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J-1/J-2 Visa

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Overview of the Exchange Visitor Visa

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) provides the exchange visitor (J) nonimmigrant visa category for persons who are approved to participate in exchange visitor programs in the United States. This means that before you can apply at an American Embassy or Consulate for a J visa you must apply, meet the requirements, and be accepted for one of the Exchange Visitor Program categories through a designated sponsoring organization. If you are accepted as a participant in an exchange program, the sponsor will provide you with information and documents necessary to apply for the J visa to enter the United States.

The Exchange Visitor Program is administered by the State Department's Office of Exchange Coordination and Designation in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Visit the [Exchange Visitor Program](#) ^[2] to learn more about program eligibility requirements, regulations and much more. At the conclusion of their program, Exchange Visitor program participants are expected to return to the home countries to utilize the experience and skills they have acquired while in the United States. [Learn more](#) ^[3] about exchange related programs and opportunities by clicking the links provided.

In carrying out the responsibilities of the Exchange Visitor Program, the Department designates public and private entities to act as exchange sponsors. Designated sponsoring organizations facilitate the entry of foreign nationals into the U.S. as exchange visitors to complete the objectives of one of the exchange visitor program categories, which are:

- Au pair
- Camp Counselor
- Student, college/university
- Student, secondary
- Government Visitor
- Intern
- International Visitor (reserved for U.S. Department of State use)
- Physician
- Professor
- Research Scholar

- Short-term Scholar
- Specialist
- Summer work/travel
- Teacher
- Trainee

Each category of exchange has specific requirements and regulations.

To learn about the **foreign physician, au pair, camp counselor, summer work/travel, and trainee categories** select Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Exchange Visitor Program, [Private Sector Programs](#) [2]. See information about pilot programs for [Australians and New Zealanders](#) [4] and for [Irish citizens](#) [5].

To learn about the post secondary **student, college/university student, professor, research scholar, short-term scholar, specialist, teacher and Government Visitor and International Visitor categories**, select Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Exchange Visitor, [Government Programs](#) [3].

Qualifying for an Exchange Visitor Visa

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) is very specific with regard to the requirements, which must be met by applicants to qualify for the exchange visitor (J) visa. The consular officer will determine whether you qualify for the visa. Applicants must demonstrate that they properly meet the requirements to be issued an exchange visitor visa, including the following:

- That they plan to remain in the U.S. for a temporary, specific, limited period;
- Evidence of funds to cover expenses in the United States;
- Evidence of compelling social and economic ties abroad; and other binding ties which will insure their return abroad at the end of the visit.

What are SEVIS and SEVP?

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is designed to help the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State better monitor school and exchange programs and F, M and J category visitors. Exchange visitor and student information is maintained in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). SEVIS is an Internet-based system that maintains accurate and current information on non-immigrant students (F and M visa), exchange visitors (J visa), and their dependents (F-2, M-2, and J-2). SEVIS enables schools and program sponsors to transmit mandatory information and event notifications via the Internet, to the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State (DOS) throughout a student or exchange visitor's stay in the United States. Select [SEVIS](#) [6] to go to the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Internet site and learn more.

All exchange visitor applicants must have a SEVIS generated DS 2019 issued by a Department of State designated sponsor, which they submit when they are applying for their exchange visitor visa. The consular officer will need to verify your DS 2019 record electronically through the SEVIS system in order to process your exchange visitor visa application to conclusion. Unless otherwise exempt, participants whose SEVIS DS-2019 was issued on or after September 1, 2004 must pay a SEVIS I-901 Fee to the Department of Homeland Security for each individual program. The fee may be paid either through a special web site, via Western Union, or by mail. See [SEVIS-901 Fee](#)^[7] for more information on the fee and payment methods.

Applying for an Exchange Visitor Visa - Required Documentation

As part of the visa application process, an interview at the embassy consular section is required for visa applicants from age 14 through 79. Persons age 13 and younger, and age 80 and older, generally do not require an interview, unless requested by embassy or consulate. The waiting time for an interview appointment for applicants can vary, so early visa application is strongly encouraged. Visa wait times for interview appointments and visa processing time information for each U.S. Embassy or Consulate worldwide is available at [Visa Wait Times](#)^[8], and on most embassy websites. If you are authorized by your sponsor to be accompanied by your spouse (husband or wife) and children, they will also be given a Form DS-2019 and they can apply at the same time. During the visa application process, usually at the interview, an ink-free, digital fingerprint scan will be quickly taken. Some visa applications require further [administrative processing](#)^[9], which takes additional time after the visa applicant's interview by a Consular Officer. Each visa applicant must submit these forms and documentation, and submit fees as explained below:

DS 2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status. You will need to submit a SEVIS generated Form, DS-2019, which was provided to you by your program sponsor. All exchange visitors, including their spouses and dependents must be registered in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), an Internet-based system that maintains accurate and current information on non-immigrant students and exchange visitors and their dependents (J-2 visa holders). Your program sponsor is responsible for entering your information for the DS 2019 Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status into SEVIS. Exchange visitors not part of a U.S. Government-sponsored program will also have to pay a SEVIS I-901 fee for each program. Questions regarding your exchange program should be directed to your program sponsor.

- **A Training/Internship Placement Plan, Form DS-7002.** All exchange visitor (J visa) trainee or intern visa applicants with DS-2019 forms dated on or after July 19, 2007 (based on Box 7 on form) must also present Training/Internship Placement Plan, [Form DS-7002](#)^[10] when applying for your visa. If your Form DS-2019 is issued prior to July 19, 2007 a Form DS-7002 is not required. For more information about the new rules for trainee and intern programs, see the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Exchange Visitor Program, [Private Sector Programs](#)^[11].
- **An application, Nonimmigrant Visa Application, Form DS-156,** completed and signed. **The DS-156 must be the March 2006 date, electronic "e-form application."** Select [Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form DS-156](#)^[12] to access the electronic version of the DS-156.
- **A Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application, Form DS-157** provides additional information about your travel plans. Submission of this completed form is required for all

male applicants between 16-45 years of age. It is also required for all applicants from state sponsors of terrorism age 16 and over, irrespective of gender, without exception. Four countries are now designated as state sponsors of terrorism, including Cuba, Syria, Sudan, and Iran. [Select Special Processing Procedures](#) ^[13] to learn more. You should know that a consular officer may require any nonimmigrant visa applicant to complete this form. Here is [Form DS-157](#) ^[14].

- **A Contact Information and Work History, Form DS-158**, completed.
- **A passport valid for travel to the United States** and with a validity date at least six months beyond the applicant's intended period of stay in the United States (unless [country-specific agreements](#) ^[15] provide exemptions). If more than one person is included in the passport, each person desiring a visa must complete an application;
- **One (1) 2x2 photograph**. See the required photo format explained in ^[16][Nonimmigrant Photograph Requirements](#) ^[17].

My Visa Has Been Issued- When Can I Travel to the U.S.?

Be advised of the Department of Homeland Security regulation which requires that all J exchange visitors, and J-2 spouse and dependents enter the U.S. 30 days or less in advance of the applicant's program start date as shown on the Form DS-2019. The 30-day limitation does not apply to current exchange participants who are returning to continue with their exchange program.

Spouses and Children

Spouses and/or children under the age of 21 who wish to accompany or join the principal exchange visitor (J) visa holder in the United States for the duration of his/her stay require exchange visitor visas (derivative J visas). The application procedure is the same as that for a primary visa applicant. The sponsor must approve the accompaniment of the spouse and/or children and who will each be issued their own Form DS-2019. This form is used to obtain the required visa and the spouse and dependents can enter the U.S. at the same time as the principal exchange visitor or at a later date.

Work - The spouse and/or children of an exchange visitor in the U.S. may not work in J-2 status. If employment is desired, the dependent must make an application to DHS, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and be approved for permission to work. They must file Form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization with the USCIS office that serves the area where they live for a work permit (employment authorization document). To learn more, select [Employment Authorization Document](#) ^[18] on the USCIS Website.

Study- The spouse and/or children of an exchange visitor visa holder who are in the U.S. on an exchange visitor visa may study in the U.S. without also being required to apply for a student (F-1) visa or change to F-1 status.

Spouses and/or children who do not intend to reside in the United States with the principal visa holder, but visit for vacations only, may be eligible to apply for ^[19][visitor \(B-2\) visas](#) ^[20], or if qualified, travel without a visa under the ^[21][Visa Waiver Program](#) ^[22].

Family Members Following to Join the Exchange Visitor

The spouse and children can also apply for visas after the principal applicant has already traveled. In general, they must present the following:

- Form DS 2019, SEVIS generated, and approved by the sponsor
- Proof that the principal applicant (the person who received the DS-2019 or IAP-66) is maintaining his/her J visa status
- Copy of the J-1's (principal applicant's) visa
- Proof of relationship to the principal applicant
- Proof of sufficient money to cover all expenses in the United States

Spouses and children of exchange visitors may not enter the United States before the principal visitor enters for the first time.

Two-Year Foreign Residency Requirement

An exchange visitor is subject to INA 212(e) requirement, if the following conditions exist:

- The program in which the exchange visitor was participating was financed in whole or in part directly or indirectly by the United States government or the government of the exchange visitor's nationality or last residence;
- The exchange visitor is a national or resident of a country designated as requiring the services of persons engaged in the field of specialized knowledge or skills in which the exchange visitor was engaged for the duration of their program (Exchange Visitor Skills List 9 FAM 41.62, Exhibit II);
- The exchange visitor entered the United States to receive graduate medical education or training.

If the exchange visitor is subject to INA 212(e) requirement, he or she cannot change his or status to that of H, L, K, or immigrant lawful permanent resident (LPR) until he or she has returned to his/her home country for at least two-years or received a waiver of that requirement. Such waivers can be obtained under five separate bases: No Objection Statement, Exceptional Hardship or Persecution, Conrad Program, or Interested Government Agency. For information, see ^[23][Waiver of the J Visa Two-Year Foreign Residence Requirement 212\(e\)](#) ^[24].

Please see the following for more information the J Visa Waiver:

[Physicians for Underserved Areas Act Approved by House Judiciary Committee](#) ^[25]
[Designated Officials For Signatures Interested Government Agencies \(IGA\)](#) ^[26]

Exchange Visitors Cannot Travel Without a Visa on the Visa Waiver Program

Citizens from a country participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), who want to enter the United States temporarily, as exchange visitors traveling to the United States, must first obtain a an exchange visitor visa to come to the U.S. They cannot travel without a visa on the Visa Waiver Program. Those travelers coming on the Visa Waiver Program to participate in an exchange program may be denied admission to the United States by the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. immigration inspector at the port of entry. For more information on VWP, see [Visa Waiver Program](#) [22].

How Long am I Permitted to Stay in the U.S. After my Program has Ended?

The initial admission of an exchange visitor, spouse and children may not exceed the period specified on Form DS-2019, plus a period of 30 days for the purpose of travel. The 30-day grace or travel status period is intended to be a period following the end of the exchange visitor's program and is to be used for domestic travel and/or to prepare for and depart from the U.S., and for no other purpose. Those exchange visitors who wish to stay beyond the time indicated on their DS-2019 should review the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs information: [Adjustments to the J-1 Status](#) [27].

Nonimmigrant Visas:

[J-1 Visa](#) [28]

[J-2 Visa](#) [29]

[J Visa](#) [30]

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Links:

[1] <https://immigration.com/visa/j-1-visa/j-1j-2-visa>

[2] <http://exchanges.state.gov/jexchanges/index.html>

[3] <http://exchanges.state.gov/>

[4] http://exchanges.state.gov/jexchanges/jexchanges/docs/australia_newzealand_2009.pdf

[5] <http://exchanges.state.gov/root/packages/files-folder9/pilot-program-irish-iwt.pdf>

[6] <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/>

[7] <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/>

[8] http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html

[9] http://travel.state.gov/visa/a_zindex/a_zindex_4353.html

[10] <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/84240.pdf>

[11] <http://exchanges.state.gov/jexchanges/programs/trainee.html>

[12] <http://evisaforms.state.gov/>

[13] http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1300.html

[14] <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/126741.pdf>

[15] <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/104770.pdf>

[16] http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors_info_photo.html

[17] http://travel.state.gov/visa/visaphotoreq/visaphotoreq_5334.html

[18]

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.eb1d4c2a3e5b9ac89243c6a7543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=820a0a5659083>

[19] http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors_types_visitor.html

[20] http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1262.html

[21] http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors_novisa_waiver.html

[22] http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html

[23] http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors_info_waivers.html

[24] http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1296.html

[25] http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/judiciary/hju27608.000/hju27608_0.htm

[26] http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1293.html

[27] <http://exchanges.state.gov/jexchanges/visitors/change.html>

[28] <https://immigration.com/visa/nonimmigrant-visas/j-visa/j-1-visa>

[29] <https://immigration.com/visa/nonimmigrant-visas/j-visa/j-2-visa>

[30] <https://immigration.com/visa/nonimmigrant-visas/j-visa>