



## Fact Sheet

# NATURALIZATION FOR VAWA LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENTS

## WHY NATURALIZE AND BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN?

Obtaining U.S. citizenship through naturalization offers many benefits and important responsibilities. For example, only U.S. citizens can vote in federal elections and serve on a jury. As a U.S. citizen, you can get priority for sponsoring certain family members to come to the United States. You can also apply for certain federal jobs and become eligible for certain federal benefits, grants, and scholarships. Finally, if your children are under 18 years of age and are lawful permanent residents when you naturalize, they may automatically acquire citizenship.

## WHEN CAN I APPLY FOR NATURALIZATION TO BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN?

Eligible survivors of domestic violence who obtained their Green Card as the spouse or child of a U.S. citizen who subjected them to battery or extreme mental cruelty may apply for naturalization after residing in the U.S. for 3 years as a lawful permanent resident. This includes individuals with:

- An approved I-360 VAWA self-petition;
- An approved I-751 waiver of conditional residence based on battery or extreme cruelty; or
- Cancellation of Removal and subsequent adjustment of status for battered spouses and children under INA § 240A(b)(2).

**NOTE:** You do NOT need to demonstrate that you resided together with the citizen spouse during this time.

Eligible survivors of domestic violence who obtained their Green Card as the spouse or child of a lawful permanent resident who subjected them to battery or extreme cruelty may apply for naturalization after residing in the U.S. for 3 years as a lawful permanent resident (as a Green Card holder).

## WHAT ARE THE GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR NATURALIZATION TO BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN?

To be eligible for naturalization as the spouse or child of a U.S. citizen who has been a permanent resident for 3 years, you must:

- Be at least 18 years of age when you submit Form N-400, Application for Naturalization ([www.uscis.gov/n-400](http://www.uscis.gov/n-400));
- Show you have been a lawfully admitted permanent resident of the United States for at least 3 years;
- Demonstrate [continuous residence](#) in the United States as a lawful permanent resident for at least 3 years immediately before the date you file Form N-400 and up to the time of naturalization;

- Reside continuously within the United States from the date you filed your application until the date you naturalize;
- Show you have been [physically present](#) in the United States for at least 18 months out of the 3 years immediately before the date you file Form N-400;
- Show you have lived for at least 3 months in a state or USCIS district having jurisdiction over your place of residence;
- Show that you are a person of good moral character;
- Be able to read, write, and speak English;
- Have knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of the history, and of the principles and form of government of the United States (also known as civics);
- Demonstrate an attachment to the principles and ideals of the U.S. Constitution; and
- Take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States.

## INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SPOUSE

The Form N-400, Application for Naturalization, requests basic biographic information about your current and former spouses. However, USCIS will not contact your current or former spouse about your application. In addition, you do not need to establish that you are or were living with your spouse or provide documentation about your spouse.

## SAFE ADDRESS

USCIS takes steps to protect the information of victims of domestic violence. If you are residing in a shelter or safe house at the time of filing for naturalization, or you otherwise do not feel safe providing your current physical address, you may provide a “safe address” (mailing address) where you are able to receive mail on your [Form N-400](#). This might be a post office box (P.O. Box) or the address of a friend, your attorney, a community-based organization that is helping you, or any other address where you can safely and timely receive mail.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT TO APPLY FOR NATURALIZATION TO BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN?

Apply for U.S. citizenship by submitting Form N-400, Application for Naturalization ([www.uscis.gov/n-400](http://www.uscis.gov/n-400)). You can file this form online. There are exceptions and modifications to the naturalization requirements that are available to those who qualify. USCIS also provides accommodations for individuals with disabilities. For more information on exceptions, modifications and accommodations see our Exceptions and Accommodations webpage ([www.uscis.gov/citizenship/exceptions-and-accommodations](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/exceptions-and-accommodations)).

You can use the USCIS Naturalization Eligibility Tool to quickly determine whether you may be eligible to apply for naturalization ([www.uscis.gov/citizenship-resource-center/learn-about-citizenship/naturalization-eligibility](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship-resource-center/learn-about-citizenship/naturalization-eligibility)).

**Fees:** There is a fee for Form N-400. However, if you cannot afford the naturalization fee, then you may be eligible for a fee waiver ([www.uscis.gov/i-912](http://www.uscis.gov/i-912)) or fee reduction ([www.uscis.gov/i-942](http://www.uscis.gov/i-942)).

- If you are eligible for a fee waiver, you pay no fee for the N-400. Fee waivers are available to individuals who can demonstrate that they qualify based on:

- You, your spouse, or the head of household living with you, are currently receiving a means-tested benefit;
  - Your household income is at or below 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines at the time you file. Check the current Federal Poverty Guidelines for this year at Form I-912P, HHS Poverty Guidelines for Fee Waiver Requests ([www.uscis.gov/i-912p](http://www.uscis.gov/i-912p)); or
  - You are currently experiencing financial hardship that prevents you from paying the filing fee, including unexpected medical bills or emergencies.
- If you are eligible for a fee reduction, you pay 50% of the N-400 fee. Fee reductions are available to individuals with a documented annual household income greater than 150% but not more than 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines at the time you file.

## **WHO CAN HELP ME APPLY FOR NATURALIZATION TO BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN?**

Many community organizations and social service providers offer citizenship classes and assistance with the naturalization process. Classes are often held in the evenings and on weekends. In many cases, these programs provide additional support and referral services as well. If you need help with an immigration issue, you can use the services of a licensed immigration attorney or accredited representative of a Department of Justice recognized organization.

- You can learn more by visiting the “Find Help in Your Community” and “Free Naturalization Information Sessions” webpages at [www.uscis.gov/citizenship/apply-for-citizenship](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/apply-for-citizenship).
- USCIS also has resources to help you prepare for the English language and civics test. Visit [www.uscis.gov/citizenship/find-study-materials-and-resources](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/find-study-materials-and-resources) to find study materials and more.
- You may wish to consult a legal services provider to assist you in applying for naturalization. Visit [www.uscis.gov/avoid-scams/find-legal-services](http://www.uscis.gov/avoid-scams/find-legal-services) for more information.