

GENERAL  
INFORMATION

J-1/J-2 Travel Information

**BEFORE TRAVELING**

Verify whether you need a new visa. Refer to our J-1/J-2 Visa Renewal guidance if you plan to renew your visa.

Check your DS-2019 for a valid travel signature. If you need a new travel signature, see the guidance below.

If your trip is longer than 5 weeks for personal travel or 2 weeks for professional travel, you will need to request **Extended Absence from NIH** approval from DIS before you leave.

*If you are not traveling to your home country, you may need a visa for the country you plan to visit. Please contact the appropriate Embassy of that country before leaving the United States.*

Consult with DIS if you have:

1. An open or pending case with a DIS Immigration Specialist
2. A pending waiver of the Two-Year Home Residence (212(e)) requirement
3. A pending petition or application at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

**TRAVEL SIGNATURE ON FORM DS-2019**

A valid travel signature on the bottom right corner of Form DS-2019 is necessary before any travel abroad. The signature can only come from a Responsible Officer (RO) or Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) of the J-1 sponsor. For Exchange Visitors sponsored by the NIH, a list of ROs and AROs can be found on our website. Each signature is valid for one year from the date of signature or the end date listed on the DS-2019, whichever comes sooner.

To obtain a travel signature, NIH-sponsored Exchange Visitors should come to DIS during our walk-in advising hours (1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m., Monday-Thursday) or, for remote sites, the Key Contact can send the Form DS-2019 to DIS. The image to the right shows where the travel signature is located.

Date (mm-dd-yyyy) of Signature

**TRAVEL VALIDATION BY RESPONSIBLE OFFICER**  
(Minimum validation period is 1 year\*)

\*EXCEPT: Maximum validation period is up to 6 months for Short-term Scholars and 4 months for Camp Counselors and Summer Work/Travel

(1) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at the present time

\_\_\_\_\_

Date (mm-dd-yyyy)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer

(2) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at the present time

\_\_\_\_\_

Date (mm-dd-yyyy)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

When traveling abroad, bring the following documents as evidence of your eligibility to enter the U.S. in J-1/J-2 status:

- Valid Passport
- Valid Visa\*
- Current Form DS-2019 with valid travel signature from DIS
- Travel letter from your Institute/Center
- NIH Identification (ID) Badge
- If traveling to country other than your home country: Visa or travel authorization to visit country to which you are traveling

**\*Automatic Visa Revalidation**

A valid, unexpired U.S. entry visa may not be required if you only plan to travel to Canada, Mexico, or a Caribbean Island (other than Cuba) for less than 30 days, provided:

- You are not a citizen of Iran, Syria, Sudan, North Korea, or another ineligible country
- You have maintained your J-1 non-immigrant status and intend to resume your J-1 activity upon re-entry
- You have Duration of Status (D/S) annotated on your most recent I-94 (**Note:** if your I-94 has a date in the "Admit Until Date", please contact DIS)
- Your visa was not cancelled or revoked
- You do not apply for a new U.S. visa while traveling
- You do not travel to another country besides Canada, Mexico, or a qualifying Caribbean Island on your trip

Refer to the Department of State website for more information on **Automatic Visa Revalidation**. Note that when travelling on a cruise ship, you should check with the carrier for any immigration restrictions before booking your trip. Contact DIS if you have additional questions.

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## WHILE TRAVELING

Store your documents in a safe and secure location.

Notify DIS and your lab if your travel plans change significantly, such as extending your stay outside of the United States beyond 5 weeks.

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## RETURNING TO THE UNITED STATES

Keep your J-1 or J-2 immigration documents in your carry-on luggage so you can easily present them to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for re-entry to the United States. Do not use ESTA or a B-1/B-2 visa to re-enter the country.

After you pass through the CBP, verify that the information on your passport entry stamp is correct. Your immigration status should be J-1/J-2 and your Admit Until Date should be "Duration of Status (D/S)." If there is a mistake, politely request that the CBP officer review your documents again and correct the entry stamp. If you are unable to resolve the issue with CBP at the port of entry, contact DIS as soon as possible.

Once you are able to access a computer, check your I-94. Verify that all information on the I-94 is correct. If anything other than "D/S" is in the "Admit Until Date" field on your I-94, contact DIS.

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## PROVIDE UPDATED DOCUMENTS TO DIS

Upon your re-entry to the United States, send DIS a copy of any updated immigration documents, such as your Form I-94 and passport or visa. Immigration documents contain Personally Identifiable Information (PII), so they must be sent via a secure delivery method such as the [Secure Email File Transfer Service \(SEFT\)](#) to [DIS@mail.nih.gov](mailto:DIS@mail.nih.gov). Please do not send unencrypted e-mails to DIS that contain PII.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

Request for Extended Absence from NIH:

<https://ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/AdministrativeStaff/Documents/RequestforExtendedAbsencefromNIH.pdf>

Download Most Recent I-94: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94>

Template for IC Travel Letter:

<https://ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/VisitingScientists/Documents/SampleLetterTravel.doc>

List of countries ineligible for Automatic Visa Revalidation:

<https://www.state.gov/state-sponsors-of-terrorism/>

Information on Automatic Visa Revalidation:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/visa-expiration-date/auto-revalidate.html>

Secure Email and File Transfer (SEFT):

<https://secureemail.nih.gov/bds/Login.do>

Contact DIS:

<https://ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/AboutDIS/Pages/ContactUs.aspx>

J-1 Visa Renewal Information:

<https://ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/VisitingScientists/Documents/j1visarenewal.pdf>

**Send above documents via secure method to DIS:**

Building 31, Room B2B07  
31 Center Drive MSC 2028  
Bethesda, MD 20892-2028  
Telephone: (301) 496-6166  
[ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis](https://ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis)

Keep copies of everything you send to DIS