

**Special Immigrant Juvenile Status  
(SIJS)**

**What is Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)?**

SIJS is a legal status created to:

Protect youth who have been abused, abandoned or neglected by one or two of their parents or legal guardians.

**What are the benefits for someone with SIJS?**

- They can work after receiving a work permit
- They can travel outside of the United States after obtaining residency (we recommend consulting an immigration lawyer before)
- They can receive some forms of public aid
- They can apply for citizenship after turning 18 and after having residency for 5 years

\*Note: If granted SIJS, you *cannot* submit an application to help parents receive immigration status

**Who qualifies for SIJS?**

Under the law, someone qualifies for SIJS if:

- (i) He/she is under 21 years of age\*
- (ii) He/she is unmarried
- (iii) He/she has been declared dependent upon a juvenile court or placed by a juvenile court under the custody of an individual or state agency
- (iv) Reunification with one or two of his/her parents has been deemed not viable due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment, or a similar basis under state law
- (v) Juvenile court has determined that it is not in the young person's best interest to be returned to the country of nationality or last residence

\* Although federal law allows youth 21 years old or younger to apply, the majority of state laws define a minor as a person that is younger than 18 years of age.

**Possible Steps to Obtain SIJS:**

1. If the minor is detained by the federal government, they must ask the Department of Health and Human Services for specific permission to continue with state court proceedings. *This is only necessary if the minor is detained.*
2. The next step is to obtain an order of dependency from a state court that can decide that the reunification of the minor with one or both parents is not viable due to abuse, neglect or abandonment or a similar basis under state law, and the court determines that it is not in the young person's best interest to be returned to the country of nationality or last residence.
  - You should seek a lawyer to represent you in state court.
3. Next, you must complete an SIJS petition (form I-360), and send it to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). A favorable I-360 decision grants the minor Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) and allows the minor to apply for permanent residence (a green card) immediately.
  - You should find *an immigration lawyer* to represent you in your petition 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 should attend all of your hearings** with the judge while you are applying for SIJS. If you do not attend court, the judge will order an order of deportation in your absence.

***This informational sheet is not legal advice. It is important to consult an immigration lawyer to determine if you are eligible for SIJS or another legal immigration option.***