

GUIDE FOR THE FILIPINO EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS or J-1 VISA HOLDERS

What is the Exchange Visitors Program (EVP)?

The Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) is an international exchange program administered by the United States of America to strengthen the educational, scientific, and technological capabilities through inter-country exchange of knowledge and expertise. It also provides non-US citizens with opportunities to participate in educational and cultural programs in the US and return home to share their acquired skills and knowledge. It is not an immigration program and in many cases requires participants to comply with a two-year home-country residency requirement after completing the program.

What are the obligations of an exchange visitor?

An exchange visitor must secure an insurance in case of sickness or accident during the period of training. An accompanying dependent is also required to be covered by insurance. He/she must engage only in the activity specified/listed on his/her DS 2019. Exchange visitors are directed not to engage in unauthorized employment while under the program. An exchange visitor participant is also expected to return home and share his/her experiences with his/her fellow citizens.

What is a DS2019?

The DS 2019, or the Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J1) Status, is a document of the US Department of State that **contains all relevant information regarding an individual's participation in a** particular exchange program. It is one of the requirements in the application for a J1 visa.

What are the obligations of the sponsor?

The sponsor is required to ensure that the activity in which the visitor is engaged is consistent with the category and activity listed on his/her DS 2019. Sponsors can also facilitate changes in visa.

**Make sure to inform your sponsoring institution of your arrival in the US for the verification of your immigration status by the Department of Homeland Security. This is necessary for the Social Security Number application eligibility.*

When may an exchange visitor secure a new DS 2019?

A new DS 2019 is needed if the participant will have a transfer of program/change of category and if he/she is allowed or required to have an extension of stay in his/her program in the US. Application for a new DS 2019 should be made two months prior to the transfer of program/expiration of period of stay.

How long is an exchange visitor permitted to stay in the US after his/her program has ended?

The initial admission of an exchange visitor, spouse and children may not exceed the period specified on Form DS 2019, plus a period of 30 days for travel purposes.

What is the two-year home-country physical presence requirement?

Pursuant to Section 212(a) of the US Immigration and Nationality Act, EVP participants are required to reside in the country of their nationality or last legal permanent residence for an aggregate period of at least two years after completion of their respective programs before becoming eligible to apply for an immigrant visa or for non-immigrant visa.

The two-year home-country physical presence requirement also applies to the J2 dependent spouse or children of the EVP participant.

Who are subject to the two-year home-country physical presence requirement?

- Those whose training were financed in whole or in part, directly or indirectly, by an agency of the US Government or by the Philippine Government;
- Those whose training fields are included in the Skills List of the Philippines; and
- Those who came to the US to acquire graduate medical education or training.

**The residency requirement is usually annotated on the visa.*

What is the Exchange Visitor Program Skills List?

The EVP Skills List is a directory of skills which are in short supply and, therefore, very much needed in countries participating in the EVP. Educational opportunities contained in the Skills List are automatically covered by the two-year home-country physical presence requirement. The Skills List differs from one participating country to another.

Can an EVP participant continue to stay in the US beyond his/her training period?

EVP participants who are not covered by the home-country residency requirement may stay on in the US beyond their training period provided they obtain the necessary visa.

The change of status of those covered by the home-country residency requirement will require a formal No Objection Statement (NOS) to the waiver of the home-country residency requirement. A NOS is obtained from the government of the home-country of the participant. In the Philippines, the NOS is processed and issued by the EVP Committee.

An application for a waiver at the US Department of State may be approved on the following bases:

- Interest of a US government agency
- Fear of persecution
- Exceptional hardship
- Interests of the US Department of Health
- No Objection Statement

What is the EVP Committee?

The EVP Committee is composed of 11 agencies of the Philippine Government. It coordinates the Philippine participation in the program and ensures that the participation redounds to Philippine development. The agencies are the Office of the President (OP), Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO).

The DFA and the CFO serve as the Chair and the Secretariat, respectively, of the EVP Committee of the Philippines.

In the Philippines, the EVP Committee issues the Need for Training Certificates and No Objection Statements.

What is the No Objection Statement?

The No Objection Statement (NOS) is an indication from the Philippine Government that it poses no objection to the continued stay of the EVP participant in the US, or to the waiver of the two-year home-country residency requirement.

What are the requirements in applying for NOS?

To apply for NOS from the Philippine Government, an EVP participant must submit the following to the EVP Secretariat:

- Waiver Review File No. issued by the Waiver Review Division of the US Department of State (<https://j1visawaiverrecommendation.state.gov/>);
- NOS application form (downloadable at www.cfo.gov.ph and available at the Philippine Embassy or Consulate in the US and at the CFO);
- Certificate of Eligibility for exchange visitor participant (DS 2019/IAP Form 66);
- Certificate of Completion or Certificate of Participation in an EVP Program;
- Original copy of clearance from his/her former employer in the Philippines clearing the applicant from any financial accountability and contractual obligation or an Affidavit of Facts stating that the applicant was never employed prior to his/her departure to the US; and
- Proof of payment of the NOS processing fee of USD\$125.00.

Please note that all public documents, such as vital records, issued by government institutions and agencies in the US submitted in support of NOS application must be covered by an Apostille to be issued by a duly commissioned/authorized agencies. Private documents and electronically-generated US documents must be covered with a notarized affidavit prior to Apostille.

What does the CFO do upon receipt of an application for NOS?

Applications for an NOS received by the CFO are acknowledged and evaluated. The CFO informs the applicant of any documentary deficiency. Otherwise, the application is forwarded to the **EVP Committee for consideration. The CFO informs the NOS applicant of the Committee's decision on the application as soon as available.**

PRE-DEPARTURE CONCERNS

What to bring?

- Passport
- Visa
- DS 2019
- Plane ticket
- Terminal fee/Security fee
- Baggage
- Exit clearance (if applicable)

What not to bring?

- Biological equipment
- Narcotics/illegal drugs, other than those prescribed for the carrier
- Firearms, explosives, fireworks, ammunitions
- Meat, dairy and other poultry products
- Food items that will expire within 24 hours
- Plants, vegetables, fruits, flowers and seeds
- Cultural properties
- Flammable liquid or gas
- Offensively smelling items

- Transmitting devices
- Pirated materials
- Sharp pointed objects
- More than 200 sticks of cigarette (1 ream)
- More than 1.5 liters of commercial alcohol
- Records, computer software and reading materials produced in violation of copyright laws
- Endangered species and the likes

Terminal Fee - P550.00

Security Fee - P200.00

Travel Tax

- Economy/Business Class - P1,620.00
- First Class - P2,700.00
- Children below 2 yr-old are exempted from travel tax.
- 50% discount for 2 to 12 yrs. old

Payment can be made at an airline office, travel agency or Philippine Tourism Authority (PTA) main office or airport desk.

Exit Clearance

For retired, resigned and on-leave employees and officials from the government sector stating they are cleared of accountabilities from the government offices they used to work for.

Vital Carry-on Items

- ✓ Passport/US visa/DS 2019/Plane ticket
- ✓ Insurance documents
- ✓ Personal valuables (glasses, medication, etc.)
- ✓ Identification cards
- ✓ US currency in small change
- ✓ Credit/ATM cards
- ✓ Handbooks
- ✓ Phone cards
- ✓ **International driver's license (if applicable)**
- ✓ Proof of sufficient funds
- ✓ Change of clothing

**Limit liquids, aerosols and gels in carry-on at 100 ml per item and place them inside a security bag.*

Baggage

- Check in
 - 2 pieces
 - Weight: 23 kilos
 - Dimension: 62 inches (L+W+H)
- Carry-on
 - 1 bag only
 - Weight: 7 kilos
 - Dimension: 45 inches (L+W+H)

**Please check baggage weight limits and excess baggage fee with your airline as this may vary from one to another.*

Travel Fund

You are allowed to bring out of the country Philippine currency bills **or traveler's checks** not exceeding P10,000.

For foreign currencies amounting to US\$10,000 or more, you are required to declare the same in writing and to furnish information on the source and purpose of the transport of such currency. You are advised to bring documents that will show the sources of your funds. The actual owner of the money may not apportion the amount with his/her other companions to avoid the restrictions.

You may obtain a declaration form for travel fund from the Bureau of Customs or at its NAIA counter.

Travel Clearance

Secondary School Students Category

A travel clearance is a document issued by the Department of Social Welfare and Development to a minor who is below 18 years of age traveling abroad alone.

National Capital Region residents may apply at DSWD Manila located at 389 San Rafael St., Legarda, Manila. Provincial residents may apply at the DSWD Regional Field Office which has jurisdiction over **the child's residence**.

YOUR DAY OF DEPARTURE

- Be at the airport at least three (3) hours before your scheduled flight.
- Submit yourself and your baggage for security check.
- Check in with your airline counter. Keep your boarding pass and claim stubs.
- Pay the terminal and security fee at the terminal fee counter.
- Present your travel documents at the Philippine Immigration counter.
- Proceed to the waiting lounge/gate.
- Board your plane when your boarding call is made.

En Route (Stop over and connecting flight)

At the Port of Entry

- Present your travel/entry documents on the US Immigration counter (passport with J1 visa, DS 2019, departure card, etc.)
- **Claim your baggage from your airline's designated carousel.**
- Proceed to the customs area for final security and customs check.
- Exit the airport or proceed to the domestic leg of your journey, if any.

POST-DEPARTURE CONCERNS

ARRIVAL: Settlement Checklist

- ✓ Keep your identification documents (passports, social security card, insurance documents, credit/ATM cards, bank book, birth certificate, marriage certificate, etc.) in a secure place.
- ✓ Keep a list of emergency numbers in your area **and your sponsoring institution's contact** details.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the location by getting a map.
- ✓ Inquire on the policies and services of important local and provincial government offices (city halls, immigration offices, police station, tax authority agencies, social security administration offices, Philippine Consulates).

- ✓ Be aware of your rights and responsibilities in the US.
- ✓ Learn to use public communication facilities and transport system in your area.
- ✓ Learn new skills such as driving or using the computer. Continuously practice and improve your language skills.
- ✓ Establish communication and interpersonal skills.
- ✓ Involve yourself in community activities.
- ✓ Adjust with their food, culture, environment and climate.
- ✓ Have sufficient funds during the initial period of the training.
- ✓ Confirm your accommodation before going to US.
- ✓ Make sure that you have enough change and smaller bills for emergency expenses.
- ✓ Ask for advice from former EVP participants.
- ✓ Browse helpful websites.
- ✓ Know the cost of rentals in your area.
- ✓ Know the current issues.
- ✓ Open a bank account to facilitate financial transactions.

Important things to get upon arrival

- Health insurance
- SSN
- State ID card
- **Driver's** license

Health Insurance

Health insurance must be maintained for the duration of the training program, including the 30-day grace period and should be a part of health benefits program offered through a federally qualified health maintenance organization (HMO).

Social Security Number

Apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) if you have not requested for the same during your visa application. It will take about 15 working days to receive the SSN and 40-60 days for the card. If you have requested for it prior to your entry to the US, the Social Security Administration (SSA) will mail the SSN card three weeks upon your arrival. The SSN may be applied for at the nearest SSA office.

Requirements:

- Passport with J1 visa
- INS Form No. I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record)
- Copy of DS2019
- Proof of employment/Letter from the sponsor

Contact No. 1-800-772-1213

<http://www.ssa.gov>

State Identification Card

Apply for a State ID card at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). It is valid for six years and must be renewed. This card is a proof that your stay in the US is legal.

Taxes

All EVP participants and their dependents are required to file their Income Tax Statements at the Internal Revenue Service each year, whether they earn income or not.

Deadline for taxpayers : April 15
Deadline for tax filers : June 15

Contact No. 1-800-829-1040

<http://www.irs.gov/localcontacts/index.html>

SEVIS

SEVIS is an Internet-based system that maintains accurate and current information on non-immigrant students, exchange visitors and their dependents. SEVIS enables schools and program sponsors to transmit mandatory information and event notifications via the Internet, to the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State (DOS) throughout a student or exchange visitor's stay in the US.

Useful Philippine and US Government Websites

Department of Foreign Affairs: www.dfa.gov.ph
Bureau of Immigration: www.bi.gov.ph
Department of State: www.travel.state.gov
US Citizenship and Immigration Services: www.uscis.gov
US Homeland Security: www.ushs.gov
Social Security Administration: www.ssa.gov
Internal Revenue Service: www.irs.gov
SEVIS: www.ice.gov/sevis



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