

Children Who Self Petition for VAWA

Warning: Some of this information may be outdated due to the 2025 executive orders. Please consider consulting an immigration lawyer if you have questions about your situation. You can also [read the President's executive orders](#).

Requirements

To self-petition for VAWA as a child of a United States citizen or lawful permanent resident, you must be unmarried and under the age of 21. However, you may still apply up to age 25 if you can prove that the abuse prevented you from petitioning sooner.

When you self-petition for VAWA as a child, you must prove that you:

- **Are, in fact, the child of a United States citizen or lawful permanent resident.** To prove the relationship, you can use a birth certificate that identifies your abuser as your biological parent.
You can also file a VAWA self-petition if your abuser is your step-parent or adoptive parent. You have to show, however, that you were under 18 when the abuser became your step-parent or that you were younger than 16 when the abuser became your adoptive parent. If your step-parent also abuses your parent, then your parent can include you as a derivative in his or her VAWA self-petition. However, to qualify as a derivative, you still must be unmarried and under the age of 21.
- **Are a person of good moral character.** If you have certain criminal convictions, problems with alcohol, or have spent more than 180 days in jail, Immigration may take issue with your character. Learn more on our [Good Moral Character](#) article.
Resided with the abusive parent. You can use a wide range of materials to prove this: photos, school reports, or written statements from friends, family members, or teachers.
- **Were battered or subjected to extreme cruelty;** and

- **At least one instance of the abuse or extreme cruelty occurred inside of the United States.**

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