
Visa Services Operating Status Update

Last Updated: April 6, 2021

- The COVID-19 pandemic continues to severely affect the ability of embassies and consulates around the world to be able to resume routine visa services. The particular constraints vary based on local conditions and restrictions, but include local and national lockdowns; travel restrictions; host country quarantine regulations; and measures taken by our embassies and consulates to contain the spread of COVID-19. Combined, these restrictions have reduced appointment capacity during the pandemic, which has created a significant backlog of both immigrant and nonimmigrant visa applicants awaiting a visa interview. The State Department is working to reduce this backlog while ensuring the safety of our staff and applicants and protecting our national security.
- The provision of services to U.S. citizens abroad is the first priority of consular sections abroad. With respect to visa services, for consular sections that have the capacity, the processing of immigrant and fiancée visas, particularly for immediate relatives and other family-sponsored applicants, is our highest priority. U.S. Embassies and Consulates are also prioritizing the processing of immigrant visa cases previously refused under the rescinded Presidential Proclamations 9645 and 9983.
- The Department is committed to transparently sharing the current status of our worldwide visa operations and will continue to provide regular updates. Information about the backlog in immigrant visa processing will be publicly available in the future.
- U.S. Embassies and Consulates that process nonimmigrant visa applications are prioritizing travelers with urgent needs, foreign diplomats, mission-critical categories of travelers (such as those coming to assist with the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and workers who are essential

to the American food supply), followed by students, exchange visitors, and some temporary employment visas.

- Applicants should check the website of the nearest embassy or consulate for the current operating status.
- Information about nonimmigrant visa wait times are available on the visa wait time tool at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/wait-times.html>.

FAQ

Q. Which additional visa services are embassies/consulates beginning to provide?

- All of our missions are continuing to provide emergency and mission-critical visa services. As post-specific conditions permit, and after meeting demand for services to U.S. citizens, our missions are phasing in processing some routine immigrant and nonimmigrant visa cases. Posts that process immigrant visa applications are prioritizing Immediate Relative family members of U.S. citizens, including intercountry adoptions, fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens, and certain Special Immigrant Visa applications. Posts processing nonimmigrant visa applications will continue to prioritize travelers with urgent travel needs, foreign diplomats, and certain mission critical categories of travelers such as those coming to assist with the U.S. response to the pandemic, followed by students and exchange visitors (F-1, M-1, and J-1) and temporary employment visas. Posts that process both immigrant and nonimmigrant visas will prioritize immigrant visas while still providing some nonimmigrant services. The volume and type of visa cases each post will process depends on local circumstances. An embassy or consulate will resume adjudicating all routine immigrant and nonimmigrant visa cases only when adequate resources are available, and it is safe to do so.

Q. What criteria are missions using to determine when to

resume routine services?

- We are closely monitoring local conditions in each country where we have a U.S. presence. Local conditions that may affect when we can begin providing various public services include medical infrastructure, COVID-19 cases, emergency response capabilities, and host/local government restrictions.

Q. What steps are being taken to protect customers from the spread of COVID-19?

- The health and safety of our workforce and customers remains paramount. Our embassies and consulates are implementing safeguards to keep staff and customers safe, including implementing physical distancing in our waiting rooms, scheduling fewer interviews at a time, frequent disinfection of high touch areas, and following local health and safety regulations.

Q. Do the various Presidential Proclamations/travel restrictions still apply, or are those lifting with the resumption of visa services?

- The three geographical COVID-19 Proclamations (P.P. 9984, 9992, and 10143) remain in effect. These proclamations, with certain exceptions, place restrictions on visa issuance and entry into to the United States for individuals physically present in China, Iran, Brazil, UK, Ireland, South Africa, and the 26 countries in the Schengen area.

Q: Is my situation an emergency? I need to go the United States immediately for X.

- Applicants can find instructions on how to request an emergency visa appointment at the Embassy or Consulate's website.

Q. What about my application fee that expired while routine services were suspended?

- The Machine Readable Visa (MRV) fee is valid within one year of the date of payment and may be used to schedule a visa appointment in the country where it was purchased. However, the Department

understands, as a result of the pandemic, many visa applicants have paid the visa application processing fee and are still waiting to schedule a visa appointment. We are working diligently to restore all routine visa operations as quickly and safely as possible. In the meantime, the Department extended the validity of MRV fees until September 30, 2022, to allow all applicants who were unable to schedule a visa appointment due to the suspension of routine consular operations an opportunity to schedule and/or attend a visa appointment with the fee they already paid.