



INITIAL DOCUMENTS IMMIGRANT SURVIVORS MAY NEED
*** CHECKLIST ***
(Updated Dec. 2024)

This checklist suggests documents that social workers and advocates working with immigrant survivors may wish to help the survivor to gather. They may become useful for pending or future immigration applications. Most people will not have all of these, but if your client has them, see if you can help obtain a copy.

Please note this list is general. It does not represent all documents needed to succeed in an immigration application. For documentation to accompany a particular benefit, consult the survivor's immigration attorney or help the client visit the USCIS.gov website regarding the benefit the survivor is seeking.

Identity Documents

- Passport (all passports, valid or otherwise)
- Consular ID card
- National ID card
- Driver license
- Birth certificate
- Baptism certificate (if no birth certificate)

→ **NOTE** about Locating Foreign Documents: **As long as** your client does not fear contact with their country's government, you can contact the relevant embassy or consulate to inquire about obtaining a passport, national ID, or vital record such as birth certificate. **Otherwise**, a trusted person in the home country might help.

Immigration Status Documents

- Passport (all passports, valid or otherwise, that have stamps or visas in them)
- Status cards (green card or work authorization card, valid or otherwise)
- I-94 (sometimes available at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>)
- Visa (all, valid or otherwise)
- Receipts (Form I-797) for any pending immigration applications
- Approval or denial notices for current or prior immigration status applications
- Copy of attorney's file, if previously represented by attorney

Civil Status Documents

- Marriage certificate(s)
- Divorce decree(s)
- Death certificate(s) of prior spouse(s)
- Birth certificates of all children and step children

Documentation of Family Ties in the U.S.

- US birth certificates for any children born in US, including step children
- Marriage certificate if spouse has lawful status in US
- Copy of passport, status card (green card or work permit), naturalization certificate, or visa(s) for the following relatives lawfully in the US: parent, spouse, offspring, sibling, aunt, uncle, cousin, niece, nephew, person with guardianship over client or person over whom client has guardianship, similar relationships

Documentation of Being a Survivor of Crime or Abuse

- Police reports
- Court documents
- Order of protection to protect your client (all orders, valid or otherwise)
- Communications from prosecutor
- Photographs of injuries
- Hospital or other medical treatment records for injuries from crime or abuse, potentially including counseling or other mental health records
- Records from state child protection agency or elder protection agency

Records of Criminal Legal System Contacts

- Arrest reports (all arrests of client, regardless of outcome or remoteness in time)
- Court documents
- Order of protection against your client (all orders, valid or otherwise)

Documentation of Sympathetic Life Circumstances

- Medical records if client or close relative has serious health condition
- IEPs or other records if client has a disability or cares for relative with disability
- Death certificate(s) if client has suffered a loss of family member recently

Documents to Prevent Expedited Removal (showing presence in US for 2+ years)

- Third party records showing client's name and the date, with at least some from over 2 years ago and some from within the past 2 years (e.g., records from U.S.-based police, court, medical provider, school, employer, municipal/benefits office)
- Mail or other papers showing client's name, U.S. address, and date, with at least some from over 2 years ago and some from within the past 2 years (e.g., utility/ phone bill, lease, bank/card statement, greeting cards, furniture rental contracts)
- U.S. driver license and other cards showing validity starting over 2 years ago
- Documents showing reason survivor could face harm in country of origin

Certificate of Translation

- Documents not originally in English require translations. Immigration officials generally accept English translations performed by any competent speaker, as long as they are accompanied by a certificate of translation.
- Please see and feel free to copy this [sample certificate of translation](#) created by the U.S. Department of Justice, which governs immigration courts.

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