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U.S. Visas & Travel to Canada, Mexico, and Other Contiguous Territory* Automatic Extension of an Expired Non-Immigrant Visa For F and J Status

**Contiguous territory includes Saint Pierre, Miquelon, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, the Windward and Leeward Islands, Trinidad, Martinique and other British, French, and Netherlands territories or possessions in or bordering the Caribbean Sea.*

Can I travel even though my visa is expired?

In general, you must have a valid, unexpired F or J visa in order to re-enter the U.S. after a trip abroad. However, according to U.S. immigration regulations, under certain circumstances an F-1 or J-1 student/scholar with an expired visa may re-enter the country as though the visa were still valid [regulation is at 22CFR 41.112 (d)]. This is referred to as "automatic revalidation."

Is everyone eligible?

No, this benefit is not available to the following students and scholars:

1. Those who apply for a U.S. visa while in a contiguous territory.
2. Citizens of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Sudan, North Korea, and Cuba.

Under what conditions may I travel on an expired visa?

The F-1/J-1 visa is considered to be automatically extended if the student/scholar is from an eligible country, has not applied for a U.S. visa, and does the following:

Applies for re-admission (that is, return to the U.S. via a land, air, or sea Port of Entry) to the U.S. after an absence of not more than 30 days in a contiguous territory, and

1. Traveled to the contiguous territory for tourist purposes only;
2. Has maintained legal F-1/J-1 status and plans to continue doing so;
3. Presents a valid I-94 card which is not going to expire before the expected date of return to the U.S. (an I-94 card with the "D/S" notation is acceptable); and
4. Has an I-20 or DS-2019 endorsed for travel (or a newly issued I-20 or DS-2019).

What if I entered the U.S. on a visa type other than F-1 or J-1, but later changed status to F-1/J-1?

A person who entered the U.S. in a classification other than F-1 or J-1, but whose status was later changed by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to F-1 or J-1, may also travel to contiguous territory without first getting a new visa if he/she meets the conditions stated above. [Regulations regarding this provision are at 22 CFR 41.112 (d)]. You must be sure to carry with you the new I-94 card which was issued by USCIS on Form I-797 (which was sent to you along with your Change of Status approval).

What if I have received a new passport within the U.S.?

A person carrying a passport which updates or replaces the passport that contains his or her original nonimmigrant visa may qualify for automatic visa extension only if he or she has the old passport in his or her possession. Citizens of countries that keep the old passport upon issuance of a new one are therefore at a disadvantage when traveling to contiguous territories.

What if I am traveling with my F-2/J-2 dependent whose visa is expired?

F-2 and J-2 dependents are eligible for automatic extension of their visa under the same conditions as an F-1 or J-1.

IMPORTANT: When departing the U.S., you should not give up your I-94 card. Upon applying for re-admission to the U.S., the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspector will examine your expired visa, your I-94 card, your I-20 or DS-2019 (previously named IAP-66) and accompanying documents. You may wish to take a copy of this handout on your trip, to present to the CBP official, in case you are questioned about the expiration of your F-1/J-1 visa.

REMEMBER: You may need to obtain a visitor visa to enter the country to which you are traveling. For further information on visa requirements, you should check with the Embassy of the country of your destination. The following web site has links to all of the Embassies in Washington D.C.: <http://www.embassy.org/embassies/index.html>.