

Maryland Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Lawyer

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) can offer a path forward for immigrant minors who have experienced difficult circumstances, but the process involves both family law and immigration law. A Maryland special immigrant juvenile status lawyer helps guide children and their caregivers through each step, from filing a petition for and obtaining a predicate order with the required findings in state court for obtaining Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJs) status for children who have suffered abuse, abandonment, or neglect by one or both parents to filing with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to obtain a more permanent status in the U.S. With the right legal support, families can move through the process more confidently and avoid common delays.

What Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Means for a Child's Case

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) is a form of immigration relief available to certain immigrant minors who cannot safely reunite with one or both parents due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment. It is designed to protect children who have traveled unaccompanied to the U.S. and are placed under the care of a sponsor while awaiting a custody or guardianship predicate order in state court, allowing them to then apply for immigration status leading to a more stable and secure future in the United States.

To apply for SIJS, a juvenile court must first make specific findings about the child's situation. These findings typically address the child's custody, the inability to reunify with one or both parents, and why returning to the child's home country would not be in their best interest. Once those findings are in place, the child can move forward with the immigration portion of the SIJS process through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Why SIJS Matters

For many immigrant children, SIJS provides a path to stability that would not otherwise be available. Once approved, SIJS can allow a minor to apply for lawful permanent residency and eventually obtain a green card. This can open the door to long-term security, access to education and employment authorization, and a more predictable future.

It also offers protection from being returned to a home country where the child may face harm or unsafe conditions. In that sense, SIJS is not just an immigration benefit; it is a form of legal protection that recognizes the realities many immigrant children have faced.

Who May Qualify for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status in Maryland

Eligibility for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status depends on several factors, and both state and federal requirements must be met. The child must be under 21 years old and unmarried at the time of filing. In addition, a Maryland juvenile court must have jurisdiction over the child and must issue an order that includes the required findings related to abuse, neglect, or abandonment.

The court must also determine that reunification with one or both parents is not viable and that it is not in the child's best interest to return to their home country. These findings are essential, as they form the basis of the SIJS petition filed with immigration services. Without them, the federal application cannot move forward.

How the SIJS Process Works

The SIJS process usually begins in Maryland state court. A petition is filed to establish [custody](#) or guardianship, and the court is asked to make the required findings about the child's situation. This step is critical because immigration authorities rely on the state court's predicate order when reviewing the immigration petition.

Once the predicate court order is issued, the next step is to apply for SIJS with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. This involves submitting the appropriate forms and supporting documentation that reflects the court's findings.

If SIJS is approved, the child may then apply for lawful permanent residence when a visa becomes available. This final stage can take time, but it is what allows the child to move toward obtaining a green card and building a stable future in the United States.

What Are the Common Challenges in SIJS Cases?

SIJS cases often involve tight timelines and overlapping legal systems, which can create challenges if not handled carefully. One of the most common issues is obtaining the correct state court findings. If the court order does not include the required language or is incomplete, it can delay or prevent approval by immigration services.

Timing is another concern. Because SIJS eligibility depends on age, delays in filing or court proceedings can affect whether a child qualifies. It is important to move the case forward efficiently while still meeting all legal requirements.

There can also be challenges related to documentation and evidence, especially when proving abuse, neglect, or abandonment. These cases require careful preparation and a clear presentation of the facts to both the state court and immigration authorities.

Why Work with Our Maryland Family Law Attorneys

SIJS cases require coordination between family law and immigration law, which makes experienced legal guidance especially important. Our attorneys understand how to obtain the necessary state court findings and predicate order and how those findings connect to the federal immigration process.

We work closely with clients to keep the process moving, address issues as they come up, and make sure each step is handled correctly. Our goal is to provide clear direction and steady support throughout what can be a complex process.

Speak with a Maryland Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Lawyer

If you are considering applying for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status or have questions about whether a child may qualify, it is important to get legal advice early. The sooner the process begins, the better positioned you are to meet deadlines and avoid complications.

You can reach out [here](#) or learn more about our family law services [here](#).

First name*

Last name*

Email*

Phone number*

*

Geographic location

☐

Maryland

☐

District of Columbia

☐

Virginia

☐

Other

Briefly discuss your issue

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