

How can I become a U.S. citizen?

If you were born in the U.S., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands or another U.S. territory, you are a U.S. citizen by birth. Also, if you were born to a U.S. citizen while living outside of the U.S. or if your parent became a U.S. citizen while you were less than 18 years old, you *may* qualify as a citizen. If you are not a citizen by birth, you must apply to become a citizen. This process is called naturalization.

If you are under 18, in order to become naturalized, you must apply with the help of your parents unless you meet certain exceptions. Contact us for more information.



What am I entitled to if I am here illegally (without legal status)?

School

Can I still go to school?

Yes. Even if you are here illegally you have the right to go to public school through high school. You also have the right to free and reduced-price lunch and breakfast programs if you qualify financially.

Can I apply for financial aid to go to college?

Immigrants without legal status do not qualify for federal financial aid. However, there are private sources of school funding that do not require citizenship or residency, and some colleges and universities do not charge tuition at all for families that meet certain income guidelines.

Also, if you live in Connecticut, graduate from a Connecticut high school after attending a Connecticut high school for four years, and you sign a piece of paper saying you will apply for legal status when/if it becomes available, you can pay in-state tuition at a Connecticut State College. Contact us for more information.

Benefits

Can I apply for public benefits like welfare, food stamps, and medical care?

No. Only citizens and legal permanent residents can apply for most public benefits. If you said you were a citizen or a legal permanent resident to collect public benefits, this may mean that you are committing fraud. If you commit fraud, it may be harder for you to become a resident or citizen later.

If I am pregnant, can I get benefits for myself or my baby?

If you are pregnant, you can receive WIC benefits, some medical benefits, and you can apply for benefits for your child if s/he is born in the United States. You can also qualify for emergency medical care.



Deferred Action

What is Deferred Action?

Deferred Action is a policy that came out in June, 2012 which says the government will not deport certain people who are here illegally.

You can apply for Deferred Action if all of these are true:

- You were under age 31 as of June 15, 2012
- You came to the U.S. before your 16th birthday
- You were in the U.S. on June 15, 2012 and stayed here
- You are in school or have completed high school or a GED program, and have not been convicted of certain crimes

Deferred Action does not give you a green card but you can get permission to work. For more information, go to www.uscis.gov and type in "deferred action." Talk to a lawyer to decide if this is a good option for you.



Some facts about Immigration

What are my rights?
What are my options?

Need Help?

For immigration questions concerning children and teens, call the Center for Children's Advocacy (860) 570-5327 or (203) 223-8975

For general immigration questions, call the International Institute

Hartford: (860) 692-3085
Bridgeport / Main Office: (203) 336-0141
Stamford: (203) 965-7190

You can also find answers to many questions on the USCIS website at www.uscis.gov.



The information in this brochure is intended as reference only and should not be interpreted as legal advice in an individual case. If you need specific information about the law, please call 860-570-5327 or 203-223-8975.

Center for Children's Advocacy
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Some Facts about Immigration

What is a legal permanent resident?

A legal permanent resident (someone who has a "green card") can live and work permanently in the United States and travel outside the United States. Legal permanent residents cannot vote, and they can be deported for certain criminal convictions or other serious problems.

Legal permanent residents must always keep a permanent home in the United States and should not leave the country for more than one year, unless they first get a special permission from the immigration agency, because they may lose their permanent resident status.



How do I become a legal permanent resident?

To become a legal resident, you must apply for a "green card" from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). The green card allows you to live and work in the U.S. permanently. A green card must be renewed every ten years.

Not everyone will qualify for a green card, and getting one can take a long time. It all depends on your age, your country of origin, your legal status and the legal status of your family.



Here are examples of some ways to qualify for a green card:

Family Petition

Certain relatives of U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents qualify for green cards. Generally, family-based options may work for spouses, children (including stepchildren, adopted children and adult children), parents (including stepparents), brothers and sisters of adult U. S. citizens. Also, spouses and children of U.S. permanent residents may be able to get green cards. In some cases this process can take several years.

Asylum

If you left your country because of persecution (poor treatment, harassment or discrimination) or a fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a certain social group, you may qualify for asylum.

T & U Visas

Anyone who has been the victim of certain violent crimes, including being bought or sold by "traffickers," and has been helpful to the police in investigating those crimes may qualify for a T or U Visa. Once you get a T or U Visa, you can eventually apply for a green card.

Can I can apply for a green card without my parents' help? My parents left me here and I can't make it on my own. I left my home country because of abuse. My parents are hitting, slapping or kicking me.

Domestic Violence / Abuse and Neglect

Usually, people under 18 have to apply for a green card with their parents' help, but if you or your parent have been abused by a parent or spouse who is a U.S. citizen or legal resident, you can apply on your own. This law, called the Violence Against Women Act, applies to boys, girls, men and women, and allows you to apply for a green card on your own. If your parent or spouse is not a legal resident or citizen, read "Special Immigrant Juvenile Status" below.

If you are being abused or neglected, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) can help keep you safe. DCF cannot refuse to help you because of your immigration status, and can find a safe place for you to live if you are being abused or neglected at home. For help, call DCF at 1-800-842-2288 any time of the day or night.

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)

If you are under 21, unmarried, and a juvenile or probate court finds that you cannot be reunified with one or both of your parents because of abuse or neglect, and that returning to your home country is not in your best interests, you can apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. To be eligible for this, you must get into a juvenile or probate court before you turn 18.

Talk to us right away if you think you might qualify for SIJS. If you are granted Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, you can apply for a green card right away.