

VAWA Self-Petition: Immigration Relief for Victims of Domestic Violence

❖ Domestic violence and sexual assault are crimes in the United States. If you or someone in your family has been hurt or if you worry about your safety, call the police or a domestic violence shelter right away.

Introduction

Talk to an immigration lawyer if you are the victim of any of these:

- domestic violence
- sexual assault
- emotional cruelty
- threatening behavior
- other types of abusive behavior

You might be able to get or improve your immigration status.

What is VAWA?

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a federal law. It helps some people who are victims of violence in the U.S. with immigration status.

When can VAWA help me?

Often, U.S. citizens and Permanent Residents can help their spouses and some children file applications for legal status. Adult U.S. citizens can help their parents file applications for legal status. But sometimes, the U.S. citizen or Permanent Resident will not help their relative file an application.

If a U.S. citizen family member uses their immigration status to control or abuse you, you may be able to file an I-360 VAWA Petition. This petition lets you try to get status without the help of the abusive U.S. citizen family member.

Am I eligible?

To file the I-360 VAWA Petition, you must show:

1. One of these is true:

- You are the spouse of a U.S. citizen or Permanent Resident. You got married in “good faith.” You must give proof you did not get married only for immigration purposes.

OR

- You are the child of a U.S. citizen or Permanent Resident (depends on your age and marital status).

OR

- You are the parent of a U.S. citizen. The citizen child must be 21 or older.

AND

2. All the rest of these must be true:

- ✓ You are or were the victim of controlling behavior and/or physical, sexual, emotional, and/or financial abuse by a U.S. citizen or Permanent Resident family member.
- ✓ You live or lived with the U.S. citizen or Permanent Resident family member.
- ✓ You have good moral character.

❖ Some things, like some criminal convictions, can keep you from proving good moral character. Have a lawyer review your situation.

I am worried that they will not approve me.

Immigration may approve your Form I-360 even if:

- The abuse happened outside the U.S.
- The family relationship has ended through death or divorce.
- You are still living with the abusive spouse or relative.
- Your abusive spouse was married to more than one person at the same time.

- Your abusive spouse or relative lost their status within the last two years because of abusing you. You have not remarried.

Are there any deadlines I should know about?

You have two years to file the Form I-360 after your divorce is final.

Can I get any help before Immigration approves my I-360 application?

Even before Immigration approves the I-360, you may be able to get some benefits like some types of medical assistance, childcare assistance, and food assistance. You may also be able to get permission to work. Read [Washington Public Assistance for Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence](#).

What help can I get if Immigration approves my I-360 application?

You could:

- Get **deferred action**. Immigration puts your case at a low priority for deportation
- Apply for permission to work
- Apply for Permanent Resident (green card) status
- Apply for immigration relief or status for some family members

Do I need a lawyer?

A lawyer is important. **You must be very careful before sending an application to immigration. Immigration can look at ALL your records!** An immigration lawyer can help you make sure everything is okay before you file anything.

If your case is not approved, you could be deported. If you committed certain crimes, lied to the government, or other things, you could also be deported.

How do I find an immigration lawyer?

You might be eligible to get help from **Northwest Immigrant Rights Project**:

- **Seattle Office** - serving Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties: 206.587.4009 or 1-800.445.5771

The Seattle office has a special VAWA unit: (206)-957-8621;
vawaintake@nwirp.org

If you live in King County or work or go to school in Seattle, you may be eligible for help through the new Legal Defense Hotline, made possible by the City of Seattle and King County. Call 206.816.3870 to find out.

- **Tacoma & South Unit (TSU)** – serving Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skagit, Skamania, Thurston, and Wahkiakum counties: 206.816.3893 or TSUintake@nwirp.org
- **Granger Office** - serving Adams, Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Kittitas, Klickitat, Yakima, Walla Walla, and Whitman counties: 509.854.2100 or 888.756.3641
- **Wenatchee Office** - serving Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Grant, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, and Stevens counties: 509.570.0054 or 866.271.2084

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