

## APPLYING FOR A J-1 VISA STAMP

### OVERVIEW

Cedars-Sinai Medical Center's Exchange Visitor who is seeking entry into the USA must present a valid J-1 visa stamp at a US port of entry (except Canadian citizens). Accompanying dependents are required to apply for a J-2 visa stamp. All visa applicants also require a face-to-face interview at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy outside the U.S., unless otherwise indicated by the consulate. The visa application process can take up to 4-8 weeks, so plan accordingly. To view the current visa wait times, visit

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait\\_4638.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html)

### DOCUMENT REQUIREMENTS

Immediately contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate to schedule a visa interview appointment. A list of embassies and consulates are available at <http://usembassy.state.gov>

Prior to your visa appointment, visit the US embassy or consulate's website within your district for specific requirements. Go to the *Nonimmigrant Visa* section and follow the instructions. Many people are denied visas when they are unprepared.

At the visa interview, you must present:

- 1) Passport which is valid up to six months after date of entry into the USA
- 2) Original Form DS-2019
- 3) Evidence of SEVIS fee (I-901) payment
- 4) Evidence of Machine Readable Visa (MRV) fee for each visa applicant, including dependents if applicable
- 5) One 2x2 photograph —For details, visit [http://travel.state.gov/passport/guide/guide\\_2081.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/guide/guide_2081.html)
- 6) Cedars-Sinai Program Certification Letter
- 7) Cedars-Sinai Welcome Letter
- 8) Evidence of financial support
  - Non-Salaried Visitors:
    - ◆ Bank statement if self supported
    - ◆ Financial support confirmation letter from agency or home institution if supported by outside sources
  - Cedars-Sinai Salaried Employees:
    - ◆ Employment offer letter from Recruitment/HR
- 9) Home country address and documentation of home ties (if available).
- 10) Copy of Curriculum Vitae

**Do NOT complete the DS-7002: Training/Internship Placement Plan form. This is not required for**

**Cedars-Sinai exchange visitors. The Consulate officials are aware of this exception.**

### VISA INTERVIEW

Based on information received from various consular officers, the following are recommendations to prepare for your visa interview.

- 1) Listen carefully to what the consular officer asks you and then answer the question directly; short and to the point.
- 2) Be prepared to show strong ties to your home country with official documentation. Ties to your home country are the things that bind you to your home town, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc.
  - If your family owns a property, take the deeds of papers showing your ownership.
  - If you and your family have had numerous past visits to the USA, take along passports, even old ones – to show that you have many visas and many visits, but after every visit to USA you still returned to your home country.
  - If you have membership in a professional organization in your home country, bring proof of this membership.
  - If you are currently employed or the prospect of a job offer, get a confirmation letter from the company saying that you are currently employed or will be considered for the job upon your return.Some factors that might work against you in the mind of the consular officer are: someone in the USA is promising to support you, lack of family ties, poor job prospect upon return, poor English language ability.
- 3) Answer every question truthfully and maintain a positive attitude.

### VISA DELAY

Nationals of certain countries, and all internationals whose area of research has been deemed sensitive by the US Department of Homeland Security or any administrative clearances, will have their names submitted for a special security clearance procedure that may take up to 4-6 weeks before a visa is issued.

Disciplines such as nuclear technology, chemical and biotechnology engineering, and advanced computer or microelectronic technology, as well as a broad range of engineering and physical sciences are on the "Technology Alert List". Scholars in these fields should expect delays in obtaining visas at consulates abroad.

Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of State will neither discuss nor reveal the reason for a security advisory opinion on a particular case therefore our office cannot assist with expedite requests or inquire the status on your behalf. We must patiently wait for the clearance to take its own course, which is typically 2-4 weeks.

### VISA DENIAL

If you are denied a visa, you will be informed of the reason for the denial and be given the opportunity to reappear if you can provide additional evidence to support your case. Before reapplying, be sure you understand the grounds for your denial so that you can appeal effectively. Please contact the Visa & International Services Administration (VISA) if you need assistance.

### VISA RENEWAL

Current J-1 scholars wishing to renew their expired visa stamp will need to go through the same initial visa process. In addition to the above referenced requirements, current scholars also need to obtain a travel validation (signature) on their current DS-2019 for re-entry. This also applies to J-2 dependents. Contact VISA office to request for a travel signature prior to your trip. Failure to have a valid travel signature may result in denial of entry into the U.S. You may also request for an updated Employment Verification Letter from VISA office to facilitate your re-entry.

### APPLYING FOR A US VISA IN A COUNTRY OTHER THAN YOUR OWN

International scholars are strongly encouraged to apply for a visa in your home country because you may have difficulty getting a visa from a US embassy or consulate in a country other than your own. A foreign national who is a non-resident of the country where you are applying for the visa stamp, will be referred to as a Third Country National (TCN) applicant, therefore may have additional requirements. Check with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate for confirmation.

Note that U.S. immigration law requires any alien who has overstayed a nonimmigrant visa to seek visa issuance in his or her country of origin.

The following individuals are strongly discouraged from applying for a visa renewal as Third Country Nationals because there may be a high risk of denial:

- Applicants who entered the United States in one visa category and are seeking to re-enter the U.S. in a different visa category.
- Applicants who have been out of status in the USA having violated the terms of their visas or having overstayed the validity indicated on their I-94s.
- Applicants who obtained their current visa in a country other than that of their legal residence.

- Applicants who entered the U.S. with a visa issued in their home country and changed status with USCIS in the U.S. who seek a new visa in the new visa category.
- Citizens of Iran, Sudan, Libya, Iraq, North Korea, Cuba and Syria.

### Applying For A Visa In Canada or Mexico:

Make sure that you have a Mexican permit or Canadian visitor's visa to enter Mexico or Canada. In Mexico, lack of an entry permit may lead to heavy fines and even detention. For a list of countries that are exempt from the Canadian visa requirement, visit:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/>

- Visit the Applicant Service Center to schedule an appointment at <http://usvisa-info.com>.
- Visit the U.S. Consulate's website for further detailed information at [www.usembassy.state.gov](http://www.usembassy.state.gov)

Many posts may only accept visa RENEWAL applicants. Furthermore, eligible Third Country Nationals must be renewing the same visa type for which they received the first visa either in their home country or at a border post in Canada or Mexico. Please visit the specific U.S. Consulate/Embassy's website for more information.

### CAUTION:

If you apply for a visa in a third country, including Canada and Mexico, you may not be allowed to re-enter the U.S. if the visa is denied. You may need to go directly to your home country to apply for a new visa to re-enter the U.S. If you are subject to a security clearance, you may have to remain in that country until the security check is completed and the visa is approved before you are allowed to re-enter the U.S. This could take a number of weeks.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We highly recommend visiting the following websites for important guidelines and information on how to apply for a visa as well as entry requirements.

#### **Department of State J-1 Visa Information Guidance**

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types\\_1267.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html)

#### **Arriving in the USA: What to Expect at the US Port of Entry**

Information provided by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

[http://www.ice.gov/sevis/factsheet/100104ent\\_exchng\\_fs.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/factsheet/100104ent_exchng_fs.htm)

#### **Arriving in the USA: US Airline and Airport Guidelines**

Information provided by the US Transportation Security Administration

<http://www.tsa.gov/>

#### **Los Angeles International Airport**

<http://www.lawa.org/welcomelax.aspx>