

J-2 Work Authorization

Overview

If you are the J-2 dependent of a J-1 Exchange Visitor, you can apply for work authorization through [US Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#). This page will guide you through the application process, which can take 3-4 months.

General Guidelines

- At the time that you mail the application, you must be physically present in the United States and must hold valid J-2 status, and the Exchange Visitor must hold a valid J-1 status, as shown on your I-94 Arrival/Departure record.
- Your income may not be used to support the J-1 Exchange Visitor.
- USCIS usually authorizes work until the expiration of the J-1 Exchange Visitor's permission to stay in the United States. To find that date, look at item 3 of the J-1 Exchange Visitor's DS-2019, "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status." It is up to the discretion of the officer to decide the validity of the employment authorization document (EAD card).
- You may work only after you have obtained your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS. The EAD is an identification card with your photograph, personal information and start and end dates of your permission to work. Note the end date and ensure that, if you need an extension, you apply in plenty of time so as not to have a gap in your employment authorization. The approval of your extension request may take 3-4 months.
- With J-2 work authorization, you may work part-time or full-time, at any job, for any employer. There is no legal limit to the amount that you may earn.

Steps to Apply for a J-2 Work Authorization

STEP 1. Documentation to Assemble

1. [Form I-765 "Application for Employment Authorization"](#).

Do **not** submit this form electronically. Please carefully read and follow the [instructions](#) for Form I-765 that are provided by USCIS, and also note the following: Make sure to mark one of the boxes where it asks, “I am applying for...”

OIP recommends you type the application on your computer, then print and sign. If you cannot, be sure to print clearly.

- #1. Use your entire name as it appears on your passport and DS-2019 and spell out your middle name.
- #3. Enter your address in the Orono area. We recommend that you include the last 4 digits to the end of your zip code to help with mail delivery of the EAD card. Check [the U.S. Postal Service website](#) to look up your full zip code. If, for some reason, your United States address during the period of application will not be in Maine, ask OIP how to proceed. If you might be moving and decide to use a friend’s address, where your name is not on the mailbox, you should write “c/o” (for “in care of”) and your friend’s name all on the same line with the street address. Make sure your name (or your friend’s name) is on the mailbox.
- #14. Enter the eleven-digit serial number from your electronic I-94 record or paper I-94 card.
- #19. Enter “J-2 dependent”
- #20. Enter (c)(5), and leave the third set of parentheses blank. Above the three sets of parentheses, write “J-2 work permission”.

Make sure all questions on the form have an answer. If a question is not applicable to you, then write N/A (N/A = “Not Applicable”).

2. A letter (see **sample**) from you, the J-2 applicant, to the USCIS Service Center requesting work permission. You should include the following:

- The reason you want to work, some worthwhile interest, or activity that might include family travel or recreational or cultural activities.
- Proof that your earnings are not necessary for the J-1 Exchange Visitor’s support. Your letter should indicate the sources and amount of the J-1 Exchange Visitor’s support, and include a short budget or statement of family expenses to demonstrate that his or her resources are adequate without any income from your employment.

3. Two photos to the standards of [Department of State specifications](#).

- These pictures are the passport style photos in color. On the back of each photo, lightly print your name and date of birth with a pencil. Put the photos into a small envelope and staple it to the top of Form I-765. Be sure to include *new* pictures, ie, pictures that have not been used with a previous immigration application.

4. A check for the filing fee (see the [USCIS website](#) for the current fee) made payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security.”

5. A photocopy of the J-1’s DS-2019, “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status.”

6. Documentation of you and your spouse’s I-94:

Visit the [CBP website](#) to retrieve and print out a copy of your electronic Form I-94

7. A photocopy of your own DS-2019.

8. Photocopies of the identity pages of your passport. This includes the page that has your photograph and biographic information.

9. A copy of your last EAD, front and back, if you are applying for a renewal of your J-2 work permission.

10. [Form G-1145](#) (Optional) By completing this form, you can elect to receive an email and/or text message from USCIS notifying you that your application has been accepted.

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Step 2. Mailing Your Application

Consult the USCIS [website](#) to find out the specific address where to send your application. Your application category is (c)5

It is recommended that you use the U.S. Postal Service’s certified mail, return receipt requested or use a courier service such as FedEx or UPS.

USCIS states that your application will be processed more quickly if sent to the post office box rather than to the street address.

Before you mail, make photocopies/scan of your entire application plus supporting documents, and keep them with your mailing receipt.

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Step 3. Tracking Your Application

Approximately 2-4 weeks after mailing your application, USCIS will send you a notice of receipt on Form I-797. You can check for updates to your case and sign up to receive email notifications online at the [USCIS Case Status website](#). If you filed [Form G-1145](#) with your application, you will also receive text and/or email updates on your case.

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Step 4. Three to Four Month Wait While Your Application is Pending at USCIS.

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Step 5. Receive EAD and Start Working

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Step 6. Renewing Your Work Authorization

Apply early: If your current EAD expires before you receive the renewal, you will have to stop working and wait until it arrives. You can apply for renewal of your work authorization no more than 120 days before your card expires. Note that before applying for a new EAD, you and your J-1 Exchange Visitor may have to extend your permission to stay. More information is available on the extension page for scholars.

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Other Important Items

Social Security Number (SSN): To begin paying you, your employer will need your Social Security *number*, which you can obtain by applying for a Social Security *card*. You will need the following documents to apply for your SSN:

- [SSN Application](#)
- [Statement of Claimant or Other Person](#)
- [How to Apply for SSN during pandemic](#)
- passport

- DS-2019
- I-94 ([click here](#) to get an electronic copy)

USCIS Form I-9, “Employment Eligibility Verification.” When you begin work, you and your employer must complete Form I-9, which requires you to document both your identity and your authorization to work. For Form I-9, your EAD card is acceptable proof of both.

Social Security taxes: As a J-2 dependent you are subject to Social Security (F.I.C.A.) taxes on your earnings. This is in contrast to J-1 students, who are exempt from Social Security (F.I.C.A.) taxes for their first five years in the United States, as long as they continue to declare non-resident status for tax purposes (see [Internal Revenue Service Publication 519](#), “U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens”).

Federal, state, and local taxes: Your earnings as a J-2 dependent will be subject to applicable federal, state, and local taxes; also, employers are required by law to withhold those taxes from your paychecks.

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