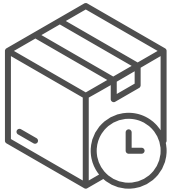


# I've Filed My Petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status! NOW WHAT?

**Congratulations!** You have filed your petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status ("SIJS")! But now... you are waiting. There are two steps in the SIJS process that require a wait. First, you wait for the agency, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS") to make a decision about whether to approve or deny your SIJS petition. Second, if it is approved, many applicants have to wait for a visa to become available before they can apply for lawful permanent residency (a green card).



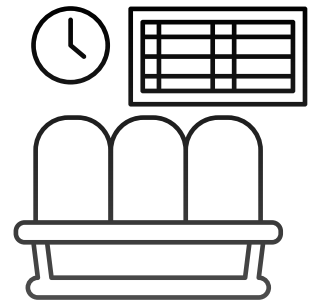
**What is the SIJS Backlog?**

The SIJS backlog is a long waiting period that certain SIJS applicants face after their SIJS petition is approved, but before they can apply for a green card. Unfortunately, even when SIJS petitions are approved, right now applicants from certain "backlogged" countries—Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador—face a waiting period that can last for years before they can apply to become lawful permanent residents.

## Why is there a backlog?

The backlog is created by two different limits the government has put on the number of green cards available each year. First, current rules put a cap on the total number of green cards based on SIJS visas are available each year. Second, only a certain number of people from any given country can get this type of green card per year.

Since 2016, SIJS applicants from Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala have had to wait because there are more approved SIJS petitions from these countries than the allotted number of green cards available each year. As a result, the backlog of applicants from these countries with approved SIJS petitions who are waiting for green cards just keeps growing longer.



## Where am I in the Process?

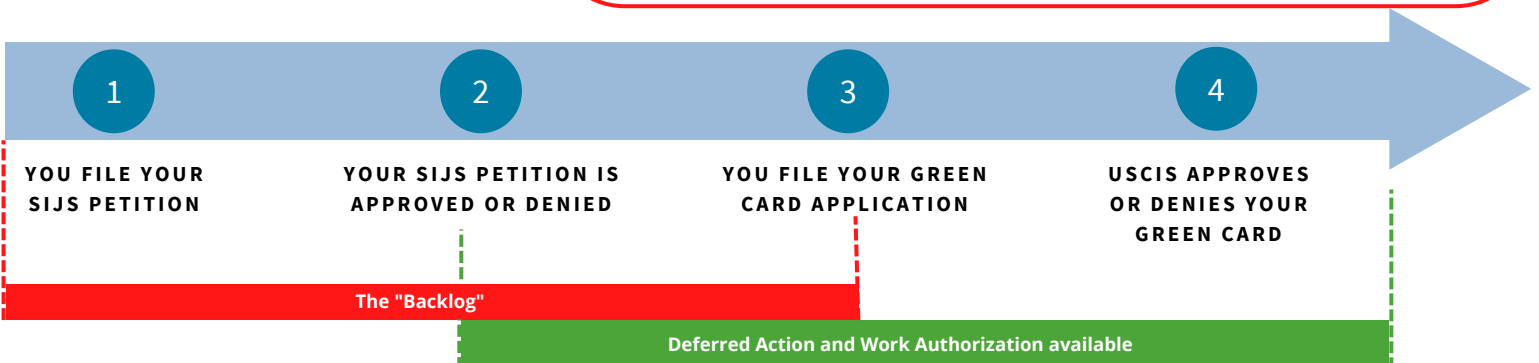
The timeline below shows four key points in the process from SIJS petition to Green Card.

### WAIT #1

It is supposed to take USCIS six months to make a decision on the SIJS petition, but sometimes the agency takes longer. You should reach out to your attorney if you have been waiting more than 6 months.

### WAIT #2

This is the part of the backlog that only impacts SIJS applicants from backlogged countries. If you are not from a backlogged country, you will skip this wait and go straight to Point 3. But if you are in the backlog, this is the time you spend waiting for a visa to become available before you can apply for your green card. Currently, it can be a very long wait of multiple years. But the good news is that as of May 2022, the government grants Deferred Action to SIJS applicants in the backlog! If you receive Deferred Action, you can apply for a work authorization during this time. See more information on Page 2 about this process.



# While I'm in the backlog, can I...

## Get a work permit?



- Unfortunately, your I-360 must be approved (wait #1 above) before you can apply for a work permit.
- But fortunately, once you are in wait #2, with an approved I-360, you can apply to receive a work permit if you receive a grant of deferred action.

## Get a state ID or drivers' license? It depends on the state you live in. For example:



- In California, undocumented people can get a driver's license as long as they are able to meet all the other requirements for a license and provide proof of identity and California residency.
- In New York, people can apply for a driver's license regardless of their status if they can provide a combination of documents that prove their name, date of birth, and New York residency.

## Get a financial aid?



- At this time, undocumented students are not eligible for financial aid from the U.S. government.
- Some states provide state financial aid to immigrant students, for example, the California Dream Act.
- Additionally, you may be eligible for merit and need-based financial aid directly from your school.
- Check out TheDream.US, which is the largest scholarship fund for undocumented students.

## Open a bank account?



- To open a bank account, you need an identification number and government issued photo ID.
- If you do not yet have a social security number, you may be eligible to apply for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) from the Internal Revenue Service. For information on how to obtain an ITIN number, visit the IRS ITIN website: <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/individual-taxpayer-identification-number>

Dos	Don'ts
Keep immigration court and USCIS updated with any changes in your address.	Don't miss any of your immigration hearings. It is mandatory to attend all immigration court hearings.
Keep in contact with your immigration attorney. Policy is changing often and your situation may change based on new policy or your circumstances. Please let them know if your number or address changes.	Don't forget that even minor incidents with law enforcement can impact your case. Do not wait to speak to your immigration attorney if you have any contact with law enforcement. Remember, while it may be legal to use in your state, marijuana is still illegal federally.
Register for the Selective Service if you are male and over 18 years old.	Don't leave the United States. Contact your attorney if you are considering traveling.
Talk to your attorney about <u>Deferred Action</u> and the process for applying for work authorization. Obtaining a government issued photo ID will help with work authorization.	Don't get married while your SIJS petition is pending. SIJS requires applicants to be unmarried. Don't get married before you receive a decision on your SIJS petition as that will make you ineligible. Talk to your attorney about any immigration consequences of getting married after your petition is approved if you are in the backlog waiting for a green card.
File your taxes if you work and make over \$12,000 a year.	Don't forget to pay all of your parking tickets. And tell your attorney about any parking or traffic tickets, citations, and arrests.

### The Backlog is Unfair! What Can I Do about It?

Join the End SIJS Backlog Coalition! This coalition of impacted youth, lawyers, and activists has been working to end the backlog, and in the meantime, address the problems that young people face while they are stuck in the backlog. Recently, the coalition successfully advocated for protection from removal and work authorization for young people in the backlog. The coalition especially welcomes young people who are in the backlog to get involved. Please check out their website or scan the QR code to see how you can get involved.

