

## Important Things to Keep in Mind



- Do not get married without talking to an immigration attorney. Getting married can make you not eligible for certain immigration benefits.
- Keep your important documents (passport, birth certificate, identification) in a safe place and make copies.
- Stay out of trouble with the law. Being convicted of a crime or admitting to certain crimes may keep you from getting legal status in the future.
- If arrested or charged with a crime, make sure to let the criminal attorney know your immigration status.
- Do not lie and say that you are a U.S. citizen if you are not. Claiming to be a U.S. citizen on paper or to a person can keep you from getting legal status in the future.

## Who We Are

Legal Aid Society is Tennessee's largest non-profit law firm. Our mission is to enforce, advance, and defend the legal rights of low income and vulnerable people to obtain the basic necessities of life.

## Contact Us

We have offices in Clarksville, Columbia, Cookeville, Gallatin, Murfreesboro, Nashville, Oak Ridge, and Tullahoma.

**Call 1-800-238-1443  
for assistance**

*In partnership with*



**LSC** | America's Partner  
for Equal Justice  
LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION



**LEGAL AID SOCIETY**  
OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE AND THE CUMBERLANDS

The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime, or the State of Tennessee Office of Criminal Justice Programs. This project was supported by Award No 2016-VA-GX-0053 awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice through the Tennessee Office of Criminal Justice Programs

Revised 8.23.22

## Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

**Immigration Relief  
for Abused, Abandoned, or  
Neglected Children**



**LEGAL AID SOCIETY**  
OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE AND THE CUMBERLANDS

# Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) is an immigration classification for noncitizen children currently in the United States who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent. A child may be eligible if there is a juvenile court order regarding:

- Their custody, placement or dependency;
- Non-viability of reunification with the parents; and
- The best interest of the child.



## Who is eligible for SIJS?

A child must meet the following four requirements to qualify for SIJS:

1. Be under 21 years old at the time of the filing of the SIJS petition;
2. Be unmarried;
3. Be physically present in the United States; and
4. Have an order from a juvenile court (or a court that makes determinations about the care and custody of juveniles) that makes the following three findings:

- **Dependency/Custody:** Declares the child dependent on the court, or legally places the child under the custody of an agency or department of a state, or an individual or entity appointed by a state or juvenile court.
- **Parental Reunification:** Child cannot be reunited with one or both of the child's parents before turning 18 because of abuse, neglect, abandonment or a similar basis under state law.
- **Best Interest:** It would not be in the child's best interest to be returned to his or her country of origin.

## Benefits of SIJS

- When a SIJS petition is approved, the child will be given deferred action status and may be eligible to apply for a work permit, social security card, and state identification.
- An approved SIJS petition provides a pathway to legal permanent residence (green card) and eventually U.S. citizenship.

## Disadvantages of SIJS

- Children who get green cards through SIJS can never petition or sponsor their parents for immigration benefits.
- The application process to get SIJS can take a year or more. These children cannot apply for a work permit until the SIJS application has been approved.
- Approval of these cases is never guaranteed. If USCIS denies the application, there is a risk that the child could be placed in removal proceedings.