

U.S. State Department Visa Policy Updates and Travel Advisory Changes for 2025



Immigration Blog

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September 11, 2025 | **IMMIGRATION**

Anyone applying for a visa through the U.S. Department of State (U.S. DOS), or traveling to or living in the U.S. with a visa, needs to be aware of some important changes the U.S. DOS has announced over the past several months. These include:

- All nonimmigrant visa applicants are required to apply for visas in their country of nationality, country of residence, or designated country/ies for visa processing (where the U.S. government does not have routine nonimmigrant operations in one of the above). Applicants for U.S. nonimmigrant visas (NIV) are now instructed to schedule their visa interview appointments at the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) in their country of nationality or residence. Nationals of countries where the U.S. government is not conducting routine nonimmigrant visa operations must apply at the designated embassy or consulate, unless their residence is elsewhere. While it will still be possible to schedule visa appointments at other U.S. diplomatic posts worldwide, applicants who schedule nonimmigrant interviews at posts outside of their country of nationality or residence “might find that it will be more difficult to qualify for the visa,” according to the U.S. DOS, and “fees paid for such applications will

not be refunded and cannot be transferred.” If applicants choose to take this risk anyway, applying outside their country of nationality or residence is likely to result in significantly longer waits for a visa interview. Visa holders who are in the U.S. and are not planning any travel other than short (30 days or less) trips to Canada or Mexico may be able to use their expired visas for travel in North America until they are able to obtain a new visa, using a process called “Automatic Revalidation.”

- Expanded screening and vetting for visa applicants: Our practice has noticed a marked slowdown in visa processing time frames since late spring/early summer 2025. In June, the [U.S. DOS announced](#) that it is conducting “a comprehensive and thorough vetting, including online presence, of all student and exchange visitor applicants in the F (academic or language training student), M (vocational or non-academic student), and J (exchange visitor) nonimmigrant classifications.” As part of this announcement, U.S. DOS stated that all applicants for these types of visas are required to adjust the privacy settings on all of their social media profiles to “public.” While the announcement is limited to students and exchange visitor visa applications, we have seen a general trend of increased social media screening of visa applicants, based on questions asked of our clients at visa interviews recently—leading us to believe that this policy may be being implemented more broadly than the guidance indicates. As noted in this announcement, the U.S. DOS “use[s] all available information in [its] visa screening and vetting to identify visa applicants who are inadmissible to the United States, including those who pose a threat to U.S. national security.” Social media and online information are absolutely being used in vetting applicants for visas and for admission to the U.S.
- Along the same line, the Associated Press stated in August that in response to a question from the media outlet, the U.S. DOS “said all U.S. visa holders, which can include tourists from many countries, are subject to ‘continuous vetting,’ with an eye toward any indication they could be ineligible for permission to enter or stay in the United States.” This simply means that the U.S. government can reach out at any time to review continued eligibility for an issued visa and take action (such as to cancel the visa, if the individual does not still meet the eligibility requirements), regardless of the visa’s expiration date.
- In June, the U.S. DOS issued a worldwide travel advisory to U.S. citizens, describing increased risks to U.S. citizens (not foreign persons) in a foreign destination, as well as recommended precautions. The travel advisory, specific country-based information pertaining to risks, and recent security alerts can be accessed at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages.html>

If you have questions about how these 2025 U.S. Department of State changes affect your visa strategy, interview location, social media screening, continuous vetting risk, or eligibility for Automatic Revalidation, please contact Elizabeth M. Klarin at eklarin@lippes.com or Eileen M. Martin at emartin@lippes.com.

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