

Updates to National Interest Exceptions for Regional COVID Proclamations

Last Updated: April 8, 2021

The Secretary has determined that the travel of immigrants, fiancé(e) visa holders, certain exchange visitors, and pilots and aircrew traveling to the United States for training or aircraft pickup, delivery, or maintenance is in the national interest for purposes of approving exceptions under the geographic COVID Presidential Proclamations (9984, 9992, and 10143). These proclamations restrict the entry of individuals physically present, within the 14-day period prior to their attempted entry into the United States, in the People's Republic of China, Islamic Republic of Iran, Schengen Area, United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Federative Republic of Brazil, or Republic of South Africa. This article provides further details regarding this determination.

As with all national interest exceptions for qualified travelers seeking to enter the United States under a Presidential Proclamation, if circumstances warrant, the Secretary of State may revise the national interest determination.

National Interest Exceptions for Immigrants and Fiancé(e)s

On April 8, 2021, the Secretary of State determined that travel on an immigrant or fiancé(e) visa is in the national interest for purposes of granting exceptions under the geographic COVID proclamations. Immigrant Visa processing posts may now grant immigrant and fiancé(e) visas to applicants otherwise eligible, notwithstanding these proclamations.

Immigrant and K fiancé visa applicants present in South Africa, Brazil, the Schengen Area, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, the People's Republic of China, and the Islamic Republic of Iran should review the website of the nearest embassy or consulate which processes immigrant visas to verify which visa services are currently available, as the volume and type of visa cases each post is able to process, given the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19

process, given the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, will depend on local circumstances. At posts where immigrant visa processing is available, immigrant visas will be prioritized in accordance with the [Department's guidance on the phased resumption of visa services](#). An embassy or consulate will resume adjudicating all routine visa cases only when it is safe to do so and adequate resources are available. As local 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. Applicants should monitor embassy and consulate websites for updates on availability of visa services.

After meeting demand for services for U.S. citizens, embassies and consulates will continue to prioritize immediate family members of U.S. citizens including intercountry adoptions and spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens, as well as fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens, and certain Special Immigrant Visa applications, in accordance with the [phased resumption of visa services guidance](#).

National Interest Exceptions for Certain Exchange Visitors

On April 8, 2021, the Secretary of State determined that travel by certain exchange visitors is in the national interest for purposes of granting exceptions under the geographic COVID Presidential Proclamations. Based on the Secretary's determination, national interest exceptions under these proclamations may be approved for the following categories of travel:

- Travel by an au pair to provide care for a minor U.S. citizen, LPR, or nonimmigrant in lawful status when the au pair possesses special skills required for a child with particular needs (e.g., medical, special education, or sign language).
- Travel by an au pair that prevents a U.S. citizen, lawful permanent resident, or other nonimmigrant in lawful status from becoming a public health charge or ward of the state or of a medical or other public funded institution.
- Travel by an au pair to provide childcare services for a child whose parents are involved with the provision of medical care to individuals who have contracted COVID-19 or medical research at United States facilities to help the

United States combat COVID-19.

- Travel for an exchange program conducted pursuant to an MOU, Statement of Intent, or other valid agreement or arrangement between a foreign government and any federal, state, or local government entity in the United States that is designed to promote U.S. national interests if the agreement or arrangement with the foreign government was in effect prior to June 24, 2020.
- Travel by Interns and Trainees on U.S. government agency-sponsored programs (those with a program number beginning with "G-3" on Form DS-2019): An exchange visitor participating in an exchange visitor program in which he or she will be hosted by a U.S. government agency and the program supports the immediate and continued economic recovery of the United States.
- Travel by Specialized Teachers in Accredited Educational Institutions with a program number beginning with "G-5" on Form DS-2019: An exchange visitor participating in an exchange program in which he or she will teach full-time, including a substantial portion that is in person, in a publicly or privately operated primary or secondary accredited educational institution where the applicant demonstrates ability to make a specialized contribution to the education of students in the United States. A "specialized teacher" applicant must demonstrate native or near-native foreign language proficiency and the ability to teach his/her assigned subject(s) in that language.
- Travel in support of critical foreign policy objectives: This only includes exchange visitors participating in a small number of exchange programs that fulfill critical and time sensitive foreign policy objectives.

Travelers in these categories who wish to visit the United States and have a valid visa in the appropriate class, or who are seeking to apply for a visa, and believe they may qualify for a National Interest Exception should contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate before traveling.

National Interest Exceptions for Pilots and Air Crew Traveling for Training and Aircraft Pickup, Delivery, or Maintenance

On April 8, 2021, the Secretary of State determined that travel by pilots and aircrew for training or aircraft pickup, delivery, or maintenance is in the national interest for purposes of granting exceptions under the geographic Presidential Proclamations. This includes individuals who are traveling to the United States for training or aircraft pickup, delivery, or maintenance on B-1/B-2, B-1, or M-1 visas, or Visa Waiver Program authorizations. The determination also covers certain M-2 dependents when the principal's necessary training is four weeks or more. Access by qualified pilots and other essential air crew to aircraft maintenance, as well as simulator training, continuing education such as proficiency checks, and other vital safety certification courses offered in the United States, is an important component of safe skies. Therefore, we intend to continue issuing visas to eligible applicants for such travelers, on the basis of national interest exceptions, as permitted by post resources and local government restrictions.

Visa applicants will be considered for an exception at the time of interview. Travelers who already hold valid visas or Visa Waiver Program authorization and believe they meet the exception criteria should follow the procedures set forth on the Embassy/Consulate website where their visa was processed or nearest their residence for consideration for an exception under the geographic Presidential Proclamations.