus immediate contextualization, in the same breath.*


## QUESTION 4 — "Why did you not return to your home country when your authorized stay ended?"

### **This question applies most directly to overstays and parolees.**

If you have a clean status history with no overstay, this question may not be asked, or it may be asked in a softer form like "why are you applying through adjustment of status?" If your status history is clean, prepare a short version of this answer that references your continuous lawful status. If you have any overstay or parole-related fact in your history, this question requires careful preparation.

### **Why we expect USCIS to ask this**

The memo identifies failure to depart as expected as a highly relevant negative factor — particularly when the failure is connected to an intention to live permanently in the United States that could have been pursued through the immigrant visa process. The officer is giving you the opportunity to address that factor directly. How you handle this question can mitigate the weight of an overstay — or, handled badly, amplify it.

### **Framework for a strong answer**

Use specific dates. State the original reason for entry. Honestly acknowledge the overstay or status lapse. State the truthful reason you did not depart — typically the relationship with your U.S. citizen spouse or the establishment of family life here. Acknowledge your compliance since. Point the officer to the Discretionary Statement for the full picture. Do not minimize. Do not over-explain. Three to five sentences.

### **Template answer structure**

*"Officer, I entered the United States on [VISA TYPE] on [DATE OF ENTRY] for the purpose of [ORIGINAL PURPOSE]. During my time here I [HOW YOU MET YOUR SPOUSE / HOW YOUR PLANS CHANGED]. We were married on [DATE OF MARRIAGE]. I acknowledge that I [OVERSTAYED / FELL OUT OF STATUS] beginning on [DATE], and I take responsibility for that decision. I did not depart because [TRUTHFUL REASON — typically the marriage, U.S. citizen children, family circumstances]. Since [DATE], I have [COMPLIED WITH TAX LAW, FILED MY TAXES EVERY YEAR, ETC.]. I respectfully ask USCIS to consider the full picture as described in my Discretionary Statement at Exhibit [X]."*

### **✓ Example of what works**

"Officer, I entered the United States on a B-2 tourist visa on March 15, 2022, to visit my brother in Texas. During that visit I met my now-wife. We began a serious relationship. We were engaged in

December 2022 and married on April 2, 2023. I acknowledge that I overstayed my B-2 admission beginning on September 15, 2022, and I take responsibility for that. I did not depart because I had begun building a life with the person I subsequently married. Since our marriage I have filed federal and state taxes every year and complied with all other requirements of U.S. law. I respectfully ask USCIS to consider the full picture as described in my Discretionary Statement at Exhibit Z."

**X Example of what does NOT work**

"I did not return because I love my wife." (Too brief. No specific dates. No acknowledgment of the overstay. No reference to compliance since. Reads as evasive.)

**X Example of what is dangerous**

"I did not realize I had overstayed." (USCIS will not believe this. Every nonimmigrant admission comes with a clear I-94 date. Attempting to plead ignorance of an obvious fact destroys credibility on every other answer you give.)

**DRAFT YOUR ANSWER BELOW**

*Specific dates. Truthful timeline. Acknowledge the overstay. Reference compliance since. Three to five sentences.*


## Spouse Preparation Notes

In a marriage-based interview, your spouse will be asked his or her own parallel questions. The officer is looking for consistency between your answers. Rehearse together using the prompts below.

### Parallel questions for the U.S. citizen / LPR spouse

- How did you meet your spouse?
- When did you decide to get married?
- What is your spouse's daily routine? Work schedule?
- What are your spouse's parents' names? Where do they live?
- What would happen to you and your family if your spouse had to leave the United States for consular processing?
- What does your spouse contribute to your household — financially, in caregiving, otherwise?
- Do you know your spouse's prior immigration history? Be ready to give consistent dates and circumstances.

### Practical rehearsal tips

Sit across from each other at a table. One spouse plays the officer, asks the questions, and listens for inconsistencies. Switch roles. Do this two or three times across separate evenings before the interview. If you notice inconsistencies between your answers about basic facts — dates, names, daily routines — fix them now, before the interview.

If you have any concern about how your spouse will handle a particular question, identify it now and discuss it openly. Surprises at the interview are far worse than uncomfortable conversations at the kitchen table.

## Day-of-Interview Reminders

### What to bring

- Government-issued photo identification (passport, driver's license)
- Original or certified copies of every document you previously submitted
- An organized binder of your evidence package with tabbed exhibits
- Updated photographs and recent joint documents (taxes, bills, account statements)
- Your interview appointment notice
- Your spouse — interviews are typically conducted with both parties present at least initially

### What NOT to bring

- This worksheet (review it in the waiting room or in the car, but do not bring it into the interview)
- Notes you plan to read from during the interview
- Anyone other than your spouse and your attorney (if represented)
- Cell phone notifications (silence your phone before entering)

### Demeanor in the interview

Be polite. Make eye contact with the officer. Speak clearly. If you do not understand a question, ask the officer to repeat or clarify it. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so honestly — do not guess. Do not interrupt your spouse. Do not coach your spouse during the interview.

### If the officer asks something not covered in this worksheet

Stay calm. Apply the same framework: answer truthfully, be specific, reference supporting documentation in your package where applicable, and frame your answer in terms of the totality of the circumstances. If a question genuinely surprises you or makes you uncomfortable, take a breath before answering. A brief pause is better than a hasty wrong answer.

## After the Interview

Most marriage interviews end with one of three outcomes: immediate approval, a request for additional evidence, or a continuance for further review. Be prepared for any of them.

### If the case is approved at the interview

Congratulations. The officer may stamp your passport with an I-551 temporary stamp evidencing your lawful permanent residence pending production of the physical green card. The card typically arrives by mail within several weeks. Keep all paperwork. Apply for your Social Security card if you do not already have one.

### If you receive a Request for Evidence

The standard RFE deadline is 87 days from the date of issue. Review Module 7, Lesson 7.3 of the course for the RFE response framework. If the RFE asks about discretionary factors, treat it as an opportunity to file a supplemental Discretionary Statement using the same template structure. Use the full 87-day window. A thorough response is far more valuable than a fast one.

### If you receive a Notice of Intent to Deny

A NOID means the officer is leaning toward denial and is giving you a last chance to change their mind. NOID windows are often shorter — typically 30 days. This is the moment to call Botelho Law Group for a free consultation at 508-500-1551. Your Confidence Credit Guarantee covers exactly this scenario.

### If you receive a discretionary denial

Remember that the memo requires USCIS, when it denies a case as a matter of discretion, to set out in writing the positive and negative factors it weighed and why the negatives prevailed. That written analysis tells you exactly what the officer found lacking — the starting point for a motion to reopen or reconsider, or other appropriate relief. Consult an attorney promptly; your Confidence Credit Guarantee covers this scenario.

### If the case is continued for further review

The officer may continue the case for security checks, background investigation, or supervisor review. This does not mean denial. It means the decision is not yet final. Continue to maintain status if you have underlying status. Do not travel without consulting counsel. Monitor your case status weekly through your myUSCIS account.

## When to Escalate to Representation

The Marriage Green Card System course and the companion handouts are designed for applicants whose cases are straightforward enough for DIY preparation. If your case includes any of the following, consider transitioning to attorney representation using your Confidence Credit Guarantee:

- Overstay longer than 180 days
- Any unauthorized employment history
- Prior visa denial or border issue
- Any criminal history, including arrests without convictions
- Any prior immigration violation, including any past misrepresentation
- Existing I-485 that has received an RFE on discretionary factors
- Existing I-485 that has been denied
- Notice of Intent to Deny received

### **Free Consultation with Botelho Law Group PLLC**

Call: 508-500-1551

Schedule online: [us-immigration-lawfirm.com/free-consultation/](https://us-immigration-lawfirm.com/free-consultation/)

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