

YOUTH RIGHTS: IMMIGRATION ISSUES FOR YOUTH IN CARE

What should I do if I am in foster care I am not a U.S. citizen or do not have valid immigration documents?

Making sure you have valid citizenship or alien status is one of the most important things a young adult can do before leaving substitute care. Without documentation of your immigration status, you will not be able to get state identification, it will be hard for you to work, receive financial aid, or apply for medical or other public benefits.

What immigration options are available to immigrants in substitute care?

The best way to know what options are available to you is to talk to a lawyer who specializes in immigration. If you need help finding an immigration lawyer contact: HIAS and Council Migration Service of Philadelphia at 215-832-0900, or e-mail them at info@hiaspa.org. You should also talk to the lawyer that represents you in dependency court.



Here are some of the more common ways that young people in substitute care might get legal status in the U.S.:

- **Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS).** If you are still in substitute care you may be eligible for SIJS. SIJS is available to individuals who cannot return to their parents' care because of abuse, abandonment or neglect, and who cannot return to their home country. If you are eligible for this status, you will be able to get a green card, and eventually apply for citizenship.
- **Adoption.** In some cases, you may be eligible for a green card if you are adopted by US citizens. However, adoption will not necessarily change your status automatically. As a result, if you are adopted, you and your adoptive parents should contact an immigration lawyer.
- **Asylum.** If you are in this country because you are afraid that you will be persecuted or abused in your home country, you may be eligible for asylum. If you are granted asylum, you will be allowed to live and work in the United States. You will also be eligible to apply for a green card a year after you are granted asylum.
- **Changing status with your parents.** In some cases, if your biological parents get legal status in the United States, you may be eligible for legal status as well. Both you and your parents should talk to a lawyer to find out more details.

What resources are available for immigrant individuals and families in Philadelphia?

- **HIAS and Council Migration Service of Philadelphia, 215-832-0900**

HIAS offers law-related immigration services to foreign born individuals and their families who seek asylum, family reunification, permanent legal status and citizenship in the U.S.

- **Nationalities Service Center, 215-893-8400**

Nationalities Service Center offers educational, social, and legal services for immigrant individuals and families in Philadelphia.

Juvenile
Law
Center