FAQ: U Visas for Survivors of Crimes

What is a U Visa?

The U visa provides a pathway to citizenship for certain immigrants who survived a crime in the US. This visa allows the recipient to live and work in the US and apply for lawful permanent residence (a green card).

Do I qualify for a U Visa?

You may be eligible for a U visa if ALL of these apply to you.

- You survived a qualifying crime while you were in the United States. See the list of qualifying crimes below.
- You reported the crime to the police. You may be listed as a “victim” of the crime on the police report.
- You cooperated with police, investigators, or government attorneys prosecuting the crime. For example, you answered questions about the crime, provided information, and gave up-to-date contact information.
- You were substantially harmed by the crime. For example, you suffered a physical injury as a result of the crime; you experienced severe fear, depression, or anxiety; you were fired from your job; etc.

Benefits of a U Visa

- Possible pathway to work authorization, green card, and citizenship.
- Some family members can apply with you.
- You can apply even if you entered the US unlawfully.

Drawbacks of a U Visa

- It can take 5+ years to receive work authorization and 10+ years to receive a green card after applying.
- You may be required to talk or write about the crime a lot, which might be traumatic for some applicants.

Qualifying Crimes

If someone has committed or attempted any of these crimes against you, you might be eligible for a U visa.

- Domestic violence
- Physical abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Stalking
- Assault
- Torture
- Attempted murder
- Murder of a close family member
- Manslaughter
- Abduction
- Kidnapping
- False imprisonment
- Mugging
- Incest
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual assault or rape
- Sexual exploitation
- Female genital cutting
- Obstruction of justice
- Perjury
- Witness tampering
- Involuntary servitude
- Slavery
- Human trafficking
- Not being paid for your labor
How do I apply for a U Visa?

**STEP 1: Report the Crime to the Police**
If you haven’t already, you will need to get a police report about the crime.

**STEP 2: Request a U Certification**
Ask the police department or agency that investigated the crime to sign a U Certification. This certification states that you survived a crime and were helpful to their investigation.

**STEP 3: Receive a Signed U Certification from the Police**
Wait ≤ 30 days

**STEP 4: Apply for a U Visa**
Submit an application to USCIS within 6 months of receiving the signed U Certification form. There is no filing fee for this application.

**STEP 5: Receive Work Authorization**
While your U visa application is pending, USCIS may grant you work authorization.

**STEP 6: Receive a U Visa**
Wait 5+ Years
If USCIS grants your application, you will receive a U visa. The U visa allows you to live and work in the US for up to four years.

**STEP 7: Apply for a Green Card**
Wait Time Varies
Three years after receiving your U visa, you can apply to become a lawful permanent resident (green card holder).

**STEP 8: Receive a Green Card**
Wait 5 Years
If USCIS grants your green card application, you can live and work in the US permanently, subject to certain restrictions.

**STEP 9: Apply for Citizenship**
Wait 5 Years