

A STUDENT'S VISA TO THE USA

A visa is a courtesy extended by a national government to a foreigner to be welcomed as an official guest in the host country - for a specified reason - and for a specified period of time.

THE J-1 CULTURAL VISITOR VISA

The J-1 [Cultural Exchange Visitor's] Visa is valid for a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 11 months for students ages 15 to 18 1/2. Shorter term visitors use a B-2 tourist visa. PEACE electronically records information in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) to issue form DS2019 enabling and recording a student' exchange visitor's stay in the U.S. Forms are controlled closely by the Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs/U.S.Dept. of State and by Immigration & Customs Enforcement/ U.S. Department of Homeland Security .Students may have a J-1 Visa issued *only once in their lifetime*.

HOW TO READ A DS-2019 FORM

Item # 3 shows the duration of the supervised program stay. To determine the final date for departure from the U.S., add 30 more days to the date typed in item #3. Every student automatically receives this 30 day grace period from U.S. Immigration. A stamp "D/S" put on their copy of their DS-2019 by the Immigration official when going through US Customs at the airport extends their stay to the date in item #3 + 30 days. You'll find this stamp in item #6. It means "**Duration of Status**". Some consulates issue an entry visa with an actual date totaling 12 months. If this is stamped in a student's passport, that **includes the grace period. NO Extensions can be made except to go from one to two semesters.**

HOW TO READ an I-94 (4" sq. card)

The **I-94** is issued as a student is processed by US Customs in the airport or a border crossing. It is entered into SEVIS, the State Department database, at that time. If Customs prints a copy, it will be stamped "D/S" (duration of status) and have a date reflecting the final day possible for departure – they may also choose to stamp your passport the same way.

ARRIVING WITH A B-2 VISA

Students not waiting for their documents and rushing here on a B-2 Tourist visa must convert to a J-1 visa & must pay \$140 to ICE to process an I-539 change of visa status form. Students are responsible for this. Short term visitors in winter or summer will arrive on a tourist visa which can be issued for up to 90 days to audit part-time classes but can't be extended.

GOING ABROAD IN MID-YEAR

Exchange Students going to another country with host, school or church groups must apply for a visa from the host country by mail or at a border consulate. When trying to re-enter the U. S. from another country they *must* have the I-94 card *and* their copy of the DS-2019 *stapled* inside their passport or they will not be allowed back in! Please check it. Never allow your student to go abroad during the grace period. They *will* be denied re-entry to the U. S.

USING 30 DAY GRACE PERIOD

Hosts may wish for their student to stay beyond the program finish date or natural families may come to visit at graduation and want to travel with your student before returning home, or your student's U.S. residing relatives may invite your student to visit. Host & Natural parents must both request by email or fax requested date, name, relationship, email, ph & address of deviations from a direct return home and release responsibility for any time a student is in the U.S. not following the PEACE schedule. Medical insurance is paid in advance; students extending from 1 to 31 days must pay \$2-400 or more for airline change penalties, for continued program support services, and to keep insurance in force,

BEYOND THE GRACE PERIOD

Students wishing to remain with their host longer than a year may try to change to tourist visas, but discover that they can't convert a J-1 Visa to anything except to change to a private high school in mid-year. Most must return home first, then re-enter the U.S. even if they obtain an F-1 student visa application (I-20) from a US college before going back home. PEACE is accountable to the State Department for all students' return. The goal of the U.S. Government is for students to return to share new-found discoveries with their countrymen.

ARRIVING WITH AN F-1 VISA

Students over 18.5 or under 15 at entry cannot get a J-1 visa. In that case they must be sponsored by a private school with SEVIS registration. Such schools issue a form I-20 instead of a DS2019 and the students come on an F-1 instead of a J-1 visa. PEACE will still have the same agreement with the student and parents and school for oversight.