
National Interest Exceptions for Certain Travelers from China, Iran, Brazil, South Africa, Schengen Area, United Kingdom, and Ireland

Last Updated: April 26, 2021

On April 26, 2021, the Secretary of State made a national interest determination regarding categories of travelers eligible for exceptions under Presidential Proclamations (PPs) 9984, 9992, and 10143 related to the spread of COVID-19. As a result of this determination, together with national interest determinations already in place, travelers subject to these proclamations, due to their presence in China, Iran, Brazil, South Africa, the Schengen area, the United Kingdom, and Ireland, who are seeking to provide vital support for critical infrastructure; journalists; students and certain academics covered by exchange visitor programs, may now qualify for a National Interest Exception (NIE). Students and academics subject to these proclamations due to their presence in China, Iran, Brazil, or South Africa, may qualify for an NIE only if their academic program begins August 1, 2021 or later. Qualified travelers who are applying for or have valid visas or ESTA authorization may travel to the United States following the procedures below, even as PPs 9984, 9992, and 10143 remain in effect.

Students with valid F-1 and M-1 visas intending to begin or continue an academic program commencing August 1, 2021 or later do not need to contact an embassy or consulate to seek an individual NIE to travel. They may enter the United States no earlier than 30 days before the start of their academic studies. Students seeking to apply for new F-1 or M-1 visas should check the status of visa services at the nearest embassy or consulate; those applicants who are found to be otherwise qualified for an F-1 or M-1 visa will automatically be considered for an NIE to travel.

Travelers in categories described above who have a valid visa in the appropriate class or who have a valid ESTA authorization for travel under the Visa Waiver Program and seek to travel for purposes consistent with ESTA authorization, should contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate before traveling, if they believe they may qualify for a National Interest Exception. If a National Interest Exception is approved, they may travel on either a valid visa or ESTA authorization, as appropriate.

The Department of State also continues to grant NIEs for qualified travelers seeking to enter the United States for purposes related to humanitarian travel, public health response, and national security. These travelers and any others who believe their travel to be in the United States' national interest should also review the website of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for instruction on how to contact

them.

As with all NIEs for qualified travelers seeking to enter the United States under a Presidential Proclamation, if circumstances warrant, the Secretary of State may revise the national interest determination.