

**Special Immigrant Juvenile Status
(SIJS)**

What is Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)?

SIJS is a legal protection for children who have been abused, abandoned or neglected by one or two of their parents.

How can SIJS help me?

SIJS allows you to apply for a green card (lawful permanent residency) and a work permit. With a green card:

- ✓ You can travel outside of the United States (always talk to a lawyer first!)
- ✓ You can receive some forms of public aid
- ✓ You can apply for citizenship after turning age 18 and after having your green card for 5 years.

NOTE: If granted SIJS, you *cannot* apply to help your parents receive immigration status in the future.

How do I qualify for SIJS?

You may qualify for SIJS if:

- You are under 21 years old*
- You are not married
- A court that specializes in children enters an order:
 - ✓ Placing you in the custody of an adult or an agency;
 - ✓ Declaring that you cannot go back to one or both of your parents because of abuse, neglect, or abandonment, or a similar reason; and
 - ✓ Declaring that it is not in your best interest to go back to your home country

* You can submit your immigration application until you are 21, but usually you have to get a custody order before you turn 18.

Steps to Ask for SIJS:

1. First, you or your parent or adult guardian should ask a court that specializes in children (family, guardianship, adoption, and juvenile courts are examples) to enter an order placing you in the legal custody of an adult or an agency. That court must decide you cannot be returned to one or both parents because of abuse, neglect, abandonment or a similar reason. The court must also decide that it is not in your best interest to be returned to your home country.
 - You should find a lawyer to represent you in state court. It is best if the lawyer practices *family law*. This lawyer should work closely with an *immigration lawyer* to make sure the court order is correct.
2. Next, you must fill out an SIJS application (Form I-360), and send it to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), along with a copy of your court order. If your application is approved, you will be granted Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) and you may be able to apply for a green card.
 - You should find an *immigration lawyer* to represent you in your application for SIJS. Lawyers that specialize in immigration law work with federal law. State courts are very different and follow state laws. For this part of the process, it is important that you find a lawyer who knows immigration law.

* **Note:** If you have a case in immigration court, **you must go to all of your scheduled hearings**. If you do not go to immigration court when you are supposed to, the judge will order you deported in your absence.

This fact sheet is not intended as legal advice. It is always best to consult with a licensed attorney or DOJ accredited representative to decide whether you are eligible for SIJS or any other benefit under immigration law or policy.