



New DOS Policies Impacting Non-Immigrant and Immigrant Visa Applications

Key Takeaways

- The Department of State has indicated non-immigrant visa holders should schedule their visa interview appointments at a U.S. consular post in their country of nationality or residence, barring limited circumstances.
- DOS restricted the categories of applicants eligible for NIV interview waivers. Almost everyone applying for a U.S. visa, including children and elderly applicants, must now attend an in-person interview.
- Immigrant visa applicants can no longer choose third countries for interviews. Applicants are required to attend their interviews in the consular district corresponding to their country of residence, or, if specifically requested, their country of nationality.
- The constellation of the above factors will likely increase processing and visa interview wait times for immigrant and nonimmigrant visa applications.

Nonimmigrant Visa Applicants

DOS recently announced new policies for NIV holders, including advice that NIV applicants **should schedule** their visa interview appointments at a U.S. embassy or consulate in their country of nationality or residence. While it is not explicitly stated that NIV holders are required to interview with their home embassy or consulate, DOS **is encouraging applicants** to do so, noting that scheduling outside their resident country as a third-country national (TCN) may result in longer wait times and a harder path to qualification. It remains to be seen if more specific or strict guidance emerges that further limits TCN options.

Those with existing NIV appointments will **generally not** be cancelled. For nationals of countries where the U.S. does not conduct routine NIV services, DOS has designated consular posts for attendance of visa interview appointments unless the foreign national has residency elsewhere.

This does not apply to applicants for:

- A, G, C-2, C-3, NATO visas;



- Diplomatic or official visas;
- Visas covered by the UN Headquarters Agreement; and,
- Rare unspecified exceptions on humanitarian, medical, or foreign policy grounds.

Immigrant Visa Applicants

Beginning November 1, 2025, all immigrant visa applicants will be **required** to attend their interviews in the consular district corresponding to their country of residence, or, if specifically requested, their country of nationality. This applies to all immigrant visa categories: family-based visas, employment-based visas, and diversity visa (DV-2026) lottery winners. As for existing appointments, the National Visa Center (NVC) will generally retain existing interview appointments. For applicants living in countries where U.S visa services are suspended or limited, DOS has designated alternative locations for visa processing (table below).

In summary, **immigrant visa applicants can no longer choose third countries for interviews.** Applicants in countries with limited or suspended services should expect possible longer waiting times and additional travel to designated processing locations.

| RESIDENT OF | DESIGNATED POST(S) |
|--|----------------------------|
| Afghanistan (except Special Immigrant Visas) | Islamabad |
| Belarus | Warsaw |
| Eritrea | Addis Ababa, Nairobi |
| Haiti | Nassau |
| Iran | Abu Dhabi, Ankara, Yerevan |
| Libya | Tunis |
| Niger | Abidjan |
| North Korea | Guangzhou |



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|-------------|---|
| Russia | Warsaw, Almaty (IR-5). Tashkent (IR-5) |
| Somalia | Nairobi |
| Syria | Amman, Beirut (for Palestinians with Syrian Travel Documents) |
| South Sudan | Nairobi |
| Sudan | Cairo |
| Venezuela | Bogota |
| Yemen | Djibouti |
| Zimbabwe | Johannesburg |

Interview Waiver Policy Update

Since September 2, 2025, DOS has limited who may be eligible for NIV interview waivers. This means most nonimmigrant visa applicants, including those renewing a H, L, F, M, J and O-1 visa, will be required to attend in-person interviews.

In addition, under this new policy, children under 14 and adults over 79 will most likely be required to appear for an in-person visa interview, unless there are specific and limited exceptions.

Who May Skip the Visa Interview (As of Sep 2, 2025):

1. Diplomats and International Organization Staff: People applying for **A-1, A-2, C-3** (not their employees), **G-1 to G-4**, or **NATO-1 to NATO-6** visas.
2. Officials or Diplomatic Visa Applicants: Anyone applying for a visa in an official or diplomatic role, even if it's not one of the categories above.
3. Specific Applicants renewing Tourist or Business Visas: You may not need an interview if you're renewing a B-1, B-2, or B1/B2 visa, or a Mexican Border Crossing Card and:



- You apply from your home country or where you live;
- Your previous visa expired less than 12 months ago;
- You were 18 or older when your last visa was issued;
- You've never been denied a visa (unless it was fixed); and,
- You have no issues that could make you eligible (For example: criminal record, immigration violations, etc.).

In summary, as of today, **nearly everyone applying for a U.S. vis**, including children and elderly applicants, must attend in-person visa interviews, unless the above-listed exceptions apply.