



The Long Wait from a SIJS Petition to a Green Card

After you send a petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) to USCIS, it can take a long time before you can apply for your green card—and it can be hard to know how long. This drawing explains the process using the metaphor of waiting in line for ice cream at an ice cream store. **Each numbered item corresponds to a square in the drawing. This visual does not explain visa retrogression or discuss the pros and cons of applying for SIJS.**

01 Once you have a state court order, you can petition for SIJS, which is like getting a numbered ticket at an ice cream store. This is a giant ice cream store that serves everyone in the entire country.

02 Your ticket number is your priority date, which is the date that USCIS got your SIJS petition.

03 The line of people with tickets in front of you is super long, and you're at the very back.

04 Usually, waiting for ice cream doesn't take long, but this line moves very slowly. Waiting can be frustrating and boring, but we can't do anything to make the line go faster.

05 You will probably get a decision on your SIJS petition after waiting for 6 months. If you start waiting in the summer, it will be winter by the time you get a decision. If your SIJS petition is approved, it means you get Special Immigrant Juvenile status. This is great news! It means you can go inside the ice cream store, but it doesn't mean you will get ice cream quite yet.

06 Around the same time, you might also get deferred action, which protects you from deportation and lets you apply for a work permit. Getting deferred action is like being able to get free samples of ice cream – it lets you have a taste of what's to come. Most young people who get SIJS also get deferred action, but not all. Sometimes, USCIS might let someone keep waiting in line without giving them free samples.

07 The line inside the store is very, very long. Waiting can get really tiring because it can take years. You might have several birthdays while you're waiting.

08 There isn't very much ice cream, and there are so many people in front of you that you can't even see the front of the line.

09 We never know how much ice cream they have. Sometimes they get more and start calling numbers faster. It's hard to know how long you'll wait because we don't know how many people are still waiting. **To explain SIJS inadmissibility, consider saying, "If you do certain things while you're waiting in line, they might decide you can't get your ice cream when it's your turn."**

10 After waiting a long time, your ticket is finally called!

11 This means your priority date is current, and you can finally order your ice cream, which means you can apply for your green card.

12 At last, you get your ice cream! This means you have a green card, which lets you live and work in the U.S. forever. After five years with your green card, you can apply to become a U.S. citizen.

For additional resources from the End SIJS Backlog Coalition, visit <https://bit.ly/EndSIJSBacklog>