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# Hughes Hubbard & Reed

## Firm Helps Honduran Family Stay Together Amid Deportation Threat

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**August 11, 2017** — Hughes Hubbard paved the path to legal permanent residency for two teenage immigrants who faced deportation after entering the United States last year to escape an abusive home in Honduras and join their mother and younger brother in New York.

After hearing testimony from the girls, ages 13 and 16, and their mother over the summer, Suffolk County Family Court granted the mother's custody petition, as well as the girls' petitions for special finding orders, which will permit them to apply for special immigrant juvenile status (SIJS).

SIJS is an immigration classification available to certain undocumented immigrants under the age of 21 who have been abused, neglected or abandoned by one or both parents. Obtaining SIJS allows the girls to petition for legal permanent residence in the United States and apply for work authorization.

The mother has lived in New York since 2004. Meanwhile, the girls lived with their abusive father and grandmother in Honduras before decamping to their uncle's home several hours away. They fled Honduras in 2016 after their father threatened to find them and kill them.

HHR received the case in December 2016 from Kids In Need of Defense (KIND), a nonprofit organization that partners with law firms, corporations and law schools to provide pro bono representation to unaccompanied immigrant and refugee children in removal proceedings. The firm represented the siblings and mother in immigration and family court hearings this summer.

The girls and their mother were happy and relieved at the outcome of the hearings. It was nerve-racking for the girls to testify before the family court judge, particularly about the abuse the girls suffered from their father, and they are excited not to have to return to family court. The older sibling was particularly excited because she hopes that she will be able to get work authorization soon.

Vilia Hayes, Sara E. Echenique and Austen Ishii worked on this matter.

## Related People



**Vilia B. Hayes**