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Initiating a J-Visa Exchange

1. Complete the NWRA Cultural and Educational Exchange Application for a J visa exchange. This application is attached to this packet. Once completed, the application goes to the NWRA Principal Investigator (PI) requesting the exchange. The PI then completes their section and submits the request to the RO. All information included on the application must be complete and accurate.
2. The RO at NWRA completes the DS-2019 on SEVIS.
3. The RO at NWRA pays the SEVIS I-901 fee.
4. The completed DS-2019 and SEVIS receipt are sent to the applicant.
5. Applicant requests J Visa stamps from the U.S. Consulate or Embassy in his/her country. The applicant should check with the Embassy or Consulate regarding the procedures to be followed in applying for the visa/s. Most participants, including the J-1 and their dependents, must appear in person and present their passports and DS-2019's at the Consulate or Embassy. Each applicant must submit a Form DS 156 Nonimmigrant Visa Application (accessible on each Embassy and Consulates website) and bring two passport photographs. Some applicants are also required to submit a Form DS 157. Please make sure to consult the relevant Embassy or Consulate's website.
6. Arrangements are made for required medical insurance while under the J visa. The RO will assist the J Visitor with this requirement.
7. Upon arrival in the U.S., check in immediately with the NWRA Responsible Officer. If your status is not verified by the RO within 30 days, your J visa program will be cancelled.

Who is the NWRA Responsible Officer (RO)?

The RO's name and contact information are:

Anita Whitney
NorthWest Research Associates
Human Resources
4118 – 148th Ave NE
Redmond, WA 98052 USA
425-556-9055 ext. 280; 425-556-9099 (fax)
JVisaRO@nwra.com

Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO):

Pederson Immigration Law Group, P.C.
Attn: Jan Pederson
2001 L Street, NW, Suite 601
Washington, DC 20036-4954
202-785-1960; 202-785-3815 (fax)
jpederson@usvisainfo.com

Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO):

Debbi Bardsley
NorthWest Resource Associates
Human Resources Administrator
4118 – 148th Ave NE
Redmond, WA 98052 USA
425-556-9055, ext. 213; 425-556-9099 (fax)
debbi@nwra.com

After Hours Emergency number: 425-652-5431

NWRA Office Locations

Redmond/Seattle, Washington State
NorthWest Research Associates, Inc.
4118 – 148th Ave NE
Redmond, WA 98052
425-556-9055

Boulder, Colorado
NorthWest Research Associates, Inc.
3380 Mitchell Lane
Boulder, CO 80301
303-415-9701

Fees Payable to Program Sponsor

The J-1 must pay for visa, travel, medical and living expenses related to any J-2 dependents. For the J-1, the SEVIS I-901 fee, visa, travel and medical will be paid for by NWRA. Living expenses for the J-1 will be covered via a salary, if the EV stays for three months or longer, or a consultancy fee if they are expected to stay at NWRA for less than three months, the amount of which will be determined after review of the visa application and consultation with the PI requesting the exchange.

Receiving Your Visa Stamp

A visa is a stamp in your passport that allows you to ask for permission to enter the United States upon reaching a U.S. border. The visa will contain your personal information, the visa type (J-1 or J-2), date issued, expiration date and your photograph and fingerprints. To obtain your visa you need to make an appointment with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. This should occur after you receive the DS-2019 and the receipt for your SEVIS I-901 fee. Take all of your documents with you to the appointment at the consulate, including your DS-2019, your SEVIS receipt, documents that establish your funding, your passport and if you have dependents, their DS-2019's, passports and marriage and birth certificates showing the family relationship. Contact the Embassy or Consulate in advance to determine their procedure; your dependents may have to appear in person as well as yourself.

Canadian citizens do not require visas to enter the U.S. as an Exchange Visitor, but they must present their DS-2019 and SEVIS receipt to the immigration officer at the port of entry.

Entering the United States

Before arriving at an airport, the airline will give you a form I-94 (white) Arrival/Departure Record to complete. The form asks for basic identification information and the address where you will stay in the United States. This document is very important to your immigration status in the United States, so be sure to make photocopies of the front and back of the card and keep the original in a safe place. Upon leaving the airplane you will be shown to the inspection area where a U.S. Customs official will review your documents. If everything is in order the officer will stamp your I-94 and DS-2019 for "duration of status" (D/S). The completed form I-94 will show what immigration classification you were given and how long you are allowed to stay. You should keep your I-94 in your passport, along with your DS-2019. As these documents are your only proof of your J-1 status, it is advisable to make photocopies of your passport identification page, visa stamp, I-94 and DS-2019. Keep the copies in a separate place in case the originals are lost.

Hand carry your documents. You will need to have access to them before you retrieve your luggage.

You must enter the U.S. within the 30 days prior to your program start date. If an Exchange Visitor must arrive later than the program start date shown on their Form DS 2019, the Visitor must let the RO know so that the SEVIS record can be amended to reflect a later arrival date. When the Visitor arrives in the United States, prior to validating the SEVIS record, the RO will change the program begin date, then validate the record, confirming arrival in the U.S. and the commencement of the participant's exchange visitor program.

Required Medical Insurance

As described previously, all J-1's and their dependents must have the following minimum benefits in place for the duration of their stay: 1) medical benefits maximum cannot be lower than \$50,000 per accident or illness; 2) repatriation of remains in the amount of \$7500; 3)

medical evacuation to the home country in the amount of \$10,000; 4) a deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness; 5) the co-insurance payable by the exchange visitor or dependents may not exceed 25% of the covered benefits per accident or illness.

NWRA has selected MedEx to provide this insurance. The Choice Inbound plan covers all the J visa requirements. Most exchange visitors and their visiting dependents will need to sign up for this plan initially. Some higher coverage limits are available for an additional cost. If you are coming as an employee of NWRA at one-half time or more, you will be covered under the NWRA medical as of the first day of the first full calendar month of employment. After you have become covered under the NWRA medical you need only maintain the evacuation and repatriation coverage which is the SafeTrip plan.

If you wish to have a more comprehensive health plan while you are here and you will not be eligible for the NWRA health coverage, there are numerous insurance companies who offer individual and family coverage. Often these will require a health screening and can be expensive. There are many options to choose from and your RO can help you understand how the plans work. The websites below give you information about some of the options available. A sample rate chart is included in the appendix for your reference.

Washington State:

Premera Blue Cross – www.premera.com

Regence Blue Shield – www.wa.regence.com

Group Health Cooperative – www.ghc.org

Colorado State:

Anthem Blue Cross BlueShield – www.anthem.com

Kaiser Permanente – <https://www.kaiserpermanente.org/>

If you are coming to NWRA for less than three months, you will be a consultant to NWRA. In this case, you will be required to maintain the complete J visa insurance coverage as described above.

Please contact the RO for information about how to enroll in these plans. Ideally enrollment should take place **before** you leave your home so that you are covered from the time you arrive in the U.S. You must be covered under the required medical for each day you are under J status.

Check in with Responsible Officer

Upon arrival in the U.S., check in immediately with the RO. We have 30 days from the program start date to validate your record in SEVIS. If this is not done, the record will automatically go to invalid status which will require the payment of an additional fee to correct.