

CRIMINAL INADMISSIBILITY GROUNDS UNDER INA § 212(a)(2)

Will or may result in ineligibility to obtain lawful admission status in the US or prevent a noncitizen who already has lawful admission status (including LPRs) from being able to return to the US from a trip abroad.

- Conviction or admission of a **Controlled Substance Offense** (if categorical match to federal “controlled substances”)
- DHS reason to believe that individual is a drug trafficker [see RTB box]
- Conviction or admission of a **Crime Involving Moral Turpitude** (CIMT), including generally offenses:
 - with an *intent to steal or defraud* as an element or
 - in which *bodily harm* is caused or threatened by an intentional act or *serious bodily harm* is caused or threatened by a reckless act. [Matter of Fualaau](#), 21 I&N Dec. 475 (BIA 1996) or
 - that are sex-related

Petty Offense Exception – only 1 CIMT + offense is not punishable >1 year & prison sentence ≤ 6 months

- **Prostitution** (conviction, admission, or intent to engage in US) or other **commercialized vice**
- Conviction of **2 or more offenses** of any type & **aggregate sentence to confinement of 5 yrs**

CRIMINAL BARS TO 212(h) WAIVER OF CRIMINAL INADMISSIBILITY based on time/rehabilitation since conviction (for prostitution inadmissibility) or extreme hardship to USC or LPR spouse, parent, son or daughter, and for VAWA self-petitioners. **INA § 212(h)**

- Conviction or admission of a **violent or dangerous crime** is a presumptive bar, 8 CFR § 1212.7(d)
- Conviction of an **Aggravated Felony**, or a **Criminal Inadmissibility Offense** if removal proceedings initiated before 7 yrs of lawful residence. **But note:** *these bars do not apply to non-LPRs or LPRs who adjusted to LPR status inside US & have not entered as LPR from abroad.* [Matter of J-H-J](#), 26 I&N Dec. 563 (BIA 2015)
- **Note:** 212(h) cannot waive a conviction or admission of a **Controlled Substance Offense** except a single offense of simple possession of ≤ 30g of marijuana. It also cannot waive §212(a)(2)(C) [see Reason to Believe Drug Trafficker box] or 212(a)(8) [see **post-9/17/26 Aggravated Felony** inadmissibility in §212(a)(8) box].

CRIMINAL BARS ON ASYLUM based on a well-founded fear of persecution in country of removal. **INA § 208(b)(2) – OR ON WITHHOLDING OF REMOVAL** based on threat to life or freedom in country of removal. **INA § 241(b)(3)(B)**

- Conviction of a **“Particularly Serious Crime” (PSC)**
 - All **Aggravated Felonies**, INA § 101(a)(43), will be deemed PSCs for asylum
 - Withholding barred if aggravated felonies w/ aggregate 5 yr + sentences of imprisonment
 - Withholding presumptively barred for Aggravated Felonies involving unlawful trafficking in controlled substances – [Matter of Y-L](#), 23 I&N Dec. 270 (A.G. 2002)
- Conviction of **other offenses deemed a PSC**. IDP/HIRC [Particularly Serious Crime Bars Chart](#)
- Conviction of a **violent or dangerous crime** presumptively bars asylum. [Matter of Jean](#), 23 I&N Dec. 373 (A.G. 2002)

CRIMINAL BARS ON 209(c) WAIVER OF CRIMINAL INADMISSIBILITY based on humanitarian purposes, family unity, or public interest (only for asylees or refugees). **INA § 209(c)**

- DHS reason to believe that individual is a drug trafficker [see RTB box]
- **Violent or dangerous crime** is a presumptive bar. [Matter of Jean](#), 23 I&N Dec. 373 (A.G. 2002)

CRIMINAL BARS ON NON-LPR CANCELLATION OF REMOVAL based on 10+ yrs US continuous physical presence & “exceptional & extremely unusual” hardship to USC/LPR spouse, parent or child. **INA § 240(A)(b)(1) – OR ON VAWA CANCELLATION** based on 3+ yrs continuous physical presence of battered spouse or child & “extreme hardship” to battered person, their child, or parent. **INA § 240A(b)(2)**

- Conviction of an offense described under the criminal inadmissibility or deportability grounds
- Conviction or admission of crimes barring finding of good moral character (GMC) during 3 or 10 yr period

CRIMINAL INADMISSIBILITY GROUND UNDER INA § 212(a)(8)

Will or may result in ineligibility to adjust to lawful permanent resident (LPR) status or enter or reenter the US from abroad as an immigrant

- Conviction of an **Aggravated Felony** after 9/17/2026. [Matter of A-V-O](#), 30 I&N Dec. 44 (BIA 2026).

CRIMINAL DEPORTABILITY GROUNDS. INA § 237(a)(2)

Will or may result in deportation of a noncitizen who already has a lawful admission status, such as a lawful permanent resident (LPR).

- Conviction of a **Controlled Substance Offense** (CSO) (if categorical match to federal “controlled substance”) **EXCEPT** a single offense of simple possession of 30g or less of marijuana
- Conviction of a **Crime Involving Moral Turpitude** (CIMT)
 - One CIMT committed w/ 5 yrs of admission into the US & for which a prison sentence of 1 yr or longer may be imposed
 - Two CIMTs committed *at any time* after admission & “not arising out of a single scheme”
- Conviction of a **Firearm or Destructive Device Offense** (if categorical match to federal “firearm/destructive device”)
- Conviction of a **Crime of Domestic Violence, Crime Against Children, Stalking, or Violation of Protection Order** (criminal or civil)
- Conviction of an **Aggravated Felony** – defined in INA § 101(a)(43) & including the following crimes, even if not a felony, or **attempts or conspiracies to commit them:**

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| ♦ Murder | ♦ Crime of Violence and 1 yr + prison sentence* |
| ♦ Rape | ♦ Theft or Burglary and 1 yr + prison sentence* |
| ♦ Sexual Abuse of a Minor | ♦ Fraud or tax evasion and loss to victim(s) > \$10,000 |
| ♦ Controlled substance trafficking (if categorical match to federal “controlled substance”), including most sale or intent to sell offenses and possibly certain second or subsequent possession offenses where the criminal court makes a finding of recidivism | ♦ Prostitution business offenses, commercial bribery, counterfeiting, or forgery and 1 yr + prison sentence* |
| ♦ Firearm Trafficking & other designated firearm/destructive device offenses (if categorical match to federal “firearm/destructive device”) | ♦ Obstruction of justice or perjury and 1 yr + prison sentence* |
| | ♦ Other offenses listed at INA § 101(a)(43) |

* “1 yr +” prison sentence includes suspended sentences of 1 yr or more

CRIMINAL BARS ON LPR CANCELLATION OF REMOVAL based on LPR status of 5 yrs or more & continuous residence in US for 7 yrs after admission. **INA § 240A(a)(3)**

- Conviction of an **Aggravated Felony**, INA 101(a)(43)
- **Offense** triggering removability referred to in **Criminal Inadmissibility Grounds Under INA § 212(a)(2) if committed before 7 yrs of continuous residence in US**, INA § 240A(d)

“CONVICTION” as defined for immigration purposes. INA § 101(a)(48)(A)

Formal judgment of guilt entered by a court, **OR**, if adjudication of guilt has been withheld, where:

- (i) a judge or jury has found the noncitizen guilty or the noncitizen has entered a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere* or has admitted sufficient facts to warrant a finding of guilt, &
- (ii) the judge has ordered some form of punishment, penalty, or restraint on liberty
- Court-ordered drug treatment or domestic violence counseling alternatives to incarceration (ATI) w/ guilty plea **IS** a conviction for immigration purposes (even if the guilty plea is or might later be vacated)
- Deferred adjudication w/o a guilty plea **NOT** a conviction
- **NOTE:** *A juvenile delinquency adjudication or analogous youth offender adjudication IS NOT a conviction.* [Matter of Devison-Charles](#), 22 I&N Dec. 1362 (BIA 2000) (NY Youthful Offender)

“ADMISSION” of criminal conduct requires:

- conduct admitted constitutes a crime under the laws of the jurisdiction where it occurred. [Matter of M](#), 1 I&N Dec. 229 (BIA 1942)
- individual admitted all factual elements of the crime. [Matter of E.N.](#), 7 I&N Dec. 153 (BIA 1956)
- the admission was voluntarily given. [Matter of G](#), 1 I&N Dec. 225 (BIA 1942)
- NOTE:** Guilty plea alone is insufficient. [Matter of Thomas](#), 21 I&N Dec. 20 (BIA 1995)
- NOTE:** *prior case law held that notice of a crime’s definition must be given prior to admission, but the extent of notice required is now unsettled.* [Matter of Mendez Maldonado](#), 30 I&N Dec. 62 (BIA 2026)

REASON TO BELIEVE DRUG TRAFFICKER (RTB) INA § 212(a)(2)(C)

- DHS does not need to show a conviction.
 - Only substantial & probative evidence that individual engaged in unlawful trading or dealing of a controlled substance
 - Police testimony or reports, admissions by noncitizens, delinquency adjudications, criminal complaints, & other evidence of sale or possession w/ intent to distribute have all been held to support RTB.
- Where RTB comes up:
 - Adjustment of status or consular processing
 - Returning LPR (*treated as seeking admission under INA 101(a)(13)(C)*)
 - LPR otherwise removable, needing to re-adjust
 - Spouse &/or children of any of the above if they obtained any financial or other benefit from the illicit activity w/ the previous 5 yrs.
- See IDP [Key Removal Defenses](#), 71–73.

IMMIGRATION CONSEQUENCES OF CONVICTIONS SUMMARY CHECKLIST page 2

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CRIMINAL BARS ON OBTAINING US CITIZENSHIP. INA § 101(f) Will bar an LPR from US citizenship	CRIMINAL BARS FOR DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS (eligibility requirements and DACA updates at uscis.gov/DACA)	MANDATORY DETENTION, INA § 236(c)
If occurring during the applicable required residence period, the following bar the finding of good moral character (GMC) required for US citizenship: ➤ Conviction of an Aggravated Felony on or after Nov. 29, 1990 • <i>Note: this <u>permanently</u> bars citizenship even if committed before the applicable residence period</i> ➤ Conviction or admission of Controlled Substance Offense (unless single offense of simple possession of 30g < of marijuana) ➤ Conviction or admission of a Crime Involving Moral Turpitude (unless single CIMT & the offense is not punishable by > 1 yr & does not involve a prison sentence > 6 mos) ➤ Conviction of 2 or more offenses of any type & aggregate prison sentence of 5 yrs ➤ Conviction of 2 or more gambling offenses ➤ Confinement as a result of a conviction to a penal institution for 180 days + ➤ Conviction of 2+ DUI offenses is a presumptive bar. Matter of Castillo-Perez, 27 I&N Dec. 664 (AG 2019). CRIMINAL BARS TO TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS (TPS) INA § 244(c) (general eligibility requirements and updates at www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status) ➤ One Felony Conviction • Any federal, state, or local crime committed at any time in the US, punishable by imprisonment for >1 yr, regardless of time served ◦ <i>Note: Even if an offense has a potential sentence of >1 yr, it will not be treated as a felony for TPS purposes if 1) the offense is classified as a misdemeanor <u>AND</u> 2) the sentence actually imposed is 1 yr or less, regardless of time served</i> ➤ Two Misdemeanor Convictions • Any federal, state, or local crime committed at any time in the US, that is: ■ Punishable by a term of imprisonment of 1 yr or less, regardless of the term actually served <u>OR</u> ■ 1) the offense is classified as a misdemeanor AND 2) the sentence actually imposed is 1 yr or less, regardless of time served -<i>Note: Offenses punishable by a maximum term of 5 days or less are not misdemeanors.</i> 8 C.F.R. § 244.1 -<i>Note: certain NY traffic infractions or violations are not considered misdemeanors for purposes of TPS January 17, 2010 Neufeld Memo</i> ➤ One Conviction, Admission, or Conduct Triggering a Criminal Inadmissibility Ground • Even if an applicant has <2 misdemeanor convictions, certain criminal offenses may trigger the crimes-related inadmissibility grounds under INA § 212(a)(2) (see reverse side) which are bars to TPS. A discretionary waiver, (INA § 244(c)(2)(A)(ii)), is only available in narrow circumstances • Waivers are NOT available for: ◦ Conviction or admission of a CIMT. INA § 212(a)(2)(A)(i)(I) ◦ Conviction or admission of a CSO (other than a single offense involving simple possession of 30g or less of marijuana). INA § 212(a)(2)(A)(i)(II) ◦ Multiple criminal convictions where the aggregate sentence is 5 yrs or more. INA § 212(a)(2)(B) ◦ Reason to believe (RTB) that the applicant is a drug trafficker. INA § 212(a)(2)(C) [<i>See reverse side</i>] ➤ Criminal Bars to Asylum [<i>see reverse side</i>]	➤ One Felony Conviction • Any federal, state or local offense that is punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding 1 yr ◦ Does not include state immigration-related offenses ◦ Does not matter whether state or local offense is classified as a “felony” ➤ One “Significant Misdemeanor” conviction, including: • CONDUCT-BASED ◦ An offense punishable by imprisonment of 1 yr or less but greater than 5 days (<i>regardless of sentence actually imposed</i>) and is an offense of: ◆ Domestic violence ◆ Sexual abuse or exploitation ◆ Burglary ◆ Unlawful possession or use of a firearm ◆ Drug distribution or trafficking ◆ Driving under the influence ◦ <i>Note: this may include certain offenses that are not classified as misdemeanors in the convicting jurisdiction, e.g. domestic violations or driving under the influence traffic infractions, if punishable by > 5 days in prison</i> • SENTENCE-BASED ◦ Any other offense punishable by imprisonment of 1 yr or less for which the person received a sentence of more than 90 days in custody ◦ <i>Note: Suspended sentences do not count towards the 90 days</i> ➤ Three Misdemeanor Convictions • Three or more misdemeanors not occurring on the same date and not arising out of the same act, omission, or scheme of misconduct ◦ Includes federal, state, or local offenses punishable by imprisonment of 1 yr or less but greater than five days (may include certain low-level offenses not classified as misdemeanors if punishable by more than five days in prison e.g. NYS violations) ◦ <i>Note: Does not include</i> minor traffic offenses (such as driving without a license) ◦ <i>Note: Does not include</i> state immigration-related offenses OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR THOSE CONSIDERING DACA RENEWAL Other conduct that can lead to denial of prosecutorial discretion ➤ Convictions or information indicating that the applicant is a threat to national security or public safety. DHS considers such threats could include: gang membership, participation in criminal activities, or participation in activities that threaten the US Dispositions that avoid automatic disqualification ➤ Juvenile dispositions (but not adult convictions of juveniles) & expunged convictions will not trigger an automatic bar to DACA renewal IMPORTANT: future lawful admission status ➤ A conviction triggering the Criminal Inadmissibility Grounds on the reverse side may affect a person’s future ability to apply for LPR or other formal admission status, even if it does not bar DACA renewal	➤ Deportable under INA 237(a)(2) for conviction at any time after admission of: • One CIMT w/ 5 yrs of admission + prison sentence of at least 1 yr, • Two CIMTs, • an Aggravated Felony, • a CSO, or • a Firearm or Destructive Device Offense ➤ Inadmissible under INA 212(a)(2) for • conviction or admission of a CIMT (except petty offense) or a CSO, • conviction of two or more offenses + aggregate prison sentence of at least 5 yrs, • reason to believe individual is a drug trafficker or • some evidence of prostitution, trafficking in persons or money laundering ➤ Inadmissible under INA 212(a)(2)(6)(A), (6)(C) or (7) for • being present in the US without admission or parole (i.e., entry without inspection), • seeking admission without proper documentation, • seeking or having procured admission by fraud or misrepresentation or • falsely claiming US citizenship <u>AND</u> • merely charged with or arrested for, convicted of, or admits to ◦ “burglary,” ◦ “theft,” ◦ “larceny,” ◦ “shoplifting,” ◦ “assault of a law enforcement officer” offense, or ◦ any crime that results in death or “serious bodily injury” to another person under the meaning given the terms quoted above in the state or other jurisdiction in which the alleged acts occurred. • Note on challenging retroactive application: May be possible to argue that this latter new group of mandatory detention grounds added by the Laken Riley Act, signed into law on Jan. 29, 2025 without any effective date provision, does not apply to individuals released from criminal custody for the triggering offense before Jan. 29, 2025, cf. Matter of Adeniji, 22 I&N Dec. 1102 (BIA 1999), or whose alleged acts occurred prior to that date, cf. Montero v.Cobb, 937 F.Supp. 88 (D.Mass. 1996) (finding that mandatory detention provisions in AEDPA did not apply retroactively in absence of clear Congressional intent)] ➤ NOTE: Some individuals are subject to mandatory detention <i>even without</i> a criminal conviction or charge under different INA provisions.