

News from Moreno Law Office LLC, Attorney Madeleine Moreno.

Maintaining F-1 Student Status

As an F-1 international student in the United States, it is your responsibility to maintain your immigration status. Follow these key guidelines to stay in compliance and avoid jeopardizing your education or legal stay:

Maintain Required Documentation

F-1 students must have the following documents:

- All issued Forms I-20;
- Passport valid for at least 6 months into the future.
- I-94 record that reflects “D/S” and “F-1” status □
 - D/S means “Duration of Status”. There is no definite end date listed on the I-94.

Academic Requirements

- Attend the school listed on your Form I-20;
- F-1 undergraduate students must enroll full-time and take at least 12 credit hours per term. Those in graduate programs must take a minimum of 9 credit hours;
- Only one online class (3 credit hours) can count toward full-time enrollment per semester; If you plan to enroll less than full-time, you must obtain written approval from your advisor before dropping below the required number of credits;
- You must maintain good academic standing as defined by your school

Program Updates and Changes

- Keep your Form I-20 up to date. Report any of the following changes to your DSO within 10 days:

- Change of major, degree level, or funding; □
- Change of address or phone number; □
- Name change
- Extend your I-20 before it expires if you need more time to finish your program.

Employment

F-1 students can only work in the following limited circumstances without violating status:

On-Campus Employment □

- F-1 students may work on-campus part-time (no more than 20 hours per week) while school is in session and full-time during school vacations.

Off-Campus Employment □

- Requires prior approval through CPT (Curricular Practical Training) or OPT (Optional Practical Training). Both are handled through the Designated School Official (DSO);

Curricular Practical Training □

- Must be authorized by the DSO, endorsed on Form I-20, and updated in SEVIS.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) & STEM OPT

- OPT provides F-1 students with an opportunity to gain practical experience in their field of study.
- It can be authorized for up to 12 months and can be used either before (pre-completion) or after (post-completion) the completion of the degree program.

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Optional Practical Training (OPT) & STEM OPT (Continued)

- Students who have completed a degree in a qualifying STEM field can apply for a 24-month extension of OPT.
- Must get prior approval from the DSO and apply for & receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) before beginning working.

Severe Economic Hardship

- Students may qualify for off-campus employment due to severe economic hardship from unforeseen circumstances out of their control, such as loss of financial aid or significant currency fluctuations.

Traveling as an F-1 Student

- Before traveling abroad check that your **SEVIS record** is up-to-date and activated.
- Confirm your DSO has signed your Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status" in the "Travel Endorsement" section within the last year, and that you're not leaving the U.S for more than 5 months.
- When you arrive at at US port of entry, you will meet with CBP officers for primary and sometimes secondary inspection.
- The CBP officer may ask for your valid passport, I-20(s), student visa, and practical training employment EAD, as applicable.
- CBP Officers may search your electronic devices.

F-2 Dependents

- F-2 dependents must maintain their lawful status while in the U.S. and may study part-time, but employment is prohibited.

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Report a Change of Address

- Report a change of address to the Designated School Official and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services within 10 days of the change.

Loss of F-1 Status

- If you violate immigration regulations or U.S. laws, you may lose your F-1 status and benefits (e.g. employment authorization).
- The U.S. DOS may revoke your visa on various grounds while you're in the U.S.
- If your visa has been revoked or your SEVIS record is terminated, you may be subject to removal and/or detention and should seek the advice of a reputable attorney.
- In preparation to meet the attorney, you should:
 - Download and document all relevant immigration history (**SEVIS record, ALL I-20s and notes; I-94 & travel history, etc**)
 - Keep digital copies of passports, visas, all I-20s, and both sides of any EAD.
 - Sign a Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) release, and an ICE Privacy Waiver (Form 60-001) to enable information to be released to a third party

Final Reminders

- Keep your SEVIS record active by staying enrolled and communicating with your school's international office.
- Depart the U.S. within 60 days of program completion unless you transfer, apply for OPT, or change status.
- Talk to your DSO before making any changes to your academic program or visa status.