

## § 204.2

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States may submit a statement from the appropriate authority of the Armed Forces. The statement should attest to the fact that the personnel records of the Armed Forces show that the petitioner was born in the United States on a certain date.

(3) *Evidence submitted with a self-petition.* If a self-petitioner filing under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii), 204(a)(1)(A)(iv), 204(a)(1)(B)(ii), or 204(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Act is unable to present primary or secondary evidence of the abuser's status, the Service will attempt to electronically verify the abuser's citizenship or immigration status from information contained in Service computerized records. Other Service records may also be reviewed at the discretion of the adjudicating officer. If the Service is unable to identify a record as relating to the abuser or the record does not establish the abuser's immigration or citizenship status, the self-petition will be adjudicated based on the information submitted by the self-petitioner.

[57 FR 41056, Sept. 9, 1992, as amended at 58 FR 48778, Sept. 20, 1993; 61 FR 13072, 13073, Mar. 26, 1996; 63 FR 70315, Dec. 21, 1998; 72 FR 19106, Apr. 17, 2007; 72 FR 56853, Oct. 4, 2007; 74 FR 26936, June 5, 2009; 76 FR 28305, May 17, 2011]

### § 204.2 Petitions for relatives, widows and widowers, and abused spouses and children.

(a) *Petition for a spouse*—(1) *Eligibility.* A United States citizen or alien admitted for lawful permanent residence may file a petition on behalf of a spouse.

(i) *Marriage within five years of petitioner's obtaining lawful permanent resident status.* (A) A visa petition filed on behalf of an alien by a lawful permanent resident spouse may not be approved if the marriage occurred within five years of the petitioner being accorded the status of lawful permanent resident based upon a prior marriage to a United States citizen or alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence, unless:

(1) The petitioner establishes by clear and convincing evidence that the marriage through which the petitioner gained permanent residence was not entered into for the purposes of evading the immigration laws; or

(2) The marriage through which the petitioner obtained permanent residence was terminated through death.

(B) *Documentation.* The petitioner should submit documents which cover the period of the prior marriage. The types of documents which may establish that the prior marriage was not entered into for the purpose of evading the immigration laws include, but are not limited to:

(1) Documentation showing joint ownership of property;

(2) A lease showing joint tenancy of a common residence;

(3) Documentation showing commingling of financial resources;

(4) Birth certificate(s) of child(ren) born to the petitioner and prior spouse;

(5) Affidavits sworn to or affirmed by third parties having personal knowledge of the bona fides of the prior marital relationship. (Each affidavit must contain the full name and address, date and place of birth of the person making the affidavit; his or her relationship, if any, to the petitioner, beneficiary or prior spouse; and complete information and details explaining how the person acquired his or her knowledge of the prior marriage. The affiant may be required to testify before an immigration officer about the information contained in the affidavit. Affidavits should be supported, if possible, by one or more types of documentary evidence listed in this paragraph.); or

(6) Any other documentation which is relevant to establish that the prior marriage was not entered into in order to evade the immigration laws of the United States.

(C) The petitioner must establish by clear and convincing evidence that the prior marriage was not entered into for the purpose of evading the immigration laws. Failure to meet the "clear and convincing evidence" standard will result in the denial of the petition. Such a denial shall be without prejudice to the filing of a new petition once the petitioner has acquired five years of lawful permanent residence. The director may choose to initiate deportation proceedings based upon information gained through the adjudication of the petition; however, failure to initiate such proceedings shall not establish that the petitioner's prior marriage

was not entered into for the purpose of evading the immigration laws. Unless the petition is approved, the beneficiary shall not be accorded a filing date within the meaning of section 203(c) of the Act based upon any spousal second preference petition.

(ii) *Fraudulent marriage prohibition.* Section 204(c) of the Act prohibits the approval of a visa petition filed on behalf of an alien who has attempted or conspired to enter into a marriage for the purpose of evading the immigration laws. The director will deny a petition for immigrant visa classification filed on behalf of any alien for whom there is substantial and probative evidence of such an attempt or conspiracy, regardless of whether that alien received a benefit through the attempt or conspiracy. Although it is not necessary that the alien have been convicted of, or even prosecuted for, the attempt or conspiracy, the evidence of the attempt or conspiracy must be contained in the alien's file.

(iii) *Marriage during proceedings—general prohibition against approval of visa petition.* A visa petition filed on behalf of an alien by a United States citizen or a lawful permanent resident spouse shall not be approved if the marriage creating the relationship occurred on or after November 10, 1986, and while the alien was in exclusion, deportation, or removal proceedings, or judicial proceedings relating thereto. Determination of commencement and termination of proceedings and exemptions shall be in accordance with § 245.1(c)(9) of this chapter, except that the burden in visa petition proceedings to establish eligibility for the exemption in § 245.1(c)(9)(iii)(F) of this chapter shall rest with the petitioner.

(A) *Request for exemption.* No application or fee is required to request an exemption. The request must be made in writing and submitted with the Form I-130. The request must state the reason for seeking the exemption and must be supported by documentary evidence establishing eligibility for the exemption.

(B) *Evidence to establish eligibility for the bona fide marriage exemption.* The petitioner should submit documents which establish that the marriage was entered into in good faith and not en-

tered into for the purpose of procuring the alien's entry as an immigrant. The types of documents the petitioner may submit include, but are not limited to:

(1) Documentation showing joint ownership of property;

(2) Lease showing joint tenancy of a common residence;

(3) Documentation showing commingling of financial resources;

(4) Birth certificate(s) of child(ren) born to the petitioner and beneficiary;

(5) Affidavits of third parties having knowledge of the bona fides of the marital relationship (Such persons may be required to testify before an immigration officer as to the information contained in the affidavit. Affidavits must be sworn to or affirmed by people who have personal knowledge of the marital relationship. Each affidavit must contain the full name and address, date and place of birth of the person making the affidavit and his or her relationship to the spouses, if any. The affidavit must contain complete information and details explaining how the person acquired his or her knowledge of the marriage. Affidavits should be supported, if possible, by one or more types of documentary evidence listed in this paragraph); or

(6) Any other documentation which is relevant to establish that the marriage was not entered into in order to evade the immigration laws of the United States.

(C) *Decision.* Any petition filed during the prohibited period shall be denied, unless the petitioner establishes eligibility for an exemption from the general prohibition. The petitioner shall be notified in writing of the decision of the director.

(D) *Denials.* The denial of a petition because the marriage took place during the prohibited period shall be without prejudice to the filing of a new petition after the beneficiary has resided outside the United States for the required period of two years following the marriage. The denial shall also be without prejudice to the consideration of a new petition or a motion to reopen the visa petition proceedings if deportation or exclusion proceedings are terminated after the denial other than by the beneficiary's departure from the United States. Furthermore, the denial shall

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be without prejudice to the consideration of a new petition or motion to reopen the visa petition proceedings, if the petitioner establishes eligibility for the bona fide marriage exemption contained in this part: *Provided*, That no motion to reopen visa petition proceedings may be accepted if the approval of the motion would result in the beneficiary being accorded a priority date within the meaning of section 203(c) of the Act earlier than November 29, 1990.

(E) *Appeals*. The decision of the Board of Immigration Appeals concerning the denial of a relative visa petition because the petitioner failed to establish eligibility for the bona fide marriage exemption contained in this part will constitute the single level of appellate review established by statute.

(F) *Priority date*. A preference beneficiary shall not be accorded a priority date within the meaning of section 203(c) of the Act based upon any relative petition filed during the prohibited period, unless an exemption contained in this part has been granted. Furthermore, a preference beneficiary shall not be accorded a priority date prior to November 29, 1990, based upon the approval of a request for consideration for the bona fide marriage exemption contained in this part.

(2) *Evidence for petition for a spouse*. In addition to evidence of United States citizenship or lawful permanent residence, the petitioner must also provide evidence of the claimed relationship. A petition submitted on behalf of a spouse must be accompanied by a recent ADIT-style photograph of the petitioner, a recent ADIT-style photograph of the beneficiary, a certificate of marriage issued by civil authorities, and proof of the legal termination of all previous marriages of both the petitioner and the beneficiary. However, non-ADIT-style photographs may be accepted by the district director when the petitioner or beneficiary reside(s) in a country where such photographs are unavailable or cost prohibitive.

(3) *Decision on and disposition of petition*. The approved petition will be forwarded to the Department of State's Processing Center. If the beneficiary is in the United States and is eligible for adjustment of status under section 245

of the Act, the approved petition will be retained by the Service. If the petition is denied, the petitioner will be notified of the reasons for the denial and of the right to appeal in accordance with the provisions of 8 CFR 3.3.

(4) *Derivative beneficiaries*. No alien may be classified as an immediate relative as defined in section 201(b) of the Act unless he or she is the direct beneficiary of an approved petition for that classification. Therefore, a child of an alien approved for classification as an immediate relative spouse is not eligible for derivative classification and must have a separate petition filed on his or her behalf. A child accompanying or following to join a principal alien under section 203(a)(2) of the Act may be included in the principal alien's second preference visa petition. The child will be accorded second preference classification and the same priority date as the principal alien. However, if the child reaches the age of twenty-one prior to the issuance of a visa to the principal alien parent, a separate petition will be required. In such a case, the original priority date will be retained if the subsequent petition is filed by the same petitioner. Such retention of priority date will be accorded only to a son or daughter previously eligible as a derivative beneficiary under a second preference spousal petition.

(b) *Petition by widow or widower of a United States citizen*—(1) *Eligibility*. A widow or widower of a United States citizen may file a petition and be classified as an immediate relative under section 201(b) of the Act if:

(i) He or she had been married for at least two years to a United States citizen.

(NOTE: The United States citizen is not required to have had the status of United States citizen for the entire two year period, but must have been a United States citizen at the time of death.)

(ii) The petition is filed within two years of the death of the citizen spouse or before November 29, 1992, if the citizen spouse died before November 29, 1990;

(iii) The alien petitioner and the citizen spouse were not legally separated at the time of the citizen's death; and

(iv) The alien spouse has not remarried.

(2) *Evidence for petition of widow or widower.* If a petition is submitted by the widow or widower of a deceased United States citizen, it must be accompanied by evidence of citizenship of the United States citizen and primary evidence, if available, of the relationship in the form of a marriage certificate issued by civil authorities, proof of the termination of all prior marriages of both husband and wife, and the United States citizen's death certificate issued by civil authorities. To determine the availability of primary documents, the Service will refer to the Department of State's Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM). When the FAM shows that primary documents are generally available in the country at issue but the petitioner claims that his or her document is unavailable, a letter from the appropriate registrar stating that the document is not available will be required before the Service will accept secondary evidence. Secondary evidence will be evaluated for its authenticity and credibility. Secondary evidence may include:

(i) Such evidence of the marriage and termination of prior marriages as religious documents, tribal records, census records, or affidavits; and

(ii) Such evidence of the United States citizen's death as religious documents, funeral service records, obituaries, or affidavits. Affidavits submitted as secondary evidence pursuant to paragraphs (b)(2)(i) and (b)(2)(ii) of this section must be sworn to or affirmed by people who have personal knowledge of the event to which they attest. Each affidavit should contain the full name and address, date and place of birth of the person making the affidavit and his or her relationship, if any, to the widow or widower. Any such affidavit must contain complete information and details explaining how knowledge of the event was acquired.

(3) *Decision on and disposition of petition.* The approved petition will be forwarded to the Department of State's Processing Center. If the widow or widower is in the United States and is eligible for adjustment of status under section 245 of the Act, the approved petition will be retained by the Service.

If the petition is denied, the widow or widower will be notified of the reasons for the denial and of the right to appeal in accordance with the provisions of 8 CFR 3.3.

(4) *Derivative beneficiaries.* A child of an alien widow or widower classified as an immediate relative is eligible for derivative classification as an immediate relative. Such a child may be included in the principal alien's immediate relative visa petition, and may accompany or follow to join the principal alien to the United States. Derivative benefits do not extend to an unmarried or married son or daughter of an alien widow or widower.

(c) *Self-petition by spouse of abusive citizen or lawful permanent resident—(1) Eligibility—(i) Basic eligibility requirements.* A spouse may file a self-petition under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii) or 204(a)(1)(B)(ii) of the Act for his or her classification as an immediate relative or as a preference immigrant if he or she:

(A) Is the spouse of a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States;

(B) Is eligible for immigrant classification under section 201(b)(2)(A)(i) or 203(a)(2)(A) of the Act based on that relationship;

(C) Is residing in the United States;

(D) Has resided in the United States with the citizen or lawful permanent resident spouse;

(E) Has been battered by, or has been the subject of extreme cruelty perpetrated by, the citizen or lawful permanent resident during the marriage; or is that parent of a child who has been battered by, or has been the subject of extreme cruelty perpetrated by, the citizen or lawful permanent resident during the marriage;

(F) Is a person of good moral character;

(G) Is a person whose deportation would result in extreme hardship to himself, herself, or his or her child; and

(H) Entered into the marriage to the citizen or lawful permanent resident in good faith.

(ii) *Legal status of the marriage.* The self-petitioning spouse must be legally married to the abuser when the petition is properly filed with the Service. A spousal self-petition must be denied

if the marriage to the abuser legally ended through annulment, death, or divorce before that time. After the self-petition has been properly filed, the legal termination of the marriage will have no effect on the decision made on the self-petition. The self-petitioner's remarriage, however, will be a basis for the denial of a pending self-petition.

(iii) *Citizenship or immigration status of the abuser.* The abusive spouse must be a citizen of the United States or a lawful permanent resident of the United States when the petition is filed and when it is approved. Changes in the abuser's citizenship or lawful permanent resident status after the approval will have no effect on the self-petition. A self-petition approved on the basis of a relationship to an abusive lawful permanent resident spouse will not be automatically upgraded to immediate relative status. The self-petitioner would not be precluded, however, from filing a new self-petition for immediate relative classification after the abuser's naturalization, provided the self-petitioner continues to meet the self-petitioning requirements.

(iv) *Eligibility for immigrant classification.* A self-petitioner is required to comply with the provisions of section 204(c) of the Act, section 204(g) of the Act, and section 204(a)(2) of the Act.

(v) *Residence.* A self-petition will not be approved if the self-petitioner is not residing in the United States when the self-petition is filed. The self-petitioner is not required to be living with the abuser when the petition is filed, but he or she must have resided with the abuser in the United States in the past.

(vi) *Battery or extreme cruelty.* For the purpose of this chapter, the phrase "was battered by or was the subject of extreme cruelty" includes, but is not limited to, being the victim of any act or threatened act of violence, including any forceful detention, which results or threatens to result in physical or mental injury. Psychological or sexual abuse or exploitation, including rape, molestation, incest (if the victim is a minor), or forced prostitution shall be considered acts of violence. Other abusive actions may also be acts of violence under certain circumstances, including acts that, in and of themselves, may not initially appear violent but

that are a part of an overall pattern of violence. The qualifying abuse must have been committed by the citizen or lawful permanent resident spouse, must have been perpetrated against the self-petitioner or the self-petitioner's child, and must have taken place during the self-petitioner's marriage to the abuser.

(vii) *Good moral character.* A self-petitioner will be found to lack good moral character if he or she is a person described in section 101(f) of the Act. Extenuating circumstances may be taken into account if the person has not been convicted of an offense or offenses but admits to the commission of an act or acts that could show a lack of good moral character under section 101(f) of the Act. A person who was subjected to abuse in the form of forced prostitution or who can establish that he or she was forced to engage in other behavior that could render the person excludable under section 212(a) of the Act would not be precluded from being found to be a person of good moral character, provided the person has not been convicted for the commission of the offense or offenses in a court of law. A self-petitioner will also be found to lack good moral character, unless he or she establishes extenuating circumstances, if he or she willfully failed or refused to support dependents; or committed unlawful acts that adversely reflect upon his or her moral character, or was convicted or imprisoned for such acts, although the acts do not require an automatic finding of lack of good moral character. A self-petitioner's claim of good moral character will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the provisions of section 101(f) of the Act and the standards of the average citizen in the community. If the results of record checks conducted prior to the issuance of an immigrant visa or approval of an application for adjustment of status disclose that the self-petitioner is no longer a person of good moral character or that he or she has not been a person of good moral character in the past, a pending self-petition will be denied or the approval of a self-petition will be revoked.

(viii) *Extreme hardship.* The Service will consider all credible evidence of

extreme hardship submitted with a self-petition, including evidence of hardship arising from circumstances surrounding the abuse. The extreme hardship claim will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis after a review of the evidence in the case. Self-petitioners are encouraged to cite and document all applicable factors, since there is no guarantee that a particular reason or reasons will result in a finding that deportation would cause extreme hardship. Hardship to persons other than the self-petitioner or the self-petitioner's child cannot be considered in determining whether a self-petitioning spouse's deportation would cause extreme hardship.

(ix) *Good faith marriage.* A spousal self-petition cannot be approved if the self-petitioner entered into the marriage to the abuser for the primary purpose of circumventing the immigration laws. A self-petition will not be denied, however, solely because the spouses are not living together and the marriage is no longer viable.

(2) *Evidence for a spousal self-petition—*

(i) *General.* Self-petitioners are encouraged to submit primary evidence whenever possible. The Service will consider, however, any credible evidence relevant to the petition. The determination of what evidence is credible and the weight to be given that evidence shall be within the sole discretion of the Service.

(ii) *Relationship.* A self-petition filed by a spouse must be accompanied by evidence of citizenship of the United States citizen or proof of the immigration status of the lawful permanent resident abuser. It must also be accompanied by evidence of the relationship. Primary evidence of a marital relationship is a marriage certificate issued by civil authorities, and proof of the termination of all prior marriages, if any, of both the self-petitioner and the abuser. If the self-petition is based on a claim that the self-petitioner's child was battered or subjected to extreme cruelty committed by the citizen or lawful permanent resident spouse, the self-petition should also be accompanied by the child's birth certificate or other evidence showing the relationship between the self-petitioner and the abused child.

(iii) *Residence.* One or more documents may be submitted showing that the self-petitioner and the abuser have resided together in the United States. One or more documents may also be submitted showing that the self-petitioner is residing in the United States when the self-petition is filed. Employment records, utility receipts, school records, hospital or medical records, birth certificates of children born in the United States, deeds, mortgages, rental records, insurance policies, affidavits or any other type of relevant credible evidence of residency may be submitted.

(iv) *Abuse.* Evidence of abuse may include, but is not limited to, reports and affidavits from police, judges and other court officials, medical personnel, school officials, clergy, social workers, and other social service agency personnel. Persons who have obtained an order of protection against the abuser or have taken other legal steps to end the abuse are strongly encouraged to submit copies of the relating legal documents. Evidence that the abuse victim sought safe-haven in a battered women's shelter or similar refuge may be relevant, as may a combination of documents such as a photograph of the visibly injured self-petitioner supported by affidavits. Other forms of credible relevant evidence will also be considered. Documentary proof of non-qualifying abuses may only be used to establish a pattern of abuse and violence and to support a claim that qualifying abuse also occurred.

(v) *Good moral character.* Primary evidence of the self-petitioner's good moral character is the self-petitioner's affidavit. The affidavit should be accompanied by a local police clearance or a state-issued criminal background check from each locality or state in the United States in which the self-petitioner has resided for six or more months during the 3-year period immediately preceding the filing of the self-petition. Self-petitioners who lived outside the United States during this time should submit a police clearance, criminal background check, or similar report issued by the appropriate authority in each foreign country in which he or she resided for six or more

months during the 3-year period immediately preceding the filing of the self-petition. If police clearances, criminal background checks, or similar reports are not available for some or all locations, the self-petitioner may include an explanation and submit other evidence with his or her affidavit. The Service will consider other credible evidence of good moral character, such as affidavits from responsible persons who can knowledgeably attest to the self-petitioner's good moral character.

(vi) *Extreme hardship*. Evidence of extreme hardship may include affidavits, birth certificates of children, medical reports, protection orders and other court documents, police reports, and other relevant credible evidence.

(vii) *Good faith marriage*. Evidence of good faith at the time of marriage may include, but is not limited to, proof that one spouse has been listed as the other's spouse on insurance policies, property leases, income tax forms, or bank accounts; and testimony or other evidence regarding courtship, wedding ceremony, shared residence and experiences. Other types of readily available evidence might include the birth certificates of children born to the abuser and the spouse; police, medical, or court documents providing information about the relationship; and affidavits of persons with personal knowledge of the relationship. All credible relevant evidence will be considered.

(3) *Decision on and disposition of the petition*—(i) *Petition approved*. If the self-petitioning spouse will apply for adjustment of status under section 245 of the Act, the approved petition will be retained by the Service. If the self-petitioner will apply for an immigrant visa abroad, the approved self-petition will be forwarded to the Department of State's National Visa Center.

(ii) *Petition denied*. If the self-petition is denied, the self-petitioner will be notified in writing of the reasons for the denial and of the right to appeal the decision.

(4) *Derivative beneficiaries*. A child accompanying or following-to-join the self-petitioning spouse may be accorded the same preference and priority date as the self-petitioner without the necessity of a separate petition, if the child has not been classified

as an immigrant based on his or her own self-petition. A derivative child who had been included in a parent's self-petition may later file a self-petition, provided the child meets the self-petitioning requirements. A child who has been classified as an immigrant based on a petition filed by the abuser or another relative may also be derivatively included in a parent's self-petition. The derivative child must be unmarried, less than 21 years old, and otherwise qualify as the self-petitioner's child under section 101(b)(1)(F) of the Act until he or she becomes a lawful permanent resident based on the derivative classification.

(5) *Name change*. If the self-petitioner's current name is different than the name shown on the documents, evidence of the name change (such as the petitioner's marriage certificate, legal document showing name change, or other similar evidence) must accompany the self-petition.

(6) *Prima facie determination*. (i) Upon receipt of a self-petition under paragraph (c)(1) of this section, the Service shall make a determination as to whether the petition and the supporting documentation establish a "prima facie case" for purposes of 8 U.S.C. 1641, as amended by section 501 of Public Law 104–208.

(ii) For purposes of paragraph (c)(6)(i) of this section, a prima facie case is established only if the petitioner submits a completed Form I–360 and other evidence supporting all of the elements required of a self-petitioner in paragraph (c)(1) of this section. A finding of prima facie eligibility does not relieve the petitioner of the burden of providing additional evidence in support of the petition and does not establish eligibility for the underlying petition.

(iii) If the Service determines that a petitioner has made a "prima facie case," the Service shall issue a Notice of Prima Facie Case to the petitioner. Such Notice shall be valid until the Service either grants or denies the petition.

(iv) For purposes of adjudicating the petition submitted under paragraph (c)(1) of this section, a prima facie determination—

(A) Shall not be considered evidence in support of the petition;

(B) Shall not be construed to make a determination of the credibility or probative value of any evidence submitted along with that petition; and,

(C) Shall not relieve the self-petitioner of his or her burden of complying with all of the evidentiary requirements of paragraph (c)(2) of this section.

(d) *Petition for a child or son or daughter—(1) Eligibility.* A United States citizen may file a petition on behalf of an unmarried child under twenty-one years of age for immediate relative classification under section 201(b) of the Act. A United States citizen may file a petition on behalf of an unmarried son or daughter over twenty-one years of age under section 203(a)(1) or for a married son or daughter for preference classification under section 203(a)(3) of the Act. An alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence may file a petition on behalf of a child or an unmarried son or daughter for preference classification under section 203(a)(2) of the Act.

(2) *Evidence to support petition for child or son or daughter.* In addition to evidence of United States citizenship or lawful permanent resident, the petitioner must also provide evidence of the claimed relationship.

(i) *Primary evidence for a legitimate child or son or daughter.* If a petition is submitted by the mother, the birth certificate of the child showing the mother's name must accompany the petition. If the mother's name on the birth certificate is different from her name on the petition, evidence of the name change must also be submitted. If a petition is submitted by the father, the birth certificate of the child, a marriage certificate of the parents, and proof of legal termination of the parents' prior marriages, if any, issued by civil authorities must accompany the petition. If the father's name has been legally changed, evidence of the name change must also accompany the petition.

(ii) *Primary evidence for a legitimated child or son or daughter.* A child can be legitimated through the marriage of his or her natural parents, by the laws of the country or state of the child's residence or domicile, or by the laws of the country or state of the father's res-

idence or domicile. If the legitimation is based on the natural parents' marriage, such marriage must have taken place while the child was under the age of eighteen. If the legitimation is based on the laws of the country or state of the child's residence or domicile, the law must have taken effect before the child's eighteenth birthday. If the legitimation is based on the laws of the country or state of the father's residence or domicile, the father must have resided—while the child was under eighteen years of age—in the country or state under whose laws the child has been legitimated. Primary evidence of the relationship should consist of the beneficiary's birth certificate and the parents' marriage certificate or other evidence of legitimation issued by civil authorities.

(iii) *Primary evidence for an illegitimate child or son or daughter.* If a petition is submitted by the mother, the child's birth certificate, issued by civil authorities and showing the mother's name, must accompany the petition. If the mother's name on the birth certificate is different from her name as reflected in the petition, evidence of the name change must also be submitted. If the petition is submitted by the purported father of a child or son or daughter born out of wedlock, the father must show that he is the natural father and that a bona fide parent-child relationship was established when the child or son or daughter was unmarried and under twenty-one years of age. Such a relationship will be deemed to exist or to have existed where the father demonstrates or has demonstrated an active concern for the child's support, instruction, and general welfare. Primary evidence to establish that the petitioner is the child's natural father is the beneficiary's birth certificate, issued by civil authorities and showing the father's name. If the father's name has been legally changed, evidence of the name change must accompany the petition. Evidence of a parent-child relationship should establish more than merely a biological relationship. Emotional and/or financial ties or a genuine concern and interest by the father for the child's support, instruction, and general welfare must be shown. There



should be evidence that the father and child actually lived together or that the father held the child out as being his own, that he provided for some or all of the child's needs, or that in general the father's behavior evidenced a genuine concern for the child. The most persuasive evidence for establishing a bona fide parent/child relationship and financial responsibility by the father is documentary evidence which was contemporaneous with the events in question. Such evidence may include, but is not limited to: money order receipts or cancelled checks showing the father's financial support of the beneficiary; the father's income tax returns; the father's medical or insurance records which include the beneficiary as a dependent; school records for the beneficiary; correspondence between the parties; or notarized affidavits of friends, neighbors, school officials, or other associates knowledgeable about the relationship.

(iv) *Primary evidence for a stepchild.* If a petition is submitted by a stepparent on behalf of a stepchild or stepson or stepdaughter, the petition must be supported by the stepchild's or stepson's or stepdaughter's birth certificate, issued by civil authorities and showing the name of the beneficiary's parent to whom the petitioner is married, a marriage certificate issued by civil authorities which shows that the petitioner and the child's natural parent were married before the stepchild or stepson or stepdaughter reached the age of eighteen; and evidence of the termination of any prior marriages of the petitioner and the natural parent of the stepchild or stepson or stepdaughter.

(v) *Secondary evidence.* When it is established that primary evidence is not available, secondary evidence may be accepted. To determine the availability of primary documents, the Service will refer to the Department of State's Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM). When the FAM shows that primary documents are generally available in the country at issue but the petitioner claims that his or her document is unavailable, a letter from the appropriate registrar stating that the document is not available will be required before the Service will accept secondary evidence. Sec-

ondary evidence will be evaluated for its authenticity and credibility. Secondary evidence may take the form of historical evidence; such evidence must have been issued contemporaneously with the event which it documents any may include, but is not limited to, medical records, school records, and religious documents. Affidavits may also be accepted. When affidavits are submitted, they must be sworn to by persons who were born at the time of and who have personal knowledge of the event to which they attest. Any affidavit must contain the affiant's full name and address, date and place of birth, relationship to the party, if any, and complete details concerning how the affiant acquired knowledge of the event.

(vi) *Blood tests.* The director may require that a specific Blood Group Antigen Test be conducted of the beneficiary and the beneficiary's father and mother. In general, blood tests will be required only after other forms of evidence have proven inconclusive. If the specific Blood Group Antigen Test is also found not to be conclusive and the director determines that additional evidence is needed, a Human Leucocyte Antigen (HLA) test may be requested. Tests will be conducted, at the expense of the petitioner or beneficiary, by the United States Public Health Service physician who is authorized overseas or by a qualified medical specialist designated by the district director. The results of the test should be reported on Form G-620. Refusal to submit to a Specific Blood Group Antigen or HLA test when requested may constitute a basis for denial of the petition, unless a legitimate religious objection has been established. When a legitimate religious objection is established, alternate forms of evidence may be considered based upon documentation already submitted.

(vii) *Primary evidence for an adopted child or son or daughter.* A petition may be submitted on behalf of an adopted child or son or daughter by a United States citizen or lawful permanent resident if the adoption took place before the beneficiary's sixteenth birthday, and if the child has been in the legal custody of the adopting parent or

parents and has resided with the adopting parent or parents for at least two years. A copy of the adoption decree, issued by the civil authorities, must accompany the petition.

(A) *Legal custody* means the assumption of responsibility for a minor by an adult under the laws of the state and under the order or approval of a court of law or other appropriate government entity. This provision requires that a legal process involving the courts or other recognized government entity take place. If the adopting parent was granted legal custody by the court or recognized governmental entity prior to the adoption, that period may be counted toward fulfillment of the two-year legal custody requirement. However, if custody was not granted prior to the adoption, the adoption decree shall be deemed to mark the commencement of legal custody. An informal custodial or guardianship document, such as a sworn affidavit signed before a notary public, is insufficient for this purpose.

(B) Evidence must also be submitted to show that the beneficiary resided with the petitioner for at least two years. Generally, such documentation must establish that the petitioner and the beneficiary resided together in a familial relationship. Evidence of parental control may include, but is not limited to, evidence that the adoptive parent owns or maintains the property where the child resides and provides financial support and day-to-day supervision. The evidence must clearly indicate the physical living arrangements of the adopted child, the adoptive parent(s), and the natural parent(s) for the period of time during which the adoptive parent claims to have met the residence requirement. When the adopted child continued to reside in the same household as a natural parent(s) during the period in which the adoptive parent petitioner seeks to establish his or her compliance with this requirement, the petitioner has the burden of establishing that he or she exercised primary parental control during that period of residence.

(C) Legal custody and residence occurring prior to or after the adoption will satisfy both requirements. Legal custody, like residence, is accounted

for in the aggregate. Therefore, a break in legal custody or residence will not affect the time already fulfilled. To meet the definition of child contained in sections 101(b)(1)(E) and 101(b)(2) of the Act, the child must have been under 16 years of age when the adoption is finalized.

(D) On or after the Convention effective date, as defined in 8 CFR part 204.301, a United States citizen who is habitually resident in the United States, as determined under 8 CFR 204.303, may not file a Form I-130 under this section on behalf of child who was habitually resident in a Convention country, as determined under 8 CFR 204.303, unless the adoption was completed before the Convention effective date. In the case of any adoption occurring on or after the Convention effective date, a Form I-130 may be filed and approved only if the United States citizen petitioner was not habitually resident in the United States at the time of the adoption.

(E) For purposes of paragraph (d)(2)(vii)(D) of this section, USCIS will deem a United States citizen, 8 CFR 204.303 notwithstanding, to have been habitually resident outside the United States, if the citizen satisfies the 2-year joint residence and custody requirements by residing with the child outside the United States.

(F) For purposes of paragraph (d)(2)(vii)(D) of this section, USCIS will not approve a Form I-130 under section 101(b)(1)(E) of the Act on behalf of an alien child who is present in the United States based on an adoption that is entered on or after the Convention effective date, but whose habitual residence immediately before the child's arrival in the United States was in a Convention country. However, the U.S. citizen seeking the child's adoption may file a Form I-800A and Form I-800 under 8 CFR part 204, subpart C.

(3) *Decision on and disposition of petition.* The approved petition will be forwarded to the Department of State's Processing Center. If the beneficiary is in the United States and is eligible for adjustment of status under section 245 of the Act, the approved petition will be retained by the Service. If the petition is denied, the petitioner will be notified of the reasons for the denial

and of the right to appeal in accordance with the provisions of 8 CFR 3.3.

(4) *Derivative beneficiaries.* A spouse or child accompanying or following to join a principal alien as used in this section may be accorded the same preference and priority date as the principal alien without the necessity of a separate petition. However, a child of an alien who is approved for classification as an immediate relative is not eligible for derivative classification and must have a separate petition approved on his or her behalf.

(5) *Name change.* When the petitioner's name does not appear on the child's birth certificate, evidence of the name change (such as the petitioner's marriage certificate, legal document showing name change, or other similar evidence) must accompany the petition. If the beneficiary's name has been legally changed, evidence of the name change must also accompany the petition.

(e) *Self-petition by child of abusive citizen or lawful permanent resident—(1) Eligibility.* (i) A child may file a self-petition under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iv) or 204(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Act if he or she:

(A) Is the child of a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States;

(B) Is eligible for immigrant classification under section 201(b)(2)(A)(i) or 203(a)(2)(A) of the Act based on that relationship;

(C) Is residing in the United States;

(D) Has resided in the United States with the citizen or lawful permanent resident parent;

(E) Has been battered by, or has been the subject of extreme cruelty perpetrated by, the citizen or lawful permanent resident parent while residing with that parent;

(F) Is a person of good moral character; and

(G) Is a person whose deportation would result in extreme hardship to himself or herself.

(ii) *Parent-child relationship to the abuser.* The self-petitioning child must be unmarried, less than 21 years of age, and otherwise qualify as the abuser's child under the definition of child contained in section 101(b)(1) of the Act when the petition is filed and when it is approved. Termination of the abus-

er's parental rights or a change in legal custody does not alter the self-petitioning relationship provided the child meets the requirements of section 101(b)(1) of the Act.

(iii) *Citizenship or immigration status of the abuser.* The abusive parent must be a citizen of the United States or a lawful permanent resident of the United States when the petition is filed and when it is approved. Changes in the abuser's citizenship or lawful permanent resident status after the approval will have no effect on the self-petition. A self-petition approved on the basis of a relationship to an abusive lawful permanent resident will not be automatically upgraded to immediate relative status. The self-petitioning child would not be precluded, however, from filing a new self-petition for immediate relative classification after the abuser's naturalization, provided the self-petitioning child continues to meet the self-petitioning requirements.

(iv) *Eligibility for immigrant classification.* A self-petitioner is required to comply with the provisions of section 204(c) of the Act, section 204(g) of the Act, and section 204(a)(2) of the Act.

(v) *Residence.* A self-petition will not be approved if the self-petitioner is not residing in the United States when the self-petition is filed. The self-petitioner is not required to be living with the abuser when the petition is filed, but he or she must have resided with the abuser in the United States in the past.

(vi) *Battery or extreme cruelty.* For the purpose of this chapter, the phrase "was battered by or was the subject of extreme cruelty" includes, but is not limited to, being the victim of any act or threatened act of violence, including any forceful detention, which results or threatens to result in physical or mental injury. Psychological or sexual abuse or exploitation, including rape, molestation, incest (if the victim is a minor), or forced prostitution shall be considered acts of violence. Other abusive actions may also be acts of violence under certain circumstances, including acts that, in and of themselves, may not initially appear violent but are a part of an overall pattern of violence. The qualifying abuse must have been committed by the citizen or lawful permanent resident parent, must

have been perpetrated against the self-petitioner, and must have taken place while the self-petitioner was residing with the abuser.

(vii) *Good moral character.* A self-petitioner will be found to lack good moral character if he or she is a person described in section 101(f) of the Act. Extenuating circumstances may be taken into account if the person has not been convicted of an offense or offenses but admits to the commission of an act or acts that could show a lack of good moral character under section 101(f) of the Act. A person who was subjected to abuse in the form of forced prostitution or who can establish that he or she was forced to engage in other behavior that could render the person excludable under section 212(a) of the Act would not be precluded from being found to be a person of good moral character, provided the person has not been convicted for the commission of the offense or offenses in a court of law. A self-petitioner will also be found to lack good moral character, unless he or she establishes extenuating circumstances, if he or she willfully failed or refused to support dependents; or committed unlawful acts that adversely reflect upon his or her moral character, or was convicted or imprisoned for such acts, although the acts do not require an automatic finding of lack of good moral character. A self-petitioner's claim of good moral character will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the provisions of section 101(f) of the Act and the standards of the average citizen in the community. If the results of record checks conducted prior to the issuance of an immigrant visa or approval of an application for adjustment of status disclose that the self-petitioner is no longer a person of good moral character or that he or she has not been a person of good moral character in the past, a pending self-petition will be denied or the approval of a self-petition will be revoked.

(viii) *Extreme hardship.* The Service will consider all credible evidence of extreme hardship submitted with a self-petition, including evidence of hardship arising from circumstances surrounding the abuse. The extreme hardship claim will be evaluated on a

case-by-case basis after a review of the evidence in the case. Self-petitioners are encouraged to cite and document all applicable factors, since there is no guarantee that a particular reason or reasons will result in a finding that deportation would cause extreme hardship. Hardship to persons other than the self-petitioner cannot be considered in determining whether a self-petitioning child's deportation would cause extreme hardship.

(2) *Evidence for a child's self-petition—*

(i) *General.* Self-petitioners are encouraged to submit primary evidence whenever possible. The Service will consider, however, any credible evidence relevant to the petition. The determination of what evidence is credible and the weight to be given that evidence shall be within the sole discretion of the Service.

(ii) *Relationship.* A self-petition filed by a child must be accompanied by evidence of citizenship of the United States citizen or proof of the immigration status of the lawful permanent resident abuser. It must also be accompanied by evidence of the relationship. Primary evidence of the relationship between:

(A) The self-petitioning child and an abusive biological mother is the self-petitioner's birth certificate issued by civil authorities;

(B) A self-petitioning child who was born in wedlock and an abusive biological father is the child's birth certificate issued by civil authorities, the marriage certificate of the child's parents, and evidence of legal termination of all prior marriages, if any;

(C) A legitimated self-petitioning child and an abusive biological father is the child's birth certificate issued by civil authorities, and evidence of the child's legitimation;

(D) A self-petitioning child who was born out of wedlock and an abusive biological father is the child's birth certificate issued by civil authorities showing the father's name, and evidence that a bona fide parent-child relationship has been established between the child and the parent;

(E) A self-petitioning stepchild and an abusive stepparent is the child's birth certificate issued by civil authorities, the marriage certificate of

the child's parent and the stepparent showing marriage before the stepchild reached 18 years of age, and evidence of legal termination of all prior marriages of either parent, if any; and

(F) An adopted self-petitioning child and an abusive adoptive parent is an adoption decree showing that the adoption took place before the child reached 16 years of age, and evidence that the child has been residing with and in the legal custody of the abusive adoptive parent for at least 2 years.

(iii) *Residence.* One or more documents may be submitted showing that the self-petitioner and the abuser have resided together in the United States. One or more documents may also be submitted showing that the self-petitioner is residing in the United States when the self-petition is filed. Employment records, school records, hospital or medical records, rental records, insurance policies, affidavits or any other type of relevant credible evidence of residency may be submitted.

(iv) *Abuse.* Evidence of abuse may include, but is not limited to, reports and affidavits from police, judges and other court officials, medical personnel, school officials, clergy, social workers, and other social service agency personnel. Persons who have obtained an order of protection against the abuser or taken other legal steps to end the abuse are strongly encouraged to submit copies of the relating legal documents. Evidence that the abuse victim sought safe-haven in a battered women's shelter or similar refuge may be relevant, as may a combination of documents such as a photograph of the visibly injured self-petitioner supported by affidavits. Other types of credible relevant evidence will also be considered. Documentary proof of non-qualifying abuse may only be used to establish a pattern of abuse and violence and to support a claim that qualifying abuse also occurred.

(v) *Good moral character.* Primary evidence of the self-petitioner's good moral character is the self-petitioner's affidavit. The affidavit should be accompanied by a local police clearance or a state-issued criminal background check from each locality or state in the United States in which the self-petitioner has resided for six or more

months during the 3-year period immediately preceding the filing of the self-petition. Self-petitioners who lived outside the United States during this time should submit a police clearance, criminal background check, or similar report issued by the appropriate authority in the foreign country in which he or she resided for six or more months during the 3-year period immediately preceding the filing of the self-petition. If police clearances, criminal background checks, or similar reports are not available for some or all locations, the self-petitioner may include an explanation and submit other evidence with his or her affidavit. The Service will consider other credible evidence of good moral character, such as affidavits from responsible persons who can knowledgeably attest to the self-petitioner's good moral character. A child who is less than 14 years of age is presumed to be a person of good moral character and is not required to submit affidavits of good moral character, police clearances, criminal background checks, or other evidence of good moral character.

(vi) *Extreme hardship.* Evidence of extreme hardship may include affidavits, medical reports, protection orders and other court documents, police reports, and other relevant credible evidence.

(3) *Decision on and disposition of the petition*—(i) *Petition approved.* If the self-petitioning child will apply for adjustment of status under section 245 of the Act, the approved petition will be retained by the Service. If the self-petitioner will apply for an immigrant visa abroad, the approved self-petition will be forwarded to the Department of State's National Visa Center.

(ii) *Petition denied.* If the self-petition is denied, the self-petitioner will be notified in writing of the reasons for the denial and of the right to appeal the decision.

(4) *Derivative beneficiaries.* A child of a self-petitioning child is not eligible for derivative classification and must have a petition filed on his or her behalf if seeking immigrant classification.

(5) *Name change.* If the self-petitioner's current name is different than the name shown on the documents, evidence of the name change (such as the petitioner's marriage certificate, legal

document showing the name change, or other similar evidence) must accompany the self-petition.

(6) *Prima facie determination.* (i) Upon receipt of a self-petition under paragraph (e)(1) of this section, the Service shall make a determination as to whether the petition and the supporting documentation establish a “prima facie case” for purposes of 8 U.S.C. 1641, as amended by section 501 of Public Law 104–208.

(ii) For purposes of paragraph (e)(6)(i) of this section, a prima facie case is established only if the petitioner submits a completed Form I-360 and other evidence supporting all of the elements required of a self-petitioner in paragraph (e)(1) of this section. A finding of prima facie eligibility does not relieve the petitioner of the burden of providing additional evidence in support of the petition and does not establish eligibility for the underlying petition.

(iii) If the Service determines that a petitioner has made a “prima facie case” the Service shall issue a Notice of Prima Facie Case to the petitioner. Such Notice shall be valid until the Service either grants or denies the petition.

(iv) For purposes of adjudicating the petition submitted under paragraph (e)(1) of this section, a prima facie determination:

(A) Shall not be considered evidence in support of the petition;

(B) Shall not be construed to make a determination of the credibility or probative value of any evidence submitted along with that petition; and,

(C) Shall not relieve the self-petitioner of his or her burden of complying with all of the evidentiary requirements of paragraph (e)(2) of this section.

(f) *Petition for a parent—(1) Eligibility.* Only a United States citizen who is twenty-one years of age or older may file a petition on behalf of a parent for classification under section 201(b) of the Act.

(2) *Evidence to support a petition for a parent.* In addition to evidence of United States citizenship as listed in § 204.1(g) of this part, the petitioner must also provide evidence of the claimed relationship.

(i) *Primary evidence if petitioner is a legitimate son or daughter.* If a petition is submitted on behalf of the mother, the birth certificate of the petitioner showing the mother’s name must accompany the petition. If the mother’s name on the birth certificate is different from her name as reflected in the petition, evidence of the name change must also be submitted. If a petition is submitted on behalf of the father, the birth certificate of the petitioner, a marriage certificate of the parents, and proof of legal termination of the parents’ prior marriages, if any, issued by civil authorities must accompany the petition. If the father’s name on the birth certificate has been legally changed, evidence of the name change must also accompany the petition.

(ii) *Primary evidence if petitioner is a legitimated son or daughter.* A child can be legitimated through the marriage of his or her natural parents, by the laws of the country or state of the child’s residence or domicile, or by the laws of the country or state of the father’s residence or domicile. If the legitimation is based on the natural parent’s marriage, such marriage must have taken place while the child was under the age of eighteen. If the legitimation is based on the laws of the country or state of the child’s residence or domicile, the law must have taken effect before the child’s eighteenth birthday. If the legitimation is based on the laws of the country or state of the father’s residence or domicile, the father must have resided—while the child was under eighteen years of age—in the country or state under whose laws the child has been legitimated. Primary evidence of the relationship should consist of petitioner’s birth certificate and the parents’ marriage certificate or other evidence of legitimation issued by civil authorities.

(iii) *Primary evidence if the petitioner is an illegitimate son or daughter.* If a petition is submitted on behalf of the mother, the petitioner’s birth certificate, issued by civil authorities and showing the mother’s name, must accompany the petition. If the mother’s name on the birth certificate is different from her name as reflected in the petition, evidence of the name change must also be submitted. If the

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petition is submitted on behalf of the purported father of the petitioner, the petitioner must show that the beneficiary is his or her natural father and that a bona fide parent-child relationship was established when the petitioner was unmarried and under twenty-one years of age. Such a relationship will be deemed to exist or to have existed where the father demonstrates or has demonstrated an active concern for the child's support, instruction, and general welfare. Primary evidence to establish that the beneficiary is the petitioner's natural father is the petitioner's birth certificate, issued by civil authorities and showing the father's name. If the father's name has been legally changed, evidence of the name change must accompany the petition. Evidence of a parent/child relationship should establish more than merely a biological relationship. Emotional and/or financial ties or a genuine concern and interest by the father for the child's support, instruction, and general welfare must be shown. There should be evidence that the father and child actually lived together or that the father held the child out as being his own, that he provided for some or all of the child's needs, or that in general the father's behavior evidenced a genuine concern for the child. The most persuasive evidence for establishing a bona fide parent/child relationship is documentary evidence which was contemporaneous with the events in question. Such evidence may include, but is not limited to: money order receipts or cancelled checks showing the father's financial support of the beneficiary; the father's income tax returns; the father's medical or insurance records which include the petitioner as a dependent; school records for the petitioner; correspondence between the parties; or notarized affidavits of friends, neighbors, school officials, or other associates knowledgeable as to the relationship.

(iv) *Primary evidence if petitioner is an adopted son or daughter.* A petition may be submitted for an adoptive parent by a United States citizen who is twenty-one years of age or older if the adoption took place before the petitioner's sixteenth birthday and if the two year legal custody and residence require-

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ments have been met. A copy of the adoption decree, issued by the civil authorities, must accompany the petition.

(A) *Legal custody* means the assumption of responsibility for a minor by an adult under the laws of the state and under the order or approval of a court of law or other appropriate government entity. This provision requires that a legal process involving the courts or other recognized government entity take place. If the adopting parent was granted legal custody by the court or recognized governmental entity prior to the adoption, that period may be counted toward fulfillment of the two-year legal custody requirement. However, if custody was not granted prior to the adoption, the adoption decree shall be deemed to mark the commencement of legal custody. An informal custodial or guardianship document, such as a sworn affidavit signed before a notary public, is insufficient for this purpose.

(B) Evidence must also be submitted to show that the beneficiary resided with the petitioner for at least two years. Generally, such documentation must establish that the petitioner and the beneficiary resided together in a parental relationship. The evidence must clearly indicate the physical living arrangements of the adopted child, the adoptive parent(s), and the natural parent(s) for the period of time during which the adoptive parent claims to have met the residence requirement.

(C) Legal custody and residence occurring prior to or after the adoption will satisfy both requirements. Legal custody, like residence, is accounted for in the aggregate. Therefore, a break in legal custody or residence will not affect the time already fulfilled. To meet the definition of child contained in sections 101(b)(1)(E) and 101(b)(2) of the Act, the child must have been under 16 years of age when the adoption is finalized.

(v) *Name change.* When the petition is filed by a child for the child's parent, and the parent's name is not on the child's birth certificate, evidence of the name change (such as the parent's marriage certificate, a legal document showing the parent's name change, or

other similar evidence) must accompany the petition. If the petitioner's name has been legally changed, evidence of the name change must also accompany the petition.

(3) *Decision on and disposition of petition.* The approved petition will be forwarded to the Department of State's Processing Center. If the beneficiary is in the United States and is eligible for adjustment of status under section 245 of the Act, the approved petition will be retained by the Service. If the petition is denied, the petitioner will be notified of the reasons for the denial and of the right to appeal in accordance with the provisions of 8 CFR 3.3.

(4) *Derivative beneficiaries.* A child or a spouse of a principal alien who is approved for classification as an immediate relative is not eligible for derivative classification and must have a separate petition approved on his or her behalf.

(g) *Petition for a brother or sister—(1) Eligibility.* Only a United States citizen who is twenty-one years of age or older may file a petition of a brother or sister for classification under section 203(a)(4) of the Act.

(2) *Evidence to support a petition for brother or sister.* In addition to evidence of United States citizenship, the petitioner must also provide evidence of the claimed relationship.

(i) *Primary evidence if the siblings share a common mother or are both legitimate children of a common father.* If a sibling relationship is claimed through a common mother, the petition must be supported by a birth certificate of the petitioner and a birth certificate of the beneficiary showing a common mother. If the mother's name on one birth certificate is different from her name as reflected on the other birth certificate or in the petition, evidence of the name change must also be submitted. If a sibling relationship is claimed through a common father, the birth certificates of the beneficiary and petitioner, a marriage certificate of the parents' and proof of legal termination of the parents, prior marriage(s), if any, issued by civil authorities must accompany the petition. If the father's name has been legally changed, evidence of the name change must also accompany the petition.

(ii) *Primary evidence if either or both siblings are legitimated.* A child can be legitimated through the marriage of his or her natural parents, by the laws of the country or state of the child's residence or domicile, or by the laws of the country or state of the father's residence or domicile. If the legitimation is based on the natural parents' marriage, such marriage must have taken place while the child was under the age of eighteen. If the legitimation is based on the laws of the country or state of the child's residence or domicile, the law must have taken effect before the child's eighteenth birthday. If based on the laws of the country or state of the father's residence or domicile, the father must have resided—while the child was under eighteen years of age—in the country or state under whose laws the child has been legitimated. Primary evidence of the relationship should consist of the petitioner's birth certificate, the beneficiary's birth certificate, and the parents' marriage certificate or other evidence of legitimation issued by civil authorities.

(iii) *Primary evidence if either sibling is illegitimate.* If one or both of the siblings is (are) the illegitimate child(ren) of a common father, the petitioner must show that they are the natural children of the father and that a bona fide parent-child relationship was established when the illegitimate child(ren) was (were) unmarried and under twenty-one years of age. Such a relationship will be deemed to exist or to have existed where the father demonstrates or has demonstrated an active concern for the child's support, instruction, and general welfare. Primary evidence is the petitioner's and beneficiary's birth certificates, issued by civil authorities and showing the father's name, and evidence that the siblings have or had a bona fide parent-child relationship with the natural father. If the father's name has been legally changed, evidence of the name change must accompany the petition. Evidence of a parent-child relationship should establish more than merely a biological relationship. Emotional and/or financial ties or a genuine concern and interest by the father for the child's support, instruction, and general welfare must be shown. There



should be evidence that the father and child actually lived together or that the father held the child out as being his own, that he provided for some or all of the child's needs, or that in general the father's behavior evidenced a genuine concern for the child. The most persuasive evidence for establishing a bona fide parent/child relationship is documentary evidence which was contemporaneous with the events in question. Such evidence may include, but is not limited to: money order receipts or canceled checks showing the father's financial support of the beneficiary; the father's income tax returns; the father's medical or insurance records which include the beneficiary as a dependent; school records for the beneficiary; correspondence between the parties; or notarized affidavits of friends, neighbors, school officials, or other associates knowledgeable about the relationship.

(iv) *Primary evidence for stepsiblings.* If the petition is submitted on behalf of a brother or sister having a common father, the relationship of both the petitioner and the beneficiary to the father must be established as required in paragraphs (g)(2)(ii) and (g)(2)(iii) of this section. If the petitioner and beneficiary are stepsiblings through the marriages of their common father to different mothers, the marriage certificates of the parents and evidence of the termination of any prior marriages of the parents must be submitted.

(3) *Decision on and disposition of petition.* The approved petition will be forwarded to the Department of State's Processing Center. If the beneficiary is in the United States and is eligible for adjustment of status under section 245 of the Act, the approved petition will be retained by the Service. If the petition is denied, the petitioner will be notified of the reasons for the denial and of the right to appeal in accordance with the provisions of 8 CFR 3.3.

(4) *Derivative beneficiaries.* A spouse or a child accompanying or following to join a principal alien beneficiary under this section may be accorded the same preference and priority date as the principal alien without the necessity of a separate petition.

(5) *Name change.* If the name of the petitioner, the beneficiary, or both has

been legally changed, evidence showing the name change (such as a marriage certificate, a legal document showing the name change, or other similar evidence) must accompany the petition.

(h) *Validity of approved petitions—(1) General.* Unless terminated pursuant to section 203(g) of the Act or revoked pursuant to part 205 of this chapter, the approval of a petition to classify an alien as a preference immigrant under paragraphs (a)(1), (a)(2), (a)(3), or (a)(4) of section 203 of the Act, or as an immediate relative under section 201(b) of the Act, shall remain valid for the duration of the relationship to the petitioner and of the petitioner's status as established in the petition.

(2) *Subsequent petition by same petitioner for same beneficiary.* When a visa petition has been approved, and subsequently a new petition by the same petitioner is approved for the same preference classification on behalf of the same beneficiary, the latter approval shall be regarded as a reaffirmation or reinstatement of the validity of the original petition, except when the original petition has been terminated pursuant to section 203(g) of the Act or revoked pursuant to part 205 of this chapter, or when an immigrant visa has been issued to the beneficiary as a result of the petition approval. A self-petition filed under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii), 204(a)(1)(A)(iv), 204(a)(1)(B)(ii), 204(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Act based on the relationship to an abusive citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States will not be regarded as a reaffirmation or reinstatement of a petition previously filed by the abuser. A self-petitioner who has been the beneficiary of a visa petition filed by the abuser to accord the self-petitioner immigrant classification as his or her spouse or child, however, will be allowed to transfer the visa petition's priority date to the self-petition. The visa petition's priority date may be assigned to the self-petition without regard to the current validity of the visa petition. The burden of proof to establish the existence of and the filing date of the visa petition lies with the self-petitioner, although the Service will attempt to verify a claimed filing through a search of the Service's computerized records or other

records deemed appropriate by the adjudicating officer. A new self-petition filed under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii), 204(a)(1)(A)(iv), 204(a)(1)(B)(ii), or 204(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Act will not be regarded as a reaffirmation or reinstatement of the original self-petition unless the prior and the subsequent self-petitions are based on the relationship to the same abusive citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States.

(i) *Automatic conversion of preference classification*—(1) *By change in beneficiary's marital status.* (i) A currently valid petition previously approved to classify the beneficiary as the unmarried son or daughter of a United States citizen under section 203(a)(1) of the Act shall be regarded as having been approved for preference status under section 203(a)(3) of the Act as of the date the beneficiary marries. The beneficiary's priority date is the same as the date the petition for classification under section 203(a)(1) of the Act was properly filed.

(ii) A currently valid petition previously approved to classify a child of a United States citizen as an immediate relative under section 201(b) of the Act shall be regarded as having been approved for preference status under section 203(a)(3) of the Act as of the date the beneficiary marries. The beneficiary's priority date is the same as the date the petition for 201(b) classification was properly filed.

(iii) A currently valid petition classifying the married son or married daughter of a United States citizen for preference status under section 203(a)(3) of the Act shall, upon legal termination of the beneficiary's marriage, be regarded as having been approved under section 203(a)(1) of the Act if the beneficiary is over twenty-one years of age. The beneficiary's priority date is the same as the date the petition for classification under section 203(a)(3) of the Act was properly filed. If the beneficiary is under twenty-one years of age, the petition shall be regarded as having been approved for classification as an immediate relative under section 201(b) of the Act as of the date the petition for classification under section 203(a)(3) of the Act was properly filed.

(iv) A currently valid visa petition previously approved to classify the beneficiary as an immediate relative as the spouse of a United States citizen must be regarded, upon the death of the petitioner, as having been approved as a Form I-360, Petition for Amerasian, Widow(er) or Special Immigrant for classification under paragraph (b) of this section, if, on the date of the petitioner's death, the beneficiary satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b)(1) of this section. If the petitioner dies before the petition is approved, but, on the date of the petitioner's death, the beneficiary satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b)(1) of this section, then the petition shall be adjudicated as if it had been filed as a Form I-360, Petition for Amerasian, Widow(er) or Special Immigrant under paragraph (b) of this section.

(2) *By the beneficiary's attainment of the age of twenty-one years.* A currently valid petition classifying the child of a United States citizen as an immediate relative under section 201(b) of the Act shall be regarded as having been approved for preference status under section 203(a)(1) of the Act as of the beneficiary's twenty-first birthday. The beneficiary's priority date is the same as the date the petition for section 201(b) classification was filed.

(3) *By the petitioner's naturalization.* Effective upon the date of naturalization of a petitioner who had been lawfully admitted for permanent residence, a currently valid petition according preference status under section 203(a)(2) of the Act to the petitioner's spouse and unmarried children under twenty-one years of age shall be regarded as having been approved for immediate relative status under section 201(b) of the Act. Similarly, a currently valid petition according preference status under section 203(a)(2) of the Act for the unmarried son or daughter over twenty-one years of age shall be regarded as having been approved under section 203(a)(1) of the Act. In any case of conversion to classification under section 203(a)(1) of the Act, the beneficiary's priority date is the same as the date the petition for classification under section 203(a)(2) of the Act was properly filed. A self-petition filed under section 204(a)(1)(B)(ii) or

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204(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Act based on the relationship to an abusive lawful permanent resident of the United States for classification under section 203(a)(2) of the Act will not be affected by the abuser's naturalization and will not be automatically converted to a petition for immediate relative classification.

[57 FR 41057, Sept. 9, 1992, as amended at 60 FR 34090, June 30, 1995; 60 FR 38948, July 31, 1995; 61 FR 13073, 13075, 13077, Mar. 26, 1996; 62 FR 10336, Mar. 6, 1997; 62 FR 60771, Nov. 13, 1997; 71 FR 35749, June 21, 2006; 72 FR 19107, Apr. 17, 2007; 72 FR 56853, Oct. 4, 2007]

#### **§ 204.3 Orphan cases under section 101(b)(1)(F) of the Act (non-Hague Adoption Convention cases).**

(a) This section addresses the immigration classification of alien orphans as provided for in section 101(b)(1)(F) of the Act.

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (a)(2) of this section, a child who meets the definition of orphan contained in section 101(b)(1)(F) of the Act is eligible for classification as the immediate relative of a U.S. citizen if:

(i) The U.S. citizen seeking the child's immigration can document that the citizen (and his or her spouse, if any) are capable of providing, and will provide, proper care for an alien orphan; and

(ii) The child is an orphan under section 101(b)(1)(F) of the Act.

A U.S. citizen may submit the documentation necessary for each of these determinations separately or at one time, depending on when the orphan is identified.

(2) Form I-600A or Form I-600 may not be filed under this section on or after the Convention effective date, as defined in 8 CFR 204.301, on behalf of a child who is habitually resident in a Convention country, as defined in 8 CFR 204.301. On or after the Convention effective date, USCIS may approve a Form I-600 on behalf of a child who is habitually resident in a Convention country only if the Form I-600A or Form I-600 was filed before the Convention effective date.

(b) *Definitions.* As used in this section, the term:

*Abandonment by both parents* means that the parents have willfully forsaken all parental rights, obligations,

and claims to the child, as well as all control over and possession of the child, without intending to transfer, or without transferring, these rights to any specific person(s). Abandonment must include not only the intention to surrender all parental rights, obligations, and claims to the child, and control over and possession of the child, but also the actual act of surrendering such rights, obligations, claims, control, and possession. A relinquishment or release by the parents to the prospective adoptive parents or for a specific adoption does not constitute abandonment. Similarly, the relinquishment or release of the child by the parents to a third party for custodial care in anticipation of, or preparation for, adoption does not constitute abandonment unless the third party (such as a governmental agency, a court of competent jurisdiction, an adoption agency, or an orphanage) is authorized under the child welfare laws of the foreign-sending country to act in such a capacity. A child who is placed temporarily in an orphanage shall not be considered to be abandoned if the parents express an intention to retrieve the child, are contributing or attempting to contribute to the support of the child, or otherwise exhibit ongoing parental interest in the child. A child who has been given unconditionally to an orphanage shall be considered to be abandoned.

*Adult member of the prospective adoptive parents' household* means an individual, other than a prospective adoptive parent, over the age of 18 whose principal or only residence is the home of the prospective adoptive parents. This definition excludes any child of the prospective adoptive parents, whose principal or only residence is the home of the prospective adoptive parents, who reaches his or her eighteenth birthday after the prospective adoptive parents have filed the advanced processing application (or the advanced processing application concurrently with the orphan petition) unless the director has an articulable and substantive reason for requiring an evaluation by a home study preparer and/or fingerprint check.

*Advanced processing application* means Form I-600A (Application for Advanced