

Are You Caring for an Afghan Child but Are Not Their Legal Parent?

Without legal documentation showing authority to care for the child, you may not be able to fully support their needs.

Don't Worry, There Is Help.

What Is a Legal Guardian in America?

There are paths to help you solve those problems. One option is called **legal guardianship**. This is someone who has the authority to act on behalf of a child when the child's parents are not available to make critical decisions for them. They can support with activities such as enrolling the child in school, making medical decisions for the child, opening a bank account for the child, and travelling outside the country with the child. [Learn more](#).

Does Becoming a Legal Guardian Make Me the Child's Parent Forever?

No. The child's parents will not lose their rights if you become the child's legal guardian, and you can be their legal guardian temporarily.

Who Can Help?

Every state has different laws, and a lawyer can help you consider what option might work best for you and next steps to take. Contact your [state refugee coordinator's](#) office for legal help if you do not have a lawyer.

It is common for Afghan children to be living with someone in America who is not their parent.

How Can I Apply to Become a Legal Guardian?

You must apply in the state where you and/or the child live. Each state has a different process. The process usually includes submitting a petition, required documentation, and a fee.

Are There Other Options?

Yes, there are two other options:

- You can apply to have a **power of attorney** for the child. This is a legal document that gives one or more persons the power to act on someone's behalf.
- You can apply for custody of the child. A family court judge may grant custody, which gives someone the authority to have a child in their physical care and to make major life decisions for that child.