

Preparing clients for their Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Interview in San Francisco

In San Francisco, interviews are conducted as a matter of course (this is not true for other jurisdictions) and are done at CIS offices at 630 Sansome Street, San Francisco. The interview notice will generally specify to go to Suite 200 (2nd floor). This is the general check-in place where they will put a time stamp on the interview notice and will call the officer who will be conducting the interview. At the check-in desk, they will direct you to wait in a certain section of the lobby.

Almost all SIJS interviews in San Francisco are conducted by Officer Yuen or Officer Chen.

- When you go in to the interview, the officer asks the minor and the interpreter to stand and raise their right hands and then swears in the minor and has the interpreter swear to interpret accurately. She also asks for IDs from the minor and then interpreter.
- Once seated, the officer asks the minor if they know why they are there and what the interview is for. Depending on the answer, the officer helps explain SIJS and asks if they still want to apply.
- The officer reviews the biographical info on the I-360. If the attorney has included his/her office address instead of the minor's the officer will say "I know that your attorney's office is your mailing address, but where are you actually living?" The officer will often ask who the client is living with at that address.
- The officer then begins with questions listed on the top of the second page of the I-360 and asks when the client entered the U.S. (where they crossed "the frontera"). She will give names of towns on the border if they don't know to see if any of these ring a bell. She asks how many times they tried to enter and if they were ever turned back previously. She asks how they came – with strangers, family, friends? She asks about the date they entered the U.S.
- Sometimes, the officer reviews the questions on the bottom of the I-360. If the minor is in proceedings and hasn't applied for the I-485 she might mention that. She sometimes asks about working, but usually asks the client just to repeat what the question and attachment says.
- Sometimes the officer asks the 3rd page questions by paraphrasing – "you still have a case in juvenile court? Or you're still under juvenile court jurisdiction?" She doesn't usually ask anything about the second two questions (best interests and reunification not viable due to abuse abandonment or neglect). She sometimes asks which court the child has a case in (i.e., San Mateo, San Francisco, etc.)
- The officer often asks where the parents are and when the last time that the minor had contact with the parent was.
- The officer will ask whether the minor has any children anywhere in the world. Adopted children, stepchildren, children who have died?
- The officer will note that CIS ran the child's fingerprints and there was a "hit" or a "match". She'll mention that the child had an encounter with immigration, and ask if the child has had any other contact with law enforcement. If the minor has juvenile charges, she might mention that the charges were reflected in their biometrics She sometimes asks what they were arrested for but doesn't expect much detail in the response (eg. Kids have said drugs, or assault or shoplifting) and will note that the issue will be dealt with at the adjustment stage.

- The officer will ask if the minor has ever heard of selective service. If the minor gives a good response, she'll leave it at that, otherwise she'll clarify. She also tells the minor that there's one thing they should know for the future – if they become citizens, unlike other citizens they will never be able to apply for their parents.
- The officer will then give the attorney the application with any notes or changes she has made and asks you to review them and have the client sign again on the last page. The interpreter will also need to sign on the last page affirming accuracy of interpretation. The officer will usually go and make copies of the identifications and any other paperwork you may have brought to the interview while you are reviewing.
- The officer usually asks the client to fill out a one page sheet with the names of their parents and any siblings and she sometimes reviews afterwards with the client to ask if they all have the same mother and father and then marks which ones are whole or half siblings.
- It's unlikely that the officer will make any decisions on the spot but will instead give the clients a one page sheet explaining that they were interviewed and that they are either waiting for further review or if she needs something else (like a passport, or whatever), what it is that is needed and what the deadline is for returning that thing (usually 87 days).

After the interview, you will generally receive a decision on the case anywhere from later that day to a month or so. You can check the status by entering the receipt notice number on the USCIS website (www.uscis.gov) or sign up for an email notice once it's approved.

Tips for preparing minors:

Practice with them and review the application and all the questions that the officer usually asks. Remind them that they're not being tested on anything. The questions are generally straightforward, factual questions about them and their journey to the U.S. and the officer is just reviewing their application to make sure immigration has the correct information about them. Tell them not to worry if the officer takes notes. That's normal. It doesn't mean they're saying anything wrong. Officer Yuen may appear stern or very to the point but in our experience she's actually pretty nice so we tell kids not to worry if she isn't smiling or making small talk with them.

Remind them to bring a photo ID and any other request documents if at all possible

Make sure they know where to meet you. If they are going directly to Sansome alone, make sure they know how to get there and remind them to leave extra time in case they get lost or there's a public transit delay so they won't be late to their interview.

Tell them that at security, they'll have to go through a metal detector and bag screening and may have to take off shoes, belts, and anything metal. It's important not to bring too much extra stuff!

Talk with them about appropriate attire (depending on client). They don't need to wear a suit and tie but should dress as if they were going to church or some more formal event.