

Information about Changing Status Within the U.S.

Individuals wishing to change from one U.S. visa type to another have two choices:

1. Leave the U.S., obtain a new visa at an embassy, and re-enter the U.S.
2. File to change status within the U.S.

Please contact ISSS to discuss these two options before deciding how to proceed, as there are advantages and disadvantages for both options. This document will address the second option.

Important Notes:

- **ISSS cannot provide legal advice on the Change of Status application.** This form is intended as a tool to help explain the process. It should not be considered legal advice. **We recommend that you hire a [qualified immigration attorney](#) to ensure you file properly.**
- The application processing time can be extremely long. It is very common to see USCIS processing times greater than one year.
- If you apply for F-1 student visa status you cannot assume any of the related benefits until the application is approved. Examples of F-1 benefits include course enrollment and on-campus employment (including assistantships). Please ask your attorney whether you can pursue these based on your current status while the application is pending.
- Changing status within the U.S. does not provide you with a new visa stamp in your passport. If your new status is approved, you will still need to apply for a visa stamp on your next trip outside of the U.S.
- If you leave the U.S. while your application is pending it will be considered abandoned by the USCIS. Your application will be denied, and you will not receive a refund of your application fees.
- Individuals who do not hold legal status in the U.S. (including those with terminated or expired records) are not eligible to file a change of status application.
- If you have any dependents you will need to file to change their status as well.

Change of Status applications can be filed online or by mail. If opting for mail, always check for the most recent [USCIS address](#) information.

Minimum Documentation Needed:

- [Form I-539](#) (if filing on paper be sure to use the most recent version)
- [Application fees](#)
- Copy of passport ID page
- Copy of visa stamp(s)
- Printout of [I-94 record](#)
- Copy of I-20 or DS-2019 form for new status
- SEVIS fee payment receipt (if applying for F-1 or J-1 status; Pay fee at www.fmjfee.com)
- Financial documentation
- Any other documentation recommended by your attorney, included in the [form instructions](#), or requested by USCIS



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