

The National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) is dedicated to ensuring human rights protections and access to justice for all immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

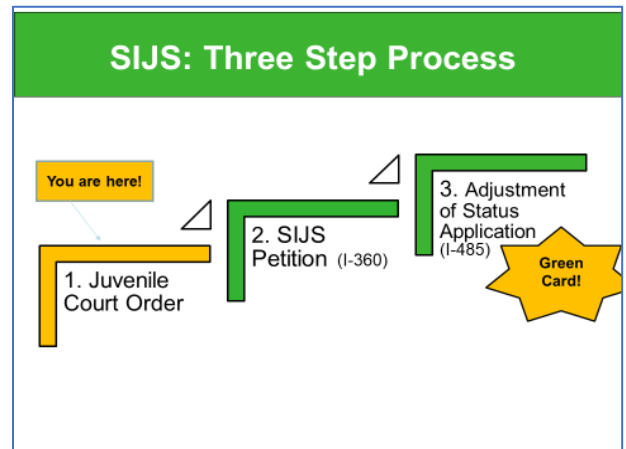
Based in Chicago and with five offices across the country, NIJC provides direct legal services to and advocates for all immigrants through policy reform, impact litigation, and public education. Since its founding more than three decades ago and thanks to the support of thousands of pro bono attorneys from the nation's leading law firms, NIJC has been unique in blending individual client advocacy with broad-based systemic change.

## Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) was created by Congress to enable undocumented immigrant children who have suffered abuse, neglect, and/or abandonment to acquire lawful permanent residence in the United States when returning to their home country would not be in their best interests. SIJS cases are a great opportunity for volunteer attorneys who are interested in ensuring safety for immigrant children.

SIJS is a three-step process:

- 1.) Obtain a predicate order in state court. A state “juvenile court” finds the child was abused, neglected, and/or abandoned and it is not in her best interest to return to her home country;
- 2.) Petition for SIJS status with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). With the state court finding, the child applies for SIJS before USCIS;
- 3.) Apply for permanent residency. Once granted SIJS status the child can petition for legal permanent residency.



For SIJS, a “juvenile court” is broadly defined as any court located in the United States with jurisdiction to make judicial determinations about the custody and care of juveniles. This can include child custody, guardianship, among others.

Obtaining a predicate order does not guarantee that a child’s petition for SIJS will be granted. SIJS only confers status to the child and does not extend benefits to any family members.

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## Our Pro Bono Partnership:

NIJC seeks pro bono attorneys to represent clients in state court to obtain the predicate order. In general, NIJC will complete the immigration steps of the process.

Pro bono attorneys are expected to:

- Work with clients in vulnerable situations
- Represent clients in state court
- Provide interpretation services, as necessary



## NIJC Provides:

- Trainings conducted by topic experts
- Policy and practice updates regarding any changes within the immigration system that may impact clients
- Detailed practice manuals, practice advisories, and samples
- Technical support through the life of the case

SIJS predicate order cases may be completed in as little as three to six months. This process must be complete before the child ages out of the juvenile court jurisdiction.

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## Project Contact Information:

For more information about the SIJS Predicate Order Pro Bono Program, please contact: Berenice Sanchez Ruiz at 773-672-6607 or [bsanchezruiz@heartlandalliance.org](mailto:bsanchezruiz@heartlandalliance.org)

We invite you to see all of NIJC's extensive pro bono resources available on our website at <https://immigrantjustice.org/for-attorneys>.

To connect with individuals and families who need legal representation, please see the [current case list](#) available on our web page.

For general information about NIJC Pro Bono Programs please contact Ellen Miller, Pro Bono Manager, at 312.660.1415 or [emiller@heartlandalliance.org](mailto:emiller@heartlandalliance.org).



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