

THE VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN ACT
(VAWA)
COMMON QUESTIONS



Immigration Legal Services
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What is the VAWA?

In 1994, Congress passed a law to help victims of domestic violence apply for work authorization and eventually their permanent residency, without depending on their abuser. Women, children, and men may apply.

What are the requirements?

In order to qualify for VAWA a spouse has to be married or have been married to his or her abuser who is/was a US citizen or lawful permanent resident. For a child abused by his/her parent, the parent has to be US citizen or lawful permanent resident.

Does my spouse have to be involved? What happens if they find out?

The application for VAWA is based on the abuse that the victim suffered. The victim themselves applies and does not depend on the abuser. The process is confidential and the abuser cannot get any information about your case. The abuser cannot interfere, change, or withdraw the application.

If I qualify, can I apply for my kids?

Yes. The children may be included in your application, even if they aren't your spouse's children.

Do I have to get divorced? What happens if I get back together with my spouse?

The law allows the victim to apply even if he or she is still with the abuser, separated, or even divorced. If you apply while you are separated from the abuser, and then get back together, your application will not be affected.

Can I work?

An approved application allows you to request a work permit while you wait to adjust your status to lawful permanent resident.

How much does the process cost and how long does the process take?

There is no cost associated with the application process. However, if you decide to apply for a work permit the cost is \$380. If you cannot pay, it is possible that your fees may be waived. The time it takes always depends on Immigration (USCIS) and your application, but in general, after gathering all the documents and sending the application, it usually takes 8 – 10 months to receive a decision.

CONSULTATIONS ARE FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL

**To arrange a
consult if you
believe you
qualify please
call:**

**(503) 542-2855
x9**