



How Long Will It Take?

Different Paths to Work Authorization and Legal Status

This board game explains how long it might take to get a work permit, legal status, and a green card for different types of immigration help for young people. It helps you understand the time each path might take, but this can change.

Please compare this with current USCIS case processing times and trends. Depending on your client's capacity, remind them that while this looks like a game, it represents big life decisions. These time estimates are from July 2024 and should be updated as needed.

We aim to help you reach the green star, which is your green card. A green card lets you live and work in the U.S. forever. After having your green card for five years, you can apply to become a U.S. citizen. There are different ways to get a green card, and this board shows some of the most common paths for young people, but there are other paths not shown here.

Some people aren't eligible for any of these paths. Some people are only eligible to take one path. Others can take multiple paths at the same time.

When you apply for one of these paths, you start moving along it. The **orange area** shows where you might get a work permit, which allows you to work in the U.S. Once you get a work permit, you can usually keep it for the rest of your journey along the path. The **teal area** shows where you might get legal status, which protects you from being deported.

Let's look at the different paths you might be eligible for:

Asylum:

You can get your work permit about six months after applying for asylum. The next step is an asylum interview, which might not happen for many years. This is the longest path to a green card. The mountains before legal status represent the difficulty and uncertainty of the asylum interview. You can apply for a green card one year after getting asylum.

SIJS:

Most people get deferred action about six months after applying for SIJS, which lets them apply for a work permit. Some people don't get deferred action, meaning they don't get a work permit (**bypass the work permit on the path**). It might take five to ten years or more before you can apply for a green card. SIJS is a relatively easy path for many people.

T Visa:

It takes about a year and a half to get a decision after applying for a T visa. If granted, you get a work permit around the same time. This is the shortest path to a green card. You can apply for a green card three years after getting a T visa.

U Visa:

Most people get a bona fide determination about five years after applying for a U visa, which gives them deferred action and lets them apply for a work permit. Not everyone gets a work permit (**bypass the work permit on the path**). After a bona fide determination, it might take ten more years before you get a decision on your U visa application. You can apply for a green card three years after getting a U visa.