

# Guide to Immigrant Visas

## Permanent Residency in the United States

### What is an Immigrant Visa?

An immigrant visa allows foreign nationals to live and work permanently in the United States. It is the first step toward obtaining lawful permanent residency (a green card) and eventually applying for U.S. citizenship.

### Types of Immigrant Visas

- **Family-Based Visas:** Available to individuals who have qualifying family relationships with U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents. Includes immediate relatives (spouses, children, parents) and preference categories for siblings and adult children.
- **Employment-Based Visas (EB):**
  - **EB-1:** Priority Workers (Extraordinary Ability, Outstanding Professors/Researchers, Multinational Executives)
  - **EB-2:** Professionals with Advanced Degrees or Exceptional Ability
  - **EB-3:** Skilled Workers, Professionals, and Unskilled Workers
  - **EB-4:** Special Immigrants (Religious workers, certain former government employees)
  - **EB-5:** Investor Visa (requires minimum investment of \$900,000 in a job-creating enterprise)
- **Diversity Visa Lottery:** Provides up to 50,000 visas annually to applicants from countries with low immigration rates to the U.S.

### Sponsorship Requirements

Most immigrant visas require sponsorship by a U.S. citizen or employer. The sponsor must file Form I-130 (for family-based) or I-140 (for employment-based) to establish the qualifying relationship before the applicant can proceed with their application.

# Path to U.S. Citizenship

After obtaining a green card, immigrants may apply for U.S. citizenship after five years (three if married to a U.S. citizen). This process is known as naturalization and includes language and civics testing.

## USCIS Process Overview

1. Petition approval by USCIS
2. Consular processing or adjustment of status
3. Medical exam and visa interview abroad (if applicable)
4. Entry into the U.S. as a permanent resident

## Benefits of Immigrant Visas

- Live and work permanently in the U.S.
- Eligibility for public benefits and assistance programs
- Path to U.S. citizenship
- Ability to petition for certain family members to join you