

GENERAL
INFORMATION

J-1/J-2 Visa Application Process

Do I need a new J-1 visa?

While you are in the United States, the entry visa in your passport can expire as long as your current Form DS-2019 and your [Form I-94](#) are valid. However, if you leave the country and travel abroad, you *must* have a valid entry visa in your passport before re-entering the United States in most circumstances.

A valid, unexpired U.S. visa may not be required if you are traveling to Canada, Mexico, or a qualified adjacent Caribbean Island (excluding Cuba) for less than 30 days. See our [J-1/J-2 Travel Guidance](#) for more information.

BOOKING A VISA APPOINTMENT

You can only obtain a J-1/J-2 visa outside of the United States from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. For more information, review the [General Guidance on J-1/J-2 Visas](#) from the Department of State

The application process for a U.S. visa can vary by country. Always refer to the [U.S. Embassy/Consulate](#) website where you plan to apply for the visa to find out specific application process for each visa type.

Note: DIS recommends applying for a visa in your home country. DIS also recommends scheduling the visa appointment as early as possible and booking flexible travel arrangements to ensure adequate time for processing. Consult with DIS beforehand if you have:

1. An open or pending case with a DIS Immigration Specialist
2. Applied for a waiver of the 212(e) requirement
3. A pending petition or application at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
4. Plans to apply for your visa in a country other than your home country.

FEE EXEMPTION FOR J-1/J-2 SPONSORED BY NIH

J-1/J-2 Exchange Visitors sponsored by the NIH do not have to pay visa application fees or SEVIS fees. The program sponsor is listed in Box 2 of your DS-2019. If you are NIH-sponsored, present the [NIH J-1/J-2 Fee Exemption Notice](#) with your visa application. If you have trouble scheduling a visa appointment because of the fee exemptions, contact the Embassy/Consulate directly via phone or email.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

DIS usually does not provide any new documents for purposes of visa renewal. In addition to any documents required by the Embassy/Consulate, bring the following documents as evidence of your J-1/J-2 status:

- Valid Passport
- Current Form DS-2019 with valid travel signature from DIS
- [Travel Letter](#) from your NIH Institute/Center
- NIH Identification (ID) Badge

PROCESSING TIMES & DELAYS

Visa processing times vary greatly. Due to the need for in-person interviews and security checks (often referred to as [administrative processing](#)), processing times between 30 and 120 days – and sometimes longer, in rare cases – are possible. If your visa is still pending 90 days after your interview date, please notify DIS so we can monitor the delay and be aware of any related issues. However, please be aware that DIS is unable to expedite the visa adjudication or issuance process.

PROVIDE UPDATED DOCUMENTS TO DIS

Upon your re-entry to the U.S., send DIS a copy of any updated immigration documents such as your new visa, passport or [Form I-94](#). Submit copies of new immigration documents to DIS via the [DIS Customer Portal](#). [Contact DIS](#) if you have additional questions.

Division of International Services

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

Keep copies of everything you send to DIS