

Important Notes on Resettling Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Holders

Background

Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders, or “SIVs”, are those individuals who have been granted special immigrant status on account of their service to US military and/or contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan. Historically, IRIS has received SIVs from both countries. Most recently, nearly all SIVs are coming from Afghanistan and comprise the majority of our arrivals since restrictions and additional security requirements were imposed by the current administration. SIVs are adjudicated under rules that are different from those governing applications for refugee status.

Almost always, when SIVs are allocated to IRIS, they provide contact information for a “**US tie**” here in Connecticut (i.e., usually New Haven) near whom they wish to live. While there is a large Afghan community concentrated in downtown New Haven, IRIS has been taking measures to encourage the community to spread out beyond New Haven to take advantage of better neighborhoods and schools. Included in that effort is presenting the US ties with the opportunity for their relatives or friends to be resettled through a community co-sponsor.

Adjusted Offer of Co-Sponsorship Procedure

When IRIS receives an arrival notice for an SIV family, the US tie is contacted for a telephone or in-person interview to ascertain the degree to which the tie will participate in the resettlement of his relatives or friends. During that conversation, the Community Co-Sponsor Program is described and offered as a resettlement option for the family. If the US tie is amenable to this prospect, a green-lit cosponsor is identified and offered the co-sponsorship before arranging for a meeting between the co-sponsor group and the US tie. During the meeting facilitated by the Community Co-Sponsorship Program Manager and/or the IRIS Executive Director, a small number of co-sponsor group members will have the opportunity to discuss their prospective relationship with the US tie while answering each other’s questions and concerns. If the conclusion of the meeting is favorable, the co-sponsor group would then have 48 hours from the date of the meeting to accept or decline the offer of co-sponsorship.

Please be advised that a meeting with the US tie would be hastily arranged within the 10-14 days before the date of arrival.

Social Security and Green Cards

For SIVs, **Social Security** cards are applied for either in conjunction with the SIV application overseas or at the point of entry. You will still receive Social Security

applications for each family member prior to their arrival, and you will still need to go to the SSA office. However, since their applications are likely in process, all you need to do is ask the clerk to verify that they are in process. In most instances, the cards will be delivered to IRIS because that is the de facto US address for the family upon arrival. Depending on where they are in the process, they could also be delivered either to the US tie or to their new US address (i.e., AR-11 form changes the address in most federal databases). It is important to maintain contact with the family's case manager and tie to monitor the mail until the cards have been received.

Similarly, SIVs apply for **green cards** at the time of their visa application. The visa(s) in the passport(s) are actually "temporary green cards", since SIVs are given permanent residence status in the US once SIV status is granted. The green cards for the entire family typically arrive within 30 days of arrival. As with Social Security cards, it is very important to communicate with the family's case manager to ensure proper delivery of the cards either to IRIS, the US tie, or the family's new US address.

With the exception of the above areas, all other policies and procedures outlined and described in this manual apply to SIV holders. They are eligible for R&P grants and their cases are administered in the same manner as that for refugees.