

Pathways to U.S. Citizenship for Child Immigrants

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Abstract

This study investigates independent naturalization of child immigrants. For child immigrants adopted, parental nativity status conveys citizenship. For child immigrants accompanying or joining parent immigrants, parental naturalizing conveys citizenship to minors. Naturalizing parents need to request citizenship certificates, or an adult son or daughter may later request a U.S. passport through the State Department based on derivative status. This study focuses on naturalizing as adults by child immigrants whose parents had not naturalized during their childhood. Younger immigrants would be more likely to derive citizenship and less likely to naturalize as adults. Older immigrants would be more likely to naturalize as independent adults, because their parents had not naturalized while they were minors. This approach adds understanding of naturalization outcomes for recent child immigrants reaching adulthood. The Child Citizenship Act, effective February 27, 2001, was meant to simplify the transition to citizenship for child immigrants.