

# INFORMATION ABOUT CONSULAR LEGALIZATIONS

(also known as: Authentications)



---

## WHAT IS A CONSULAR LEGALIZATION?

- An “consular legalization” or “authentication” is a stamp, certificate, or signature which verifies that a document is authentic and approved by the official party who is legalizing it.
- “Legalizing” your U.S. documents at a Consulate of Costa Rica will allow them to be recognized by Immigration Authorities in Costa Rica.

## HOW DO I GET A CONSULAR LEGALIZATION?

- **You must contact your Consulate to find out the cost and procedure involved.**
- Once you are clear on the steps to take, mail or bring them the documents needing legalizations with any required fees and a cover letter requesting that they legalize and return the document(s) to you.

## HOW DO I CONTACT MY CONSULATE?

- Use the enclosed list provided by AFS to find the Consulate with jurisdiction over the state where your documents have been issued/notarized/certified.
- Contact the Consulate in the correct jurisdiction via phone, fax, or email. They may also have information available online with an explanation of the steps to take.

## WHAT IS A STATE AUTHENTICATION?

- A State Authentication is a certificate issued by your Secretary of State’s Office.
- It is stapled to your document and certifies that the notary or clerk who certified your form is currently licensed in your state. The State Authentication is recognized as official by a number of countries, including Costa Rica.
- You can find out about State Authentications by calling your Secretary of State’s office or checking their website. A simple online search will usually lead you to their homepage.

## HOW DO I OBTAIN A STATE AUTHENTICATION?

- You may usually request a State Authentication via mail, by including a cover letter, the form to be authenticated, any required fee, and a pre-paid, return-addressed envelope. The turn-around time by this method can be 1 to 2 weeks, sometimes longer, depending on your particular state and their volume of work.
- You may also request a State Authentication in person, this usually offers a faster turn-around time (often within the day). This is usually done at the state capital, but some larger states have regional offices where you can obtain State Authentications.
- In order for your document(s) to receive a State Authentication, they must be notarized by a currently licensed Notary Public. Some states require a **County Clerk** to certify the notary before they will authenticate your document.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CONSULATE REQUIRES

### A STATE AUTHENTICATION IN ORDER TO LEGALIZE MY DOCUMENTS?

- In order for the Consulate to legalize your document, the document will usually need to have been **Notarized** (by a Notary Public) in your state.
- To find out if your Consulate will also require **additional certifications/stamps**, such as a **County Clerk Certification** or a **State Authentication** on your document before legalizing it, you will need to find out directly from the relevant Consulate what their document legalization procedures are.

*continued on next page →*

***TIPS FOR REQUESTING LEGALIZATIONS FOR YOUR DOCUMENTS:***

- **Consulates DO NOT ACCEPT PERSONAL CHECKS.** Find out from your Consulate what amount form of payment they require for the authentication. Usually you will need to pay by money order made out to the Consulate of Costa Rica. **They *may* also let you know that the legalization is free in the U.S. but that a fee per document (currently \$40) will be owed after arrival in Costa Rica.**
- If you request your legalization by mail, rather than in person, provide a pre-paid, return addressed envelope so that the package can be speedily mailed back to you.
- When you are sending important, authenticated documents through the mail, please always use a fast delivery service that provides you a **tracking number**, and make sure to save the tracking number for your records!