



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Interoffice Memorandum

To: Regional Directors
Service Center Directors
District Directors (except foreign)
Officers in Charge (except foreign)
National Benefit Center Director

From: Michael L. Aytes 
Associate Director, Domestic Operations

Date: DEC 21 2006

Re: FBI Name Checks Policy and Process Clarification for Domestic Operations

Background

Over the past few years, definitive FBI name checks (hereafter referred to as name checks) have been mandated on several form types as part of the effort to ensure that immigration benefits are provided only to those individuals who are eligible. Name checks search FBI administrative and investigative files based on the name and date of birth of the applicant. These checks have proven to be an effective tool in the identification of potential threats to our national security and in providing other relevant information that may affect the eligibility of an applicant for a benefit. This memorandum explains existing policy for domestic operations regarding name checks in order to provide all employees with a thorough understanding of this specific type of background check and of how the results affect the adjudication of applications for immigration benefits. In addition, several policy changes, which are explained in more detail later in this memorandum, are being instituted in the following areas:

1. Missing or Incorrect Date of Birth (DOB) – A new name check is required for year of birth changes or discrepancies.
2. Validity Period – A name check response can be used for multiple applications if the response is not more than 15 months old.
3. Duplicate Requests – Only one definitive response is necessary per application or within the 15-month validity period.

4. *Expedited Name Checks* – Mandamus filings will no longer be routinely expedited. The loss of Social Security benefits or other subsistence, however, continue to be a basis for routine expeditious processing.

This memorandum shall not apply to adjudications of I-589 and I-881 applications by the Asylum Division, which shall continue to be governed by the relevant sections of the Identity and Security Checks Procedures Manual. This memorandum also does not apply to adjudications of I-601 waiver applications filed overseas in conjunction with immigrant visa processing, which are subject to CLASS checks, and in some cases SAO clearances.

General Name Check Process

A definitive name check is required for the following form types: I-485, I-589, I-601, I-687, I-698, and N-400. Name checks for Form I-192, Application for Advance Permission to Enter as Nonimmigrant, are still required and will be performed if the form is filed with USCIS. A case may be denied, dismissed, administratively closed, withdrawn, or referred to immigration court prior to obtaining the final results of a name check, but offices may only exercise this option if they implement a post-audit system to monitor for the completion of the name check¹. A completed name check or an initiated check is required prior to the issuance of a Notice to Appear². A name check is not required for a Native American who is being accorded permanent resident status under section 289 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Most name checks are initiated through data entry of case information into the corresponding processing system. CLAIMS 3 / CLAIMS Mainframe initiate name checks for I-485s and CLAIMS 4 initiates name checks for N-400s. Name checks for I-687s and I-698s must be initiated using a manual spreadsheet process discussed below and in attachment B. An I-601 name check will generally be completed by the associated I-485 name check. However, if an I-601 is filed independently of an adjustment application, then that name check must be initiated using the manual spreadsheet process discussed later in this memo³. The manual spreadsheet process may also be used to initiate name checks that were not otherwise initiated by automated systems. However, there are additional areas of the name check process that require further guidance as follows:

Name Variations:

Name checks are conducted using an applicant's name and date of birth, as listed on the application. Alias submissions and spelling variations do not require a separate check. Names are searched in a multitude of combinations, switching the order of the first, middle, and last names, as well as combinations of just the first and last names, first and middle names, etc (this is referred to as an 'around the clock' search). Through this process, the FBI automatically repositions the names submitted and the check will match against the primary name on record as well as any aliases.

For example, if the name submitted were Jose Garcia Rodriguez, the following names would be checked automatically:

¹ Refer to memorandum titled Closing of Cases with Pending Law Enforcement Checks, dated April 5, 2004.

² Refer to memorandum titled Security Check Requirements Preceding Notice to Appear Issuance, dated March 2, 2004

³ Except for I-601s filed overseas in conjunction with immigrant visa applications.

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The name check automatically includes a phonetic search and retrieves records with similar spelling variations (e.g. Rodriguez = Rodrigues). Due to these search methodologies, name checks shall not be resubmitted because of misspellings or use of alias names.

Missing or Incorrect Date of Birth (DOB):

The name check also includes an automatic variation on the DOB that is submitted. The DOB is an important primary value used by the FBI in the name check process. The check includes a search on the exact full date of birth as well as an expanded search on the year of birth. This methodology accounts for the different ways that a date of birth can be written (e.g. the day and the month may be written in different positions). Discrepancies within the day and month of birth do not warrant resubmission of a name check and a new name check should only be initiated if the year of birth is incorrect. If a new name check is required, the manual spreadsheet process must be used.

Missing or Incorrect Place of Birth (POB):

The POB is not used as a value in the initial stages of the name check process. The POB is used as an optional indicator or matching value in the later part of the name check process for only those cases that are returned with an initial response of "pending." See Attachment A for more information.

Missing or Incorrect A-Number:

Name checks are conducted using biographical information relating to the applicant. The Alien Registration Number (A-number) is not used as a variable in the FBI's process. Therefore, name checks performed with an inaccurate or missing A-number are valid and should not be resubmitted for a new check.

In instances where the FBIQUERY system reflects an inaccurate A-number, the system may be corrected by providing the following information to your respective regional office or service center point of contact:

Applicant Name
Correct A-number
Incorrect A-number
Synopsis of reason(s) for requesting an A-number correction

Regional offices and service centers should submit A-number correction requests via E-mail to the designated POC at Headquarters' Office of Field Operations, presently Pam Wallace.

Age Limits:

Names checks are required for applicants age 14 years and older **at the time of adjudication** for all of the above-listed form types⁴ **except** Form I-485, which has an upper age limit. CLAIMS 4 processes name check requests for applicants age 14 years and over (no upper age limit) while CLAIMS 3 submits name check requests for applicants between the ages of 14 and 80 years. The upper age limit of 80 years can be misleading in that a name check is conducted only if the applicant's 80th birthday falls on the same day that the USCIS name check utility is performed. If an applicant is 80 years and a day, a name check will not be performed. Until a CLAIMS 3 system modification to remove the upper age limit can be performed, the upper age limit of 80 years will remain in effect. For the purpose of the name check, the upper age limit of 80 years is defined as the date the applicant turns 80 years old. Further, if an applicant is less than 14 years of age at the time of filing but turns 14 years old while the application is pending, then a name check is required. If a new name check is required, the manual spreadsheet process must be used.

Validity Period:

A definitive (No Record "NR" or Positive Response "PR") name check response is valid indefinitely for the application for which it was conducted. If a definitive name check response is used to support other applications, the name check response is only valid for 15 months from the FBI process date. For example, an I-485 is filed on June 1, 2004 and a definitive name check response is processed for that application on December 1, 2004. The I-485 is denied on February 15, 2005, and another I-485 is filed for the same applicant on May 15, 2005. The December 1, 2004, FBI response may be used for the I-485 filed on February 15, 2005, even if another name check has been initiated. However, final adjudication or naturalization must occur within the 15-month validity period or a new name check will be required. Additional information, including a set of frequently asked questions, is included in this memorandum as Attachment A.

Duplicate Requests:

In many instances, duplicate name checks are initiated for a single application. The causes for multiple name check requests are primarily systems issues or resubmission requests made by local offices in an effort to facilitate a name check that is already in a "pending" status. Duplicate requests for the purpose of resolving "pending" name checks must not be initiated. Duplicate requests do not facilitate the resolution of "pending" name checks and only add to the backlog. In addition, duplicate requests for a single application result in multiple name check responses being

⁴Refer to Operating Instructions 105.10.

posted to the FBIQUERY system. Often, a final response will be received from the FBI and posted to FBIQUERY, but because duplicate requests were made there are additional “pending” responses in the system. **Only one** definitive response is necessary and adjudication may continue in those instances where a final FBI response has been processed, and is within the **15-month validity period**, even though additional “pending” responses remain unresolved for that application.

Manual Spreadsheet Process:

A manual spreadsheet is available to domestic offices to be used when a name check cannot be performed or was not initiated by one of the automated systems. The local offices send their spreadsheets to their respective regional offices on a weekly basis as needed. Regional offices and Service Centers forward the spreadsheets to designated points of contact in Headquarters’ Office of Field Operations to initiate the name checks with the FBI. The initial response should appear in FBIQUERY within forty-five (45) days from the date of submission by the local office. See Attachment B for manual spreadsheet instructions and a sample spreadsheet.

There are several situations that may necessitate the initiation of a check outside of the normal data entry process:

1. An applicant turns fourteen (14) years of age during the time his/her case is pending and, therefore, requires a name check to be completed.
2. “NO DATA” response cases: If the FBIQUERY system shows “NO DATA” for a case more than ninety (90) days after the date the information was entered into CLAIMS 3 / CLAIMS Mainframe or CLAIMS 4. If a name check request was submitted through the spreadsheet process and ninety (90) days have passed without a response posted in the database, the local office should contact their regional or service center point of contact in order to verify that the name was included on the weekly report submitted to HQ. If it is verified that the name check was included on the submission to HQ, the regional or service center point of contact should report the missing name check to the HQ point of contact. If the name check cannot be verified as having been forwarded to HQ, then the local office will need to resubmit the name check request on the spreadsheet to their regional or service center point of contact.
3. “ERROR” response cases: If FBIQUERY shows an “ERROR” response, the office with the case must resubmit the case data on the manual spreadsheet if the error has not been corrected in 30 days.
4. Prior to issuance of an NTA if an FBI name check has not been initiated.

Expedited Name Checks:

Cases with significant and compelling issues can have the name check expedited. Cases that are simply “old” or the subject of a congressional inquiry *do not* qualify for an expedited name check unless one or more of the expedite criteria are met. An expedite can be requested by an office

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whether the FBIQUERY system shows "NO DATA" or "PENDING." Requests must meet at least one of the following criteria for expeditious treatment:

1. Military Deployment
2. Age-out cases not covered under the provision of the Child Status Protection Act (CSPA) and applications affected by sunset provisions such as Diversity Visas (DVs).
3. Compelling reasons as provided by the requesting office (e.g. critical medical conditions)
4. Loss of Social Security benefits or other subsistence in the discretion of the District Director

NOTE: In the interest of fairness and in processing cases chronologically mandamus filings are no longer routinely treated expeditiously.

Expedite processing is done via fax to a designated headquarters point of contact. HQ will fax a response to the initiating office, which will serve as evidence that the name check was completed. The fax will be annotated with the final response from the FBI. There may be a delay of 3 weeks or more in updating the FBIQUERY system with the results of an expedited check. However, the faxed response is acceptable for adjudication purposes and should be placed with the case file. See Attachment C for additional information regarding expedited name checks. Expedite requests shall be faxed to the attention of Pam Wallace at (202)-272-1008.

Use of the FBIQUERY System:

The official repository for name check responses is the FBIQUERY system, located on the FBI Tracking Menu in National Systems. A user can access the name check database through the CLAIMS, RNACS, or RAPS sub-menu, or from the CIS system by pressing the 'CLEAR' button and typing 'FBIQUERY'.

Normally, a user should initiate a query in the name check database by using the alien registration number (A#) of the applicant; however, a search can also be initiated by using the name and date of birth. When querying the system by name, it is recommended to broaden the search by changing the "Name Search" value from "F or Full" to "P or Partial." The name check database will provide one of several different results in response to a query. All name check responses from the FBI with process dates on or after December 1, 2002 are valid responses. The system default is to display the most recent data. The table below is a synopsis of the specific codes that a user will see in the name check database:

FBIQUERY System Responses

<u>Code</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Action</u>
NR	No Record	Proceed with the adjudication of the application. A printout of the FBI response or the faxed expedited response must be included in the case file.

PR	Positive Response	An FBI report was sent to HQ FDNS and will be forwarded to the local office. HQ FDNS forwards the report to the office shown as the File Control Office (FCO) in CIS. Do not proceed with the adjudication until the FBI report has been reviewed by the adjudicator and a determination is made based on the content of the report.
IP H I	Pending	The FBI has not completed the background check. Except for N-400 applications ⁵ , an interview can be conducted, but an approval cannot be rendered until a definitive response (either NR or PR) has been received from the FBI. A case may be denied or withdrawn if the office implements a post-audit system.
E	Error	The name check request could not be processed due to formatting or code error. Do not proceed with the adjudication until a definitive response has been received from the FBI. If the error has not been corrected in 30 days, the office should submit a manual name check using the manual spreadsheet process.
D/DD	Duplicate	The FBI previously processed the name check. The original response should be displayed in the name check response database either under the same A# or under the same name/DOB. If no original response can be found, the 'Duplicate' response can be used in its place. In the 'Duplicate' response, the final response information will show the date and the response on the right side of the 'FBI RESPONSE INFORMATION' section. 'FN' means final response and it will be followed by the date and a code for a No Record response (NR) or a code for a PENDING response (H or I).
RC	Request Cancelled	The name check request has been cancelled.
UN	Unknown Response	This is actually a POSITIVE response and follows

⁵ Refer to memoranda regarding N-400 interview without completed FBI name checks, titled Background Checks and Naturalization Interview Scheduling, dated April 25, 2006, and Background Checks and Naturalization Interview Scheduling Follow-Up Memo, dated May 22, 2006.

the action of "PR" above. The UN code appears because a new code was added by the FBI that is not included in the USCIS conversion tables. Therefore the system defaults to UN or Unknown. The HQ FBIQUERY system technical team has been tasked to correct the response information in the system.

No Data Found No Data Found

The query provided no information that a name check has been initiated. If you checked by A#, you should also search by the name/DOB. Change the "F" to a "P" in the NAME SEARCH field in the lower part of the FBI Query screen when querying by name/DOB. If, after 90 days from the data entry date of the case, or if 90 days after the name data was provided on a manual spreadsheet, the database still shows 'no data', then the case information should be submitted (or resubmitted) using the manual spreadsheet process.

The response codes listed above are not necessarily the actual response codes returned by the FBI. The FBI uses many different response codes but for purposes of consistency and simplicity, USCIS consolidates the original FBI responses into the codes noted above. On occasion, primarily with manual Name checks and duplicate responses, the internal FBI response code will appear in the FBIQUERY database. The following codes are considered NO RECORD responses: ND, NP, and NR. The codes DS, RP, OC, and RF, are considered POSITIVE RESPONSE results and offices must wait for a report from FDNS. Additional information regarding the processes supporting positive responses is explained later in this memorandum.

Positive Responses (PR):

In instances where the name check produces a positive response, a report detailing the information contained in the FBI record is returned to USCIS and, ultimately, the report is forwarded to the field office or service center shown as the A-file File Control Office (FCO) in the Central Index System (CIS). Prior to June 7, 2004, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Law Enforcement Support Center (LESC) forwarded FBI G-325 positive responses to the field offices and service centers, but on June 7, 2004, the HQ Office of Fraud Detection and National Security (HQ FDNS) assumed that responsibility⁶. All FBI reports are sent to HQ FDNS for preliminary review before being forwarded to field offices and service centers.

⁶ Refer to memorandum titled FDNS Processing of Positive FBI Responses to G-325 Name Checks, dated October 21, 2004

HQ FDNS will contact the third agencies identified by the FBI for the files referenced in the FBI's positive response record, unless the third agency is identified as a local agency in respect to the local USCIS office. Further, if FDNS determines the FBI report includes information relating to National Security, the case will be referred to the National Security Adjudication Unit.

If more than 90 days have elapsed after the posting of a "PR" result in the FBIQUERY system without a report being received, and the office is the FCO as shown in CIS, the office should contact HQ FDNS to inquire about the status of the PR record. Offices may contact Mr. Robert Kruszka at HQ FDNS via E-mail.

Hardcopy Responses:

Hardcopy responses are acceptable for documenting the name check results. In nearly all instances, hardcopy responses will be used for expedited checks, but hardcopy responses are not limited to expedited cases.

Points of Contact

Questions regarding this memorandum should be directed through appropriate supervisory and operational channels to the attention of Greg Collett, 202-272-1023, HQ Field Operations. Local offices should work through their regional offices.

ATTACHMENT A Frequently Asked Questions Regarding FBI Name Checks

What do I do if there is an NR and an IP/E update in the FBIQUERY system?

If multiple records appear for the same application, only one definitive response is necessary. Adjudication may continue in those instances where a final FBI response has been received even though additional “pending” responses remain unresolved for that name. Likewise, a definitive response may be used with another application if final adjudication occurs within 15 months of the FBI process date. Applications can continue to be denied, dismissed, administratively closed, withdrawn, or referred to immigration court because of reasons other than the name check, but only if the office implements a post-audit system to monitor for the completion of the name check⁷.

At the time of final adjudication, or at time of oath for naturalization applicants, the FBIQUERY system shall be checked again to determine if any “pending” responses have subsequently resulted in a “PR.” In instances where a “PR” is returned, adjudication shall cease and offices are to follow the guidance provided in the memo relating to positive responses.

If an applicant's primary name changes between the time of filing and the time of adjudication, does the new name need to have a name check conducted prior to an approval adjudication?

No. USCIS does not need to conduct a name check on the applicant's new name.

What do I do if the DOB in the system is wrong?

For name checks initiated by automated systems (CLAIMS 3, CLAIMS 4, RAPS) and for name checks submitted on the manual spreadsheet, the FBI searches the entire year of the submitted date of birth. For example, if a date of birth is March 1, 1980, the FBI will do a search for all dates in the year 1980. Therefore, if the year of the date of birth is incorrect, you should resubmit the name via the manual spreadsheet using the correct year of the date of birth. Stated another way, if only the month and/or the day of the date of birth are incorrect, a new name check is not required.

For expedited name checks that are faxed to HQ and manually checked at the FBI, the FBI will search the date of birth provided and also do a search by reversing the day and the month of the date provided. The FBI will not search the entire birth year for these expedited checks. For example, if an expedited name check has a date of birth of March 10, 1980, the FBI will also search using a date of birth of October 3, 1980.

If the date of birth does not meet the above guidelines and a new name check is needed with the corrected date of birth, you should resubmit the name using the correct date of birth on the

⁷ Refer to memorandum titled Closing of Cases with Pending Law Enforcement Checks, dated April 5, 2004

manual spreadsheet or, if for an expedited name check, via fax to the HQ point of contact for expedited name checks.

What do I do if the applicant's A-number is wrong in the FBIQUERY system?

The name search is based on the name and date of birth of the applicant. If a record can be located in the name check database using a name/DOB search, the record can be used. Name checks performed with an inaccurate or missing A-number are valid and should **not** be resubmitted for a new check. See page 3 and 4 of this memo for information on how to submit an A-number correction.

What do I do if the applicant's Place of Birth is incorrect/missing?

The place of birth does not need to be displayed in the response to make the response valid. The FBI does not consider the POB in the initial query so if the initial response from the FBI is No Record, the POB was not needed. If the incorrect POB was submitted and the initial response is PENDING, a new name check is required and the manual spreadsheet process must be used.

What do I do if the applicant's name is misspelled in FBIQUERY?

Misspelled names are not required to be re-run. The FBI uses an "around the clock" name search engine combined with a phonetics search logic that takes into account misspellings, name variations, and alias names. This means that all probable variations of a name are checked to include spelling and the order of names.

Does a name check expire?

A name check response is valid indefinitely for the application for which it was conducted. In addition, a definitive name check response may be used to support other applications but, when used for another application, the response is only valid for 15 months from the FBI response date.

How do I obtain third agency information?

Prior to June 7, 2004, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Law Enforcement Support Center (LESC) forwarded FBI G-325 responses to the field when the name check was updated as "PR." Since June 7, 2004, the HQ Office of Fraud Detection and National Security (HQ FDNS) assumed that responsibility⁸. For additional information, refer to the October 21, 2004 memorandum issued by Don Crocetti entitled FDNS Processing of Positive FBI Responses to G-325 Name Checks.

⁸ Refer to memorandum titled FDNS Processing of Positive FBI Responses to G-325 Name Checks, dated October 21, 2004

If more than 90 days have passed after the posting of a "PR" result without a report being received and the office is the FCO as shown in CIS, then the office should contact HQ FDNS to inquire about the status of the PR record. Offices may contact their regional or service center point of contact for assistance in requesting another copy of the PR report, if that is required.

A case has been listed as PENDING for several months; should I resubmit it?

No. Although some cases seem to take an inordinate amount of time to move from a PENDING response to a final response, submitting a second check will actually delay clearance. Check with your supervisor to determine if the case warrants expeditious processing.