

Process for Conducting a Judicial Inquiry

I. Purpose of the Judicial Inquiry - The purpose of the judicial inquiry is to determine whether respondent's competence is in issue and a more in-depth competency review is warranted.

II. Mandatory Advisals – The judicial inquiry should generally occur after explaining to the respondent the nature and purpose of the proceeding and providing the advisals required in 8 C.F.R. § 1240.10(a).

III. Suggested Advisal - The judicial inquiry should begin by explaining to the respondent the purpose and process for conducting the judicial inquiry. A sample advisal follows:

I am an Immigration Judge. My job is to decide whether you will be allowed to stay in the United States. I am going to hold a hearing to gather information from you and the representative of the Government to help me decide whether you will be allowed to stay in the United States.

It is important that you understand what is happening in court. It is important that you understand what is being said about you. It is also important that you are able to tell your side of the story.

To make sure that you are able to understand and tell your story, I am going to ask some questions about you and your case. I will use this information to decide whether you will need any special help in the hearing.

Can you explain to me what I just said in your own words?

Do you have any questions before we begin today?

IV. Suggested Questions

A. **Areas of Inquiry** - When conducting the judicial inquiry, the Immigration Judge must ask questions to assess respondent's:

1. understanding of the nature and object of the proceeding,
2. understanding of and ability to exercise core rights and privileges,
3. ability to respond to the allegations and charges,
4. ability to present information and respond to questions relevant to eligibility for relief, and
5. cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning.

B. **Suggested Questions** – The following list of questions is designed to shed light on the respondent's: 1) cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning; and 2) ability to represent him- or herself. This list is not exhaustive. The judge may ask other questions relevant to the respondent's mental health and ability to function as required in the hearing (*e.g.*, ability to communicate, subjective reality, memory, and interest in self). It is important for a judge to observe respondent's non-verbal as well as verbal responses to questions posed.

1. Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Functioning

- a. How are you today?
- b. What is your name?
- c. What is today's date (including year)?
- d. What state and country are we in today?
- e. How did you get to the United States?
- f. When did you come to the United States? About how long have you been in the United States?
- g. Do you want to stay in the United States?
- h. Where do you live?
- i. What is the highest level of school that you completed?
- j. Are you seeing a doctor or taking any medications?
 - 1) If yes, what condition or problems are you being treated for?
 - 2) If yes, what medications are you taking?
- k. Are you currently being treated for a mental health (psychological/psychiatric) or emotional problem?
 - 1) If yes, what is the problem for which you are being treated?
 - 2) If yes, how often do you see the doctor?
 - 3) If yes, what medications, if any, are you receiving for this problem?
- l. Have you been treated for a mental health (psychological/psychiatric) or emotional problem in the past?
 - 1) If yes, when and for what problem?

2. Ability to Respond to the Allegations and Charges

- a. Why were you arrested? (Why did the immigration officers pick you up?)
- b. Where were you arrested?
- c. When were you arrested? (What was the date and time of your arrest?)
- d. Can you explain to me the immigration charges against you? (Can you explain to me what the government says you did wrong?)
- e. Is there anything important that you think I should know about what they say you did wrong? (Do you agree with what the government is saying about you?)

- f. What does _____ (e.g., alien smuggling, controlled substance, conviction, firearm) mean?
- g. How do you plan to proceed in court? (What do you plan to do next?)
- h. What do you want me to know about you and/or why you are here?
- i. What do you hope happens in court?

3. Understanding and Ability to Exercise Rights and Privileges

- a. What are your rights in immigration proceedings?
- b. What is a legal representative? What does a legal representative do in court?
- c. How do you find an attorney or legal representative?
- d. Is there anyone who can help you with your case?
- e. What is “evidence”?
- f. Can you give me an example of “evidence” that may be offered in your proceeding?
- g. What is an “appeal”?
- h. Why and how would you file an appeal?

4. Ability to Present Information and Respond to Questions Relevant to Relief

- a. What does “relief from removal” mean?
- b. What forms of relief from removal may be available in these proceedings?
- c. How long have you been in the United States?
- d. Do you have any family in the United States?
- e. Have you or your family ever had papers or permission to be in the United States?
- f. Has someone hurt you or tried to hurt you in your country?
- g. Are you afraid to go back to your country? Why?
- h. What does _____ (e.g., asylum, cancellation of removal, withholding of removal) mean?
- i. I am going to show you a relief application. Please take a moment to review the application. Can you explain to me how you would fill the application out or bring it back to me completed?
- j. Who do you know who might be able to help you with your case?

5. Other appropriate questions

- a. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
- b. Are there any other questions you would like to ask?