



I Am a U.S. Citizen

How Do I... Get Proof of My U.S. Citizenship?



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

M-560 (August 2008)

A4 Customer Guide

If you were born in the United States, you do not need to apply to USCIS for any evidence of citizenship. Your birth certificate issued where you were born is proof of your citizenship.¹

If you were born outside the United States, but one or both of your parents were U.S. citizens when you were born, you may still be a U.S. citizen. This is called citizenship through derivation. There are usually additional specific requirements, and sometimes citizenship can be through a combination of a parent and grandparent.

What documents are usually accepted as proof of U.S. citizenship?

The most common documents that establish U.S. citizenship are:

- **Birth Certificate**, issued by a U.S. State (if the person was born in the United States), or by the U.S. Department of State (if the person was born abroad to U.S. citizen parents who registered the child's birth and U.S. citizenship with the U.S. Embassy or consulate);
- **U.S. Passport**, issued by the U.S. Department of State;
- **Certificate of Citizenship**, issued to a person born outside the United States who derived or acquired U.S. citizenship through a U.S. citizen parent; or
- **Naturalization Certificate**, issued to a person who became a U.S. citizen after 18 years of age through the naturalization process.

I was born in the United States. Where can I get a copy of my birth certificate?

Check with the Department of Health (Vital Records) in the U.S. State in which you were born. For more information, visit the National Center for Health Statistics web page at www.cdc.gov/nchs/births.htm.

¹An exception to this rule exists regarding children born in the United States to foreign diplomats.

I am a U.S. citizen. My child will be born abroad or recently was born abroad. How do I register his or her birth and U.S. citizenship?

Please contact the U.S. Department of State or the U.S. Embassy or consulate in the country where your child will be born for more information about eligibility requirements and how to register your child's U.S. citizenship.

I was born overseas. My birth and U.S. citizenship were registered with the U.S. Embassy or consulate. I need a copy of the evidence of my citizenship. Whom should I contact?

Contact the U.S. Department of State. For more information, please see their website at www.state.gov.

I was born overseas. I believe I was a U.S. citizen at birth because one or both my parents were U.S. citizens when I was born. But my birth and citizenship were not registered with the U.S. Embassy when I was born. Can I apply to have my citizenship recognized?

Whether or not someone born outside the United States to a U.S. citizen parent is a U.S. citizen depends on the law in effect when the person was born. These laws have changed over the years, but usually require a combination of the parent being a U.S. citizen when the child was born, and the parent having lived in the United States or its possessions for a specific period of time. Derivative citizenship can be quite complex and may require careful legal analysis.

I was born overseas. One of my parents was a U.S. citizen but never lived in the United States. One of my grandparents was also a U.S. citizen. Could I have derived U.S. citizenship?

If your parent was a U.S. citizen when you were born but had not lived in the United States for the required amount of time before your birth, but one of your grandparents was also a U.S. citizen and had already met the residence requirements, then you may still

have derived U.S. citizenship. The provisions of immigration law that govern derivative citizenship are quite precise and circumstances in individual cases can be complex. For specific information on how the law applies, please check our website or the U.S. Department of State website at www.state.gov, or call USCIS Customer Service at **1-800-375-5283**.

I was born overseas. After I was born, my parent(s) became naturalized U.S. citizens. Could I have derived U.S. citizenship?

If **one** of your parents naturalized after February 27, 2001, and you were a permanent resident and under 18 years old at the time, then you may have automatically acquired U.S. citizenship. Before that date, you may have automatically acquired U.S. citizenship if you were a permanent resident and under 18 years old when **both** parents naturalized, or if you had only **one** parent when that parent naturalized.

However, if your parent(s) naturalized after you were 18, then you will need to apply for naturalization on your own after you have been a permanent resident for at least 5 years.

How do I apply to have my citizenship recognized?

You have two options:

- You can apply to the U.S. Department of State for a U.S. passport. A passport is evidence of citizenship and also serves as a travel document if you need to travel. For information about applying for a U.S. passport, see the U.S. Department of State website at www.state.gov.
- If you are already in the United States, you also have the option of applying to USCIS using **Form N-600**, *Application for Certificate of Citizenship*. However, you may find applying for a passport to be more convenient because it also serves as a travel document and could be a faster process.

How do I replace a lost, stolen, or destroyed Naturalization Certificate or Certificate of Citizenship?

To apply to replace your Naturalization Certificate or Certificate of Citizenship issued by USCIS or by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, file a **Form N-565**, *Application for Replacement Naturalization Citizenship Document*. The N-565 application is available on our website.

Key Information

Key USCIS forms referenced in this guide	Form #
Application for Certificate of Citizenship	N-600
Application for Replacement Naturalization Citizenship Document	N-565

USCIS

- **On the Internet at: www.uscis.gov**

For more copies of this guide, or information about other citizenship and immigration services, please visit our website. You can also download forms, e-file some applications, check the status of an application, and more. It's a great place to start!

If you don't have Internet access at home or work, try your local library. If you cannot find what you need, please call Customer Service.

- **Customer Service: 1-800-375-5283**
- Hearing Impaired TDD Customer Service: 1-800-767-1833

Other U.S. Government Services—Click or Call

General Information	www.usagov.gov	1-800-333-4636
New Immigrants	www.welcometoUSA.gov	
U.S. Dept. of State	www.state.gov	1-202-647-6575
National Center for Health Statistics	www.cdc.gov	1-800-311-3435
	www.cdc.gov/nchs/birth.htm	

Disclaimer: This guide provides basic information to help you become generally familiar with our rules and procedures. For more information, or the law and regulations, please visit our website. Immigration law can be complex, and it is impossible to describe every aspect of every process. You may wish to be represented by a licensed attorney or by a nonprofit agency accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals.