

SPECIAL IMMIGRANT JUVENILE STATUS

Child Dependency Courts

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) is an immigration classification available to certain undocumented immigrants under the age of 21 who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by one or both parents. It provides a pathway for these youth to apply for and obtain Legal Permanent Residence (LPR) in the United States, which can be a critical step toward securing their safety, permanency, long-term stability, and well-being.

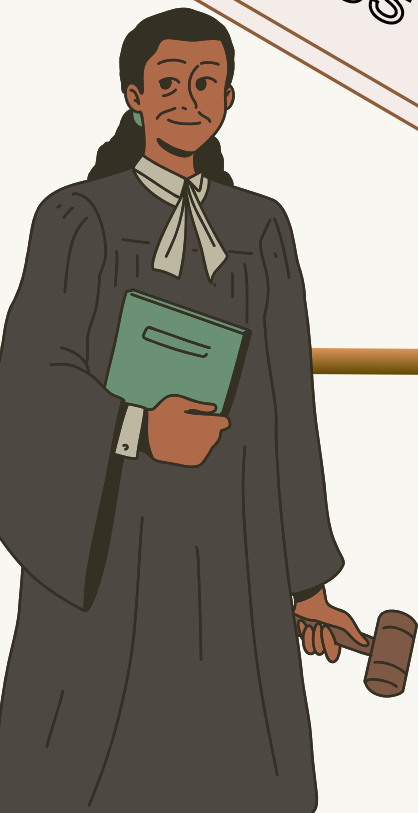
SIJS waives several types of inadmissibility that would otherwise prevent an immigrant youth from becoming a LPR.

STEP 1:
Obtain State Court Order

STEP 2:
Petition for SIJ

Step 3:
Apply for LPR status

Process



SIJ Eligibility Requirements

To file a petition for SIJ with immigration authorities, a youth must be:

- Physically present in the U.S., under 21, and unmarried;
- The subject of a juvenile court order with the following findings:
 - The youth has been either declared dependent, OR legally committed to or placed under the custody of an agency, department of a State, or individual or entity;
 - Reunification with one or both parents is not viable due to abuse, neglect, abandonment, or a similar basis under state law; AND
 - It is not in the youth's best interest to be returned to the youth's or parent's country of nationality or country of last habitual residence.

Role of State Courts

SIJ is distinct from other types of immigration benefits because it depends on state courts to make the required findings to establish eligibility. In creating SIJS, Congress intentionally deferred to state courts to make certain findings, including those relating to the youth's custody or care, parental relationship, and best interests.

Vulnerable Youth Guardianships

RCW 13.90.020

Vulnerable Youth Guardianships are reserved for immigrant youth who have been abandoned, abused or neglected and cannot return to their countries of origin. The program's intent aligns with the state's commitment to safeguarding vulnerable youth and promoting their well-being.

[State of Washington Department of Commerce. \(2019\). Vulnerable Youth Guardianships: An Evaluation as Directed by Chapter 279, Laws of 2017, Report to the Legislature.](#)

Resources

[!\[\]\(5a351309c3b87e4420622c1f0e57efc0_img.jpg\) WASHINGTON STATE COURT SPECIAL IMMIGRANT JUVENILE \(SIJ\) CLASSIFICATION BENCH BOOK AND RESOURCE GUIDE](#)

[!\[\]\(bff896c19919791b89ab521f039b410a_img.jpg\) WASHINGTON STATE COURT SPECIAL IMMIGRANT JUVENILE \(SIJ\) CLASSIFICATION BENCHARD](#)

Content for this infographic was adapted from the [Washington State Court Special Immigrant Juvenile \(SIJ\) Classification Bench Book and Resource Guide](#), prepared by Kids in Need of Defense in partnership with the Washington State Task Force on Unaccompanied Children, January 2024

For questions please contact [Family & Youth Justice Programs](#)