

# Phased Resumption of Routine Visa Services

Last Updated: December 30, 2020

- The Department of State suspended routine visa services worldwide in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2020, U.S. Embassies and Consulates began a phased resumption of routine visa services.
- The resumption of routine visa services, prioritized after services to U.S. citizens, will occur on a post-by-post basis, consistent with the Department's guidance for safely returning our workforce to Department facilities. U.S. Embassies and Consulates have continued to provide emergency and mission-critical visa services since March and will continue to do so as they are able. As post-specific conditions improve, our missions will begin providing additional services, culminating eventually in a complete resumption of routine visa services.
- We are unable to provide a specific date for when each mission will resume specific visa services, or when each mission will return to processing at pre-pandemic workload levels. See each U.S. Embassy or Consulate's website for information regarding operating status and which services it is currently offering.
- Our missions overseas continue to provide all possible services to U.S. citizens. More information is available on each post's website.
- This does not affect travel under the Visa Waiver Program. See <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/faq?focusedTopic=Schengen%20Travel%20Proclamation> [↗](#) for more information.
- Applicants with an urgent matter who need to travel immediately should contact the nearest embassy or consulate to request an emergency appointment. Contact information is on the embassy or consulate's

website.

## **FAQ**

### **Q. Which additional visa services are embassies/consulates beginning to provide?**

- All of our missions are continuing to provide emergency and mission-critical visa services. As post-specific conditions permit, and after meeting demand for services to U.S. citizens, our missions will phase in processing some routine immigrant and nonimmigrant visa cases. Posts that process immigrant visa applications will prioritize Immediate Relative family members of U.S. citizens including intercountry adoptions (consistent with Presidential Proclamation 10014) fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens, and certain Special Immigrant Visa applications. Posts processing non-immigrant visa applications will continue to prioritize travelers with urgent travel needs, foreign diplomats, and certain mission critical categories of travelers such as those coming to assist with the U.S. response to the pandemic, followed by students (F-1, M-1, and certain J-1) and temporary employment visas (consistent with Presidential Proclamation 10052). We expect the volume and type of visa cases each post will process to depend on local circumstances. An embassy or consulate will resume adjudicating all routine nonimmigrant and immigrant visa cases only when adequate resources are available, and it is safe to do so.

### **Q. What criteria are missions using to determine when to resume routine services?**

- We are closely monitoring local conditions in each country where we have a U.S. presence. Local conditions that may affect when we can begin providing various public services include medical infrastructure, COVID-19 cases, emergency response capabilities, and restrictions on leaving home.

### **Q. What steps are being taken to protect customers from**

## the spread of COVID-19?

- The health and safety of our workforce and customers will remain paramount. Our embassies and consulates are implementing safeguards to keep staff and customers safe, including implementing physical distancing in our waiting rooms, scheduling fewer interviews at a time, frequent disinfection of high touch areas, and following local health and safety regulations.

## Q. Do the various Presidential Proclamations/travel restrictions still apply, or are those lifting with the resumption of visa services?

- The five geographical COVID-19 Proclamations (P.P. 9984, 9992, 9993, 9996, 10041) and the two COVID-19 Labor Market Proclamations suspending the entry of certain aliens (P.P. 10014 and 10052) remain in effect.

## Q: Is my situation an emergency? I need to go the United States immediately for X.

- Applicants can find instructions on how to request an emergency visa appointment at the Embassy or Consulate's website.

## Q. What about my application fee that expired while routine services were suspended?

- The Machine Readable Visa (MRV) fee is valid within one year of the date of payment and may be used to schedule a visa appointment in the country where it was purchased. However, the Department understands that as a result of the pandemic, many visa applicants have paid the visa application processing fee and are still waiting to schedule a visa appointment. We are working diligently to restore all routine visa operations as quickly and safely as possible. In the meantime, the Department extended the validity of MRV fees until September 30, 2022, to allow all applicants who were unable to schedule a visa appointment due to the suspension of routine

visa appointment due to the suspension of routine consular operations an opportunity to schedule and/or attend a visa appointment with the fee they already paid.