

Ask the Embassy - February 6, 2018

Question: I'm a U.S. citizen but my child was born in Jamaica. How do I know if my child is a U.S. citizen too? What documentation will I need to provide to the Embassy?

This is a great question! A child born abroad to a United States citizen parent or parents may acquire U.S. citizenship at birth if certain statutory requirements are met. To qualify for the Consular Report of Birth Abroad, the U.S. citizen parent must provide sufficient proof of a biological relationship to the child, as well as evidence that he/she spent the required period physically present in the United States before the child was born.

Proof of biological relationship can include hospital records from before and after the child was born, which include the parent's information, photographs, or evidence that the parents were in the same place at the time of conception. The Consular Officer will determine at the time of the interview whether additional information is required. In certain cases, the Consular Officer may even suggest that you provide DNA evidence of the biological relationship. Please do not seek a DNA test prior to your interview, as only tests performed through the Embassy according to the State Department's technical requirements can be accepted.

The Immigration and Nationality Act requires that a U.S. citizen parent must be physically present in the United States prior to the birth of their child. However the physical presence requirements vary, depending on when the child was born, whether the parents were married at the time of the child's birth, and (in some cases) whether it is the mother or the father who is transmitting citizenship. Most frequently, the U.S. citizen parent must prove that they have been present in the United States for five (5) years, two (2) of which were after the age of 14. This can be demonstrated by providing pay slips, lease agreements, car payments, entry/exit records or passport stamps, or school transcripts, for example. All documentation provided to the Consular Officer will be considered.

If you believe you and your child meet these requirements, you should contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate to apply for a Consular Report of Birth Abroad. More information about the process to document the citizenship status of your child can be found on the U.S. Embassy's website here: <https://jm.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/child-family-matters/birth/> This page also includes very useful links to information about the Immigration and Nationality Act and the requirements for transmitting U.S. citizenship to children born abroad.

The more prepared you are prior to your interview, the faster the process will be.

For more information about visas and American Citizen Services, please visit our website, <https://jm.usembassy.gov/> For safety and security measures, the U.S. Embassy asks that all individuals arrive at the Embassy no more than 15 minutes before their designated appointment time.