



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

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# I am the Child of a U.S. Citizen

## Citizenship Through U.S. Parents

There are two general ways to obtain citizenship through U.S. citizen parents: at birth, and after birth but before the age of 18. Congress has enacted laws that determine how citizenship is conveyed by a U.S. citizen parent (or parents) to children born outside of the United States.

### Who May Qualify for Acquisition of Citizenship

The law in effect at the time of birth determines whether someone born outside the United States to a U.S. citizen parent (or parents) is a U.S. citizen at birth. In general, these laws require that at least one parent was a U.S. citizen, and the U.S. citizen parent had lived in the United States for a period of time.

In addition, children born abroad may become U.S. citizens after birth. For information and eligibility requirements for specific time periods, see the USCIS Policy Manual, Volume 12, [Part H, Children of U.S. Citizens](#).

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Definition of Child



Children of U.S. Citizens Residing in the United States



Children of U.S. Citizens Residing Outside the United States



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Last Reviewed/Updated: 07/05/2020