

MEDIA ADVISORY

June 14, 2021

MEDIA ADVISORY: Immigration – Study data supports Department of Homeland Security decision to speed up U visa protections for immigrant crime victims

WHAT The U.S. Department of Homeland Security today announced improvements to the U visa program that will provide immigrant victims quicker protection from deportation and work authorization. [DHS announcement and policies.](#)

Expert sources and supportive data are available from the National Immigrant Women’s Advocacy Project (NIWAP), American University, Washington College of Law. NIWAP (“New-app”) has just completed its study of how applications under the U visa program and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) improve immigrant survivors’ lives and those of their children. The study is titled “Transforming Lives: How the VAWA Self-petition and U Visa Change the Lives of Victims and their Children After Work Authorization and Legal Immigration Status.”

<https://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/transforming-lives-study-21>

The DHS changes are meant to address the major challenge of timing. Delays in deportation protections leave applicants in danger longer. From filing of the U visa application to receipt of deportation protections is now taking as long as five years, up from a former standard of about six months.

The study affirms that work authorization and protection against deportation lead to dramatic life transformations and greater positive engagement with the justice system and community, as immigrant survivors of crime and abuse move through the process of attaining legal immigration status. Legal protection against deportation removes threats of deportation from abusers’ power and control tactics.

The national data was submitted by 169 victim advocacy, legal services and government agencies in 42 states, representing 11,000+ cases. Eighty percent of applicants were victims of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, stalking and/or human trafficking. Example findings:

- Employed earning capacity grows as U visa and VAWA survivor applicants gain work authorization and lawful permanent residency. After receiving work authorization, there was a 300% rise in those often or always working at jobs that pay at least minimum wage, and 43% secure jobs with health insurance, sick leave and vacation benefits.
- There is a 114% increase in immigrant survivors’ willingness to trust police, and 30% of those applicants continued to make police reports regarding future crimes.

WHO Leslye E. Orloff, J.D., Adjunct Professor and Director of NIWAP, American University, Washington College of Law, who co-authored the study and can connect reporters to law enforcement officers, prosecutors and victim’s attorneys who represent U visa applicant clients.

National Immigrant Women’s Advocacy Project (NIWAP, pronounced *new-app*)

American University, Washington College of Law

4300 Nebraska Avenue NW N100B · Washington, D.C. 20016

(o) 202.274.4457 · niwap@wcl.american.edu · wcl.american.edu/niwap · <http://library.niwap.org/>

Example quote: “The sooner that immigrant survivors gain protections from deportation and work authorization, the sooner they and their children begin to flourish, with economic independence, as well as trust in their communities and the justice system.”

WHERE In person in D.C. metro area or at American University. Zoom, Skype or phone.

CONTACT Leslye E. Orloff, (202) 210-8886, orloff@wcl.american.edu
Alternate: Abbott Brant, Public Relations Coordinator (631) 830-3153,
abrant@wcl.american.edu

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