

# Temporary Religious Worker Visa

Generally, a citizen of a foreign country who wishes to enter the United States must first obtain a visa, either a nonimmigrant visa for temporary stay, or an immigrant visa for permanent residence. Temporary religious worker (R-1) visas are for persons who want to enter the United States to work temporarily in religious capacities.

## As a Temporary Religious Worker, You Must:



- be a member of the same religious denomination as the religious organization you plan to work for in the United States for at least two years before that organization files a petition on your behalf;
- be coming to work as a minister or in a religious vocation or occupation in the United States;
- be employed by a non-profit religious organization in the United States (or an organization affiliated with the religious denomination in the United States); and
- work at least part time, an average of at least 20 hours per week.

## For Some Temporary Religious Activity, a Visitor (B) Visa Can Be Used



Certain religious related activities can be undertaken using a [visitor \(B\) visa](#), such as private worship, prayer, meditation, informal religious study, and attendance at religious services or conferences in the United States. Also, a visitor visa is generally appropriate for ministers of religion seeking to come to the United States temporarily, whose wages and reimbursement will be paid by their own religious group outside the United States, and when coming for:

- An evangelical tour, without taking an appointment with any one church; or
- Exchanging pulpits temporarily with U.S. counterparts; or
- Members performing missionary or voluntary service for a denomination, such as to aid the elderly or needy.

When you have a religious vocation or profession, or are a religious worker coming temporarily to be employed, with your salary paid by a non-profit religious organization in the United States, the visitor visa is not permitted, and you must have a religious worker (R) visa or other work visa.

## Petition Approval



Before you can apply for a temporary religious worker visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate, a [Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker, Form I-129](#), must be filed on your behalf by a prospective employer and approved by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). For more information about the petition process and eligibility requirements, see [Working in the U.S.](#), [Temporary \(Nonimmigrant\) Workers](#), and [R-1 Temporary Nonimmigrant Religious Workers](#) on the USCIS website. USCIS will notify your prospective employer about the petition approval or denial, by sending a Notice of Action, Form I-797.

Important Notice: USCIS recently published revised Form I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker. The revised Form I-129 is labeled with an Oct. 23, 2014, edition date. You can download the revised form and details about who may file Form I-129 from the [USCIS forms website](#). Starting on May 1, 2015, USCIS will accept only the Oct. 23, 2014, edition of Form I-129. USCIS will not accept previous editions of Forms I-129 (edition dates: Oct. 7, 2011, Jan. 19, 2011, and Nov. 23, 2010) on or after May 1, 2015.

## Important Notice: Same-sex Marriage



Effective immediately, U.S. Embassies and Consulates will adjudicate visa applications that are based on a same-sex marriage in the same way that we adjudicate applications for opposite gender spouses. Please reference the specific guidance on the visa category for which you are applying for more details on documentation required for derivative spouses. For further information, please see our [FAQ's](#).

## How to Apply

There are several steps to apply for a visa. The order of these steps and how you complete them may vary at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you apply. Please consult the instructions available on the [embassy or consulate website](#) where you will apply.

## Complete the Online Visa Application

- **Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application, [Form DS-160](#)** - [Learn more](#) about completing the [DS-160](#). You must: 1) complete the online visa application and 2) print the application form confirmation page to bring to your interview.
- **Photo** - You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. Your photo must be in the format explained in the [Photograph Requirements](#).

## Schedule an Interview

While interviews are generally not required for applicants of certain ages outlined below, consular officers have the discretion to require an interview of any applicant, regardless of age.

If you are age:	Then an interview is:
13 and younger	Generally not required

<b>14-79</b>	Required (some exceptions for renewals)
<b>80 and older</b>	Generally not required

You must schedule an appointment for your visa interview, generally, at the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) in the country where you live. You may schedule your interview at any U.S. Embassy or Consulate, but be aware that it may be difficult to qualify for a visa outside of your place of permanent residence.

Wait times for interview appointments vary by location, season, and visa category, so you should apply for your visa early. Review the interview wait time for the location where you will apply:

### Appointment Wait Time

Check the estimated wait time for a nonimmigrant visa interview appointment at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

**Note:** Please check the individual Embassy or Consulate website to determine if your case is eligible for a waiver of the in-person interview.

Applicants scheduling visa appointments in a location different from their place of residence should check post websites for nonresident wait times.

### Select a U.S. Embassy or Consulate:

Wait Times for Embassy/Consulate

Enter a City  **GO**

#### Nonimmigrant Visa Type

#### Appointment Wait Time

Interview Required

Students/Exchange Visitors (F, M, J) -- days

Interview Required Petition-Based Temporary Workers (H, L, O, P, Q) -- days

U, I, Q,

Interview Required Crew and  
Transit (C, D, C1/D) -- days

Interview Required Visitors  
(B1/B2) -- days

Interview Waiver

Students/Exchange Visitors (F, M, J) -- days

Interview Waiver Petition-Based  
Temporary Workers (H, L, O, P, Q) -- days

Interview Waiver Crew and  
Transit (C, D, C1/D) -- days

Interview Waiver Visitors  
(B1/B2) -- days

[See details on appointment availability and processing times](#)

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You must provide the receipt number printed on your approved Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker, Form I-129, or Notice of Action, Form I-797, to schedule an interview.

## Prepare for Your Interview

- **Fees - Pay the non-refundable visa application fee**, if you are required to pay it before your interview. When your visa is approved, you may also pay a visa issuance fee, if applicable to your nationality. Fee information is provided below:

Application Fee

### Select your nationality to see your \$190 Issuance Fee

Select a country/authority or are: 

[All Fees](#)

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- Review the instructions available on the website of the [embassy or consulate](#) where you will apply to learn more about fee payment.

## Gather Required Documentation

Gather and prepare the following required documents before your visa interview:

- **Passport** valid for travel to the United States - Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your period of stay in the United States (unless exempt by [country-specific agreements](#)). If more than one person is included in your passport, each person who needs a visa must submit a separate application.
- **Nonimmigrant Visa Application, [Form DS-160](#)** confirmation page
- **Application fee payment receipt**, if you are required to pay before your interview
- **Photo** - You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. If the [photo upload fails](#), you must bring one printed photo in the format explained in the [Photograph Requirements](#).
- **Receipt Number** for your approved petition as it appears on your Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker, Form I-129, or Notice of Action, Form I-797, from USCIS.

### Additional Documentation May Be Required

Review the instructions for how to apply for a visa on the website of the [embassy or consulate](#) where you will apply. Additional documents may be requested to establish if you are qualified.

## Attend Your Visa Interview

During your visa interview, a consular officer will determine whether you are qualified to receive a visa, and if so, which visa category is appropriate based on your purpose of travel. You will need to establish that you meet the requirements under U.S. law to receive the category of visa for which you are applying.

Ink-free, digital fingerprint scans will be taken as part of your application process. They are usually taken during your interview, but this varies based on location.

After your visa interview, your application may require further [administrative processing](#). You will be informed by the consular officer if further processing is necessary for your application.

When the visa is approved, you may pay a visa issuance fee if applicable to your nationality, and will be informed how your passport with visa will be returned to you. Review the [visa processing time](#), to learn how soon your passport with visa will generally be ready for pick-up or delivery by the courier.

## Additional Information

- Petition approval by USCIS does not guarantee visa issuance. Do not make final travel plans or buy tickets until you have a visa.
- Unless canceled or revoked, a visa is valid until its expiration date. Therefore, a valid U.S. visa in an expired passport is still valid. If you have a valid visa in your expired passport, do not remove it from your expired passport. You may use your valid visa in your expired passport along with a new valid passport for travel and admission to the United States.
- Spouse and Children -
  - Your spouse and unmarried children under age 21 may apply for R-2 visas to accompany or join you to reside temporarily. You must demonstrate that you will be able to financially support your family in the United States. They are permitted to study while in the United States, but are not authorized to accept employment.
  - For information about employment or study while in the United States, review [Religious \(R\) Workers](#) [↗](#) and [Employment Authorization](#) [↗](#) on the USCIS website.

## Visa Denial and Ineligibility



Review [Visa Denials](#) for detailed information about visa ineligibilities, denials, and waivers.

## Visa Renewal



Whether you are applying for the first time or renewing your visa, you will use the same application process (please review [How to Apply](#), above). Some applicants seeking to renew their visas in certain visa classes may be eligible for the Interview Waiver Program (IWP) which allows qualified individuals to apply for visa renewals without being interviewed in person by a U.S. consular officer. Review the instructions on the website of the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) where you will apply to determine if the IWP is available and if you qualify.

## I was refused a visa under section 214(b). May I reapply?



Yes, if you feel circumstances have changed regarding your application. Review [Visa Denials](#) to learn more.

## Misrepresentation or Fraud



Attempting to obtain a visa by the willful misrepresentation of a material fact, or fraud, may result in the permanent refusal of a visa application or denial of entry into the United States.

Review [Ineligibilities and Waivers: Laws](#).



## Citizens of Canada and Bermuda



Citizens of Canada and Bermuda do not require visas to enter the United States as temporary religious workers; however, a temporary worker petition approved by USCIS is required. For more information, see [U.S. Embassy Ottawa website](#), [U.S. Consulate Hamilton website](#), and [CBP website](#)<sup>↗</sup>.

Additional resources for Canadian temporary religious workers can be found on the [U.S. embassy and consulate websites in Canada](#).

## Further Questions



- **Case-Specific Questions** - Contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate handling your visa application for status information. Select [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) for contact information.
- **General Questions** - review [Contact Us](#).