



Immigrant Children's Project

The path to lawful immigration status is often a complicated one and ILAP believes that no child or young person should face the immigration system alone. Through our Immigrant Children's Project, we offer legal representation and assistance to more than 125 immigrant children and youth in Maine each year.

In fall 2020, we launched our Immigrant Children's Project and **expanded access to legal representation for vulnerable immigrant children and youth across Maine** who may qualify for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS).

SIJS is a pathway to permanent residency for children and youth under 21 who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent. It can open doors to **life-changing opportunities at a critical time in a young person's life**, but the application process is complex, difficult to navigate without an attorney, and made more harrowing because eligible children and youth have often survived significant trauma.

ILAP's past advocacy work to align state and federal law in relation to SIJS has meant more Maine youth are eligible for this unique pathway. However, systemic barriers remain. There are currently thousands of youth who have been granted SIJS nationally, but are still at risk of deportation because of a years-long green card backlog.

“It's a very confusing process that requires multiple courts and multiple lawyers. The Immigrant Children's Project is providing continuity and support for youth in Maine to ensure no young person slips through the cracks.”

- Immigrant Children's Project Attorney,
Maggie Loeffelholz, Esq.

Within the first year of the project, we have **provided legal guidance and representation to more than 125 young people** in various stages of their SIJS cases. Building on this success, in year two of our pilot we are aiming to reach 200 young people through legal representation and community outreach.

