Frequently Asked Questions

DEPENDENTS

My spouse and/or child would like to join me in the U.S. while I pursue my studies. How do I get a new I-20/DS-2019 for them to use in applying for a dependent visa?

Please read the Document Request Form to learn what documents are needed in order to request an I-20/DS-2019 for your F-2/J-2 spouse or child.

Can my dependent spouse work while in the U.S.?

F-2 spouses and dependents CANNOT work while in the U.S. J-2 spouses and dependents may request permission from USCIS to work only if the additional income goes to support the J-2 holders. Work cannot begin until USCIS grants approval. For questions regarding the application procedure, please call the OISS to schedule an appointment with an advisor.

Can my dependent spouse study while in the U.S.?

The federal regulations pertaining to F-1 students and their dependents state that F-2 spouses may not engage in full-time study, that F-2 children may only engage in full-time study if the study is in an elementary or secondary school (kindergarten through twelfth grade), and that F-2 spouses and children may engage in study if the study is “avocational or recreational in nature.” As this language is somewhat ambiguous, please schedule an appointment to discuss your case in further detail with an OISS advisor.

Can my dependent spouse get an SSN or driver’s license while in the U.S.?

Currently, the U.S. Social Security Administration (http://ssa.gov) will not accept applications from individuals who lack eligibility for employment in the U.S. Thus, while J-2 dependents may be successful in obtaining a SSN (due to their employment eligibility), applications from F-2 dependents are on the other hand routinely denied (due to their ineligibility for employment).

Dependents that are ineligible for a SSN are eligible to apply for a Temporary Visitors Driver’s License (TVDL). For more information on TVDL, please visit the Illinois Secretary of State website (http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/drivers/drivers_license/tempvisitordl.html).

Last Updated 10.08