



Fact Sheet: Naturalization for Gold Star Families

Naturalization law recognizes the sacrifice that Gold Star Families make when a spouse, child or parent dies in service to the nation. Under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), immediate relatives of military service members who die while serving honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces may apply for U.S. citizenship if they meet certain requirements.

What is a Gold Star Family?

- A Gold Star Family generally includes the immediate relatives of members of the U.S. Armed Forces who have died in combat or in support of certain military activities.

Gold Star Family Naturalization Requirements

- A surviving spouse, child, or parent of a U.S. citizen who died while serving honorably in an active-duty status in the U.S. armed forces is [eligible to naturalize](#) under [INA Section 319\(d\)](#) if they meet the following [standard naturalization requirements](#):
 - Be age 18 or older at the time of filing;
 - Be a lawful permanent resident (“Green Card” holder) for at least five years;
 - Be able to read, write, and speak basic English, and have an understanding of U.S. history and American civics;
 - Be a person of good moral character; and
 - Demonstrate an attachment to the principles and ideals of the U.S. Constitution.
- A surviving spouse, child, or parent of a U.S. citizen who died while in service does not have to meet the five-year continuous residence and 30-month physical presence requirements, which most naturalization applicants have to meet.
- A surviving spouse must have been living in marital union with the service member at the time of their death, but it is acceptable if they remarry after the spouse’s death.

Posthumous Citizenship and Gold Star Families

- Any immigrant service member who enlisted in the U.S. or was a lawful permanent resident, served honorably in active-duty status in the U.S. Armed Forces and died as a result of an injury or disease incurred in or made worse by that military service may receive citizenship posthumously under [INA Section 329A](#).
 - If DoD does not make a request for citizenship for the deceased service member, the surviving spouse, child, parent or brother and sister must submit USCIS Form N-644 (Application for Posthumous Citizenship) within two years of the death, along with the Department of Defense (DD) Form 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) and DD Form 1300 (Report of Casualty/Military Death Certificate). After that, USCIS will process the forms and, if accepted, issue a Certificate of Citizenship (Form N-645) in the name of the deceased service member.
- A surviving spouse, child, or parent of a service member granted posthumous citizenship is eligible to naturalize if they meet the naturalization requirements outlined above.

Adjudication of Status

- If a surviving spouse, child, or parent does not have a “Green Card” and filed an Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status (Form I-485) prior to the service member’s death, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will continue to process that application as if the service member had not died.