



Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

What is Special Immigrant Juvenile status?

- Special immigrant juvenile status is a protection that is available for children who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected by one or both parents.

Who Qualifies?

- An unmarried boy or girl (under 21) who cannot be reunited with his or her mother, father, or both parents in his or her country of origin due to having been abused, abandoned, or neglected by one or both parents.

How is this status obtained?

- The special immigrant juvenile status consists of two steps. The first step involves going to the family state court and obtaining a special order from the family court judge. Then, during the second step, the special order is used to apply for a juvenile visa. In some states, the first step must be started before the child reaches his or her 18th birthday (and certain exceptions may apply).

What are the benefits?

- Once the juvenile visa is approved, the child can immediately apply for legal permanent residency status (green card). After the child obtains his or her green card, the child can travel freely to his or her country of origin. Five years after becoming a legal permanent resident, the child can apply to become a citizen, if the child is 18 years or older.

What are the disadvantages?

- A child who obtains special immigrant juvenile status will not be allowed to request immigration benefits for his or her parents, even when only one of the parents abandoned, neglected, or abused the child.
- A child who obtains special immigrant juvenile status may not qualify for as many health and welfare benefits from the state or federal government as a child who obtains asylum or a T visa for victims of trafficking. These benefits may also not last as long as with other options.