



For 40 years, the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) has provided expert immigration legal services to vulnerable immigrants. Since 2017 through the Legal Protection Fund, NIJC's dedicated staff of attorneys and experienced legal professionals have provided expert immigration legal representation to Chicago residents in over **5,000** cases, boasting a **97%** success rate, and provided more than **10,000** legal screenings.

NIJC's team of experienced immigration law attorneys and advocates:

- ✓ Provide individualized, comprehensive legal assessments to help individuals and families understand their rights amidst the complexities of U.S. immigration law and make informed decisions about the legal pathways available
- ✓ Prepare and apply for legal status based on comprehensive individualized legal assessments
- ✓ Offer immigration legal representation to people who face unique barriers in the legal system, including representing Chicagoans before immigration court, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the State Department

NIJC's Legal Protection Fund services have helped:

- Nearly 800 people apply for **lawful permanent residence**, including individuals seeking protection after surviving domestic violence and other crimes in the United States
- Approximately 175 people apply for **naturalization** to become U.S. citizens
- More than 440 people maintain protection from deportation under the **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)** program
- More than 480 people **defend against deportation** in immigration court
- More than 290 people seek **asylum**
- About 25 **survivors of trafficking** seek legal protection in the United States
- More than 1,450 people apply for **work authorization**
- More than 100 people arriving from the border who must file **court motions** asking to transfer their immigration case to the Chicago court to avoid being ordered deported for not appearing at a hearing scheduled in another city
- More than 100 individuals eligible for **Temporary Protected Status** including dozens of Haitians who are unable to safely return home



5x as
successful

Immigrants with lawyers
are five times more successful



180,000

Chicago residents
are undocumented



50,000

Households include an
undocumented person



NIJC's legal clinics leverage partnerships with private law firms to help more immigrants secure legal status, including:

- **DACA recipients** who must renew their status
- People completing the final step to become **U.S. citizens**
- Representation in state court and before federal agencies for **Special Immigrant Juveniles**, immigrant children who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned and qualify for protection
- **Asylees and refugees** applying for permanent residence and family petitions

Other funding streams have allowed NIJC to provide legal services to nearly 1,000 recently arrived asylum seekers, including Afghan evacuees.

Daniel's Story: NIJC's legal expertise helps international student obtain permanent residence

Daniel* came to Chicago from Ethiopia on a student visa with hopes of finding his father. After the father and son reunited, Immigration and Customs Enforcement initiated Daniel's deportation proceedings for overstaying his visa. NIJC represented Daniel and successfully terminated the government's efforts to deport him. When DHS appealed, NIJC represented Daniel to ensure that he could stay in Chicago with his father. His father had asked a non-attorney to help him secure a visa for Daniel to live with him in the U.S. Because he did not have access to legal advice, he failed to establish his parental relationship with his son in his application. NIJC took over Daniel's case to correct the error and represent him in becoming a permanent resident. Daniel is now secure in the knowledge that he and his father will remain together.

**Client's name has been changed to protect his privacy.*



Preparing for Biden's new family unity program

On June 18, 2024, the Biden administration announced it would expand access to a program to provide legal protection to some spouses and stepchildren of U.S. citizens. This program will open doors for certain people to obtain legal protection and employment authorization, and to potentially become eligible to pursue lawful permanent residence. While the program creates an opportunity for people to secure family unity, like any new immigration policy it also carries some risk. People looking to apply will need expert legal representation to ensure that they are eligible. Families should be wary of "notary fraud" and legal advice from unqualified practitioners who put them at risk of negative immigration consequences. NIJC will continue to update its [guidance](#) and provide legal consultations for families as more details about the program become available. Although there is a temporary stay on adjudicating these cases, the court allows eligible individuals to file their cases. NIJC is monitoring litigation involving this program.

