F-2 and J-2 Dependents

Visa Information

The spouse and unmarried children (under the age of 21) of F-1 students or J-1 students or scholars may either accompany them to the United States, or come alone on a later date by entering the U.S. on a F-2 or J-2 visa. In order to apply for an F-2 or J-2 visa, the dependent(s) should have the following:

- A valid passport
- Proof that they and/or their spouse have sufficient funds to meet all of their expenses while in the United States (bank statements, affidavits of support, etc.)
- A valid form I-20 or DS-2019. Please contact an Immigration Coordinator to obtain an I-20 or DS-2019 for a dependent. In order to issue an I-20 or DS-2019 for a spouse, the marriage must occur first. The issue date on the I-20 or DS-2019 needs to be after the date of marriage in order for the dependent to apply for a visa. Please be prepared to provide the following information for each dependent: name, gender, birth date, city and country of birth, country of citizenship and country of permanent residence. You will also need to bring in proof of financial support for the dependent's estimated expenses. This amount can be given to you by an Immigration Coordinator.
- A marriage or birth certificate showing the relationship to the F-1 or J-1 student or scholar. Please make sure to have an English translation if necessary.

When the family members arrive at a United States port of entry, they will present their passports containing the F-2 or J-2 visa and the Form I-20 or DS-2019 to the border patrol inspector. Upon admitting them to the United States, the inspector will stamp the Form I-94 (Arrival-Departure Record), which will show the date and place of entry, and the authorized period of stay. This period of stay should be the same as that of the F-1 or J-1.

Reasons for denial of a visa include lack of proper documentation (such as lack of evidence of sufficient financial support), suspected excludability (such as criminal activity), or, most often, the
inability to convince the consular officer that they will return to their home country after the authorized stay has ended.

Visa issuance decisions are made by the Department of State employees at U.S. embassies or consulates abroad. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) personnel are generally not involved in these matters. By statute, a consular official has absolute authority to determine the facts that will govern the issuance of a visa and the applicant has no statutory or constitutional right to review or appeal. The regulations do allow, however, for informal review of a consular officer's adverse determination. An individual who is denied a visa must be advised of the specific reasons for denial and given an opportunity to present evidence to overcome the stated objections. Applicants can reapply for a visa.

International Affairs is not able to assist dependents to reverse adverse decisions made by U.S. embassies or consulates abroad.

Work Authorization

Work authorization for those in F-2 and J-2 status (that is, spouses and children of F-1 and J-1 students) is extremely limited. F-2 visa holders are not permitted to work under any circumstances. J-2 visa holders must receive USCIS permission to work.

Taking Classes

USCIS regulations state that, as an F-2 visa holder, a person is ineligible to be a full-time university student and is not able to take courses on a part-time basis that can be applied toward a degree-granting program. F-2 visa holders are eligible to take classes that are avocational or recreational in nature. F-2 children may study full time in elementary or secondary school (kindergarten through twelfth grade).

Therefore, if an F-2 visa holder wishes to study full time, he or she must apply for a change of status from F-2 to F-1. F-2 visa holders may start school only after they have been granted a change of status to F-1. Also, they may not receive wages or compensation of any kind until the F-1 status is approved.

J-2 dependents are allowed to take classes without changing their status to J-1.