

# What do I need to know after I get a U visa?

## **Author**

Northwest Justice Project

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This tells you important information about what you can and can't do after you are granted a U Visa.

## **What can I learn?**

If you have U nonimmigrant status or a U visa, this can help you understand what your rights are while you have the U visa. It describes some of the public assistance you can get. It can also help you learn about what you can't or shouldn't do while you have your U visa.

If you are a crime victim and want to learn about how to apply for U status, read [Can I get a U visa if I was a victim of a crime?](#)

## **My application for U Nonimmigrant Status was approved. Now what?**

If you are living in the U.S. when USCIS approves your application, your U nonimmigrant status starts **when** USCIS approves the application.

You can stay in the United States while you have U nonimmigrant status.

**If you are not living in the U.S. when USCIS approves your application, you **must apply for a visa** and go to an interview at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Each embassy or consulate has their own way of doing things.**

Get legal advice from an immigration lawyer  
(<https://ailalawyer.com/>).

- If the embassy or consulate approves your case, they put the U visa on a page in your passport. When you get to the U.S., show the immigration officials your passport and visa. You will usually do this at the border or the airport.
- If the immigration officials let you enter the U.S., then they grant you U nonimmigrant status. You get an admission stamp in your passport when you enter. The stamp shows the date you entered, your status at entry, and the date your status expires.

You no longer need to have a **printed** I-94 card after entry to the U.S. To see the date you entered, your status at entry, and the date your status ends (expires), you must now check your I-94 information electronically (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>). You can still choose to print the information, but it is no longer required.

**Who is a principal? Who is a derivative?**

The main person on a U nonimmigrant case is called the **principal**. The code for the principal on the approval letter, visa, and I-94 form is U-1. The code for the principal on the work permit is (a)(19).

The principal's family member is called a **derivative**. The code for the derivative on the approval letter, visa, and I-94 form is U-2, U-3, U-4 or U-5. The code for the derivative on the work permit is (a)(20).

## **Which papers show my U nonimmigrant status?**

- **If you were in the U.S.** when you got your U nonimmigrant status, USCIS mailed you an approval letter for U status. There should be an I-94 form included with the letter. This letter is proof that that you are a U nonimmigrant. Your work permit is also proof. You should also be able to find and print these forms electronically (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/recent-search>).
- **If you got your U visa outside the U.S.** so you could come to the U.S., your admission stamp, your I-94 form and your work permit are your proof that you have U status. The approval letter from USCIS and the visa in your passport are important. But they are not proof that you have U status.

## **When did my U nonimmigrant status start? When does it expire?**

### **If you were in the U.S. when you got your U nonimmigrant status:**

- The top of the approval letter from USCIS says the date your U status started and the date it ends.
- The I-94 form has both the starting and ending dates.
- If you have a work permit, it says the date your U status ends.

- If you are a principal, you should have U nonimmigrant status for 4 years.
- If you are a derivative, you could have U nonimmigrant status for up to 4 years. It could be less.

## **If you got your U visa outside the U.S. so that you could come to the U.S.:**

- Your admission stamp and I-94 form say the date you entered the U.S. as a U nonimmigrant. This is the date your U status started.
- The date your U status ends is on your approval letter from the USCIS, the U visa in your passport, your admission stamp, your I-94 form and your work permit.

Get legal advice from an immigration lawyer (<https://ailalawyer.com/>) if the ending date is not the same on all your documents or if your U status is shorter than 3 years. You can contact the Northwest Immigrants Rights Project (NWIRP) (<https://nwirp.org/get-help>) to see if you qualify for legal help.

In a few situations, USCIS might give you extra time on your U nonimmigrant status. Get legal advice from an immigration lawyer (<https://ailalawyer.com/>) if you want to ask for extra time.

## **You can now get a Social Security card and a driver's license or ID card.**

It will be easier if you wait until you get your work permit. It can be harder if you don't have your work permit yet. Get legal advice from an immigration lawyer (<https://ailalawyer.com/>) if you want to try to get an ID before you get your work permit.

## You can work in the U.S. now.

An employment authorization document (EAD)

(<https://www.uscis.gov/employment-authorization>) lets you work in the U.S.

The EAD is also called a **work permit**. It says the date you can start work, and the date the permission to work ends.

**If you are a principal, and you were living in the U.S. when you got your U nonimmigrant status**, you should **not** have to send a work permit application to USCIS. You should automatically get a work permit that is good for 4 years.

If you are a principal, and **you got your visa outside the U.S.** so you could come to the U.S., you should be able to get a work permit. Send a letter with copies of your documents to the USCIS Vermont Service Center. Get legal advice from an immigration lawyer (<https://ailalawyer.com/>) if you do not get a work permit.

**If you are a derivative**, you must send an application to USCIS to get a work permit. The work permit application form is I-765 (<https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>).

- **If you lived in the U.S.** when you sent your U status application to USCIS, you can send your work permit application at the same time as the U status application.
- **If you got a U visa abroad** and then entered the U.S., you can send your work permit application to USCIS **after** you come to the U.S.

**Getting benefits won't harm your immigration case.**

U visa holders are not subject to the “public charge” test when they apply for lawful permanent resident (“green card”) status.

Immigration officials will not consider any benefits you or your family use when you apply for your green card.

## **You can get public benefits now.**

If you have a U visa but have not yet adjusted to lawful permanent resident (“green card”) status, you and your family members may be eligible for:

- Emergency Medicaid for treatment of emergency medical conditions in a hospital
- Treatment for cancer, benign life-threatening tumors, or dialysis
- Medical Care Services (MCS) - medical assistance for persons who have a disability or are over 65
- All children up to age 19 who have low income are eligible for free medical coverage (“Washington Apple Health (https://www.hca.wa.gov/free-or-low-cost-health-care/i-need-medical-dental-or-vision-care/children)”) in Washington State. There are no immigration status requirements for this coverage.
- Low-income pregnant people are eligible for medical coverage, until one year after the pregnancy ends

- Healthcare insurance through the new Apple Health expansion - Certain immigrants can apply for a special insurance called the Apple Health Expansion. Undocumented immigrants can apply. Lawfully present non-qualified immigrants can only apply if they are not in an employment authorized immigrant category. Lawfully present qualified immigrants can't apply. There are other eligibility requirements. **You should apply for these benefits as soon as possible** because the program is limited. Find out if the program is still accepting applications (<https://www.hca.wa.gov/free-or-low-cost-health-care/i-need-medical-dental-or-vision-care/apple-health-expansion>).

Lawfully present non-qualified immigrants like U Visa immigrants **can** apply for the Apple Health Expansion because they are **not** in an employment authorized immigrant category.

- State Family Assistance (SFA) (<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/food-cash-medical>) - cash assistance for families with dependent children
- Aged Blind and Disabled (ABD) (<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/community-services-offices/aged-blind-or-disabled-cash-program>) - cash assistance for people with disabilities or who are over 65
- Pregnant Person Assistance (also known as Pregnant Women Assistance or "PWA") (<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/community-services-offices/pregnant-women-assistance-pwa-program>) - cash assistance

- Cash for groceries through a Food Assistance Program ([https://www.washingtonconnection.org/home/?locale=en\\_en](https://www.washingtonconnection.org/home/?locale=en_en))

Other states may have different programs and different rules. Try to talk to a lawyer if you apply for assistance and are denied.

### **If you did not have health insurance before, you can sign up now.**

You can buy medical and dental insurance through the state's Health Benefit Exchange (<https://www.wahbexchange.org/home-page/>). If you have low income, you can get help to pay for insurance coverage.

### **Do I need to tell USCIS if I move?**

Yes. You have to request an address change for **each form** that you have pending or filed with USCIS. And you must tell USCIS **every time** you move.

**You have ten days to tell USCIS every time you change your address.**

U visa holders can call the USCIS Contact Center (<https://www.uscis.gov/forms/filing-guidance/how-to-change-your-address/change-of-address-procedures-for-vawatu-cases-and-form-i-751-abuse-waivers>) at 800-375-5283 (TTY: 800-767-1833) to request an address change.

Before you call, you should have your receipt notice or notices for the forms you need to change your address on. It can also help to have a copy of the forms themselves for reference. If the USCIS Contact Center can't correct your address the over the phone, you



may be scheduled for an office appointment you must go to. Don't miss this appointment.

U visa holders can also send a secure message through their personal [USCIS online account \(https://myaccount.uscis.gov/create-account\)](https://myaccount.uscis.gov/create-account). You can't actually change your address through your online account because it requires verification of who you are over the phone. USCIS will send you a message about an appointment for a phone call with USCIS to complete your address change. **Don't miss this phone call appointment.**

You can also send a signed written notice if your address change or use the USCIS [Form AR-11, Alien's Change of Address Card \(https://www.uscis.gov/ar-11\)](https://www.uscis.gov/ar-11). Send the address change information to the service center that is processing your case. If you choose to send written notice or the form, you should use mail services with tracking like certified, registered, or return receipt mail. Keep the proof of any address change you mail into USCIS.

If you become a U.S. citizen, you can stop sending Form AR-11.

### **An arrest or other police contact could hurt your status.**

If you commit certain crimes and are arrested, **you could lose your U visa and be deported.**

If you are arrested for any reason, tell your public defender that you are here under the U visa. [Get legal advice from an immigration lawyer \(https://ailalawyer.com/\)](https://ailalawyer.com/). You can [contact the](#)

Northwest Immigrants Rights Project (NWIRP)

(<https://nwirp.org/get-help>)(<https://nwirp.org/get-help>) to see if you qualify for legal help. Contact NWIRP (<https://www.nwirp.org/get-help/>) if you are detained.

### Can I help family members get a visa or legal status?

- **If you are a principal:** Yes. The family members can live in the U. S. or in another country. Sometimes this can include someone who joins your family in the future, like if you get married later. Talk to an immigration lawyer.
- **If you are a derivative:** No. If you become a permanent resident someday, you might be able to help some family members then. Talk to an immigration lawyer.

### You should not travel outside the U.S. if possible.

If possible, stay inside the U.S. until you become a permanent resident. It's probably not worth the risk to travel outside the U.S. once you have your U visa. It can be very complicated to re-enter the U.S. after you leave, including the risk of being deported or denied re-entry (<https://www.womenslaw.org/laws/federal/immigration/u-visa-crime-victims/possible-barriers-getting-u-visa/can-i-travel-outside>).

It is important that you stay in the U.S. for a **continuous period of 3 years**. The risks and rules about traveling outside of the U.S. with a U nonimmigrant status are complicated. You should get legal help if you need to travel outside of the U.S. You can contact the Northwest Immigrants Rights Project (NWIRP) (<https://nwirp.org/get-help>) to see if you qualify for legal help.

### When can I apply for permanent resident (green card) status?

You can apply after **3 years** of living in the U.S. in U nonimmigrant status. But you should **start now to get proof together** that you have been living here.

Such proof could include:

- Leases or rental agreements
- Copies of utility bills or other bills
- Check stubs
- Medical records

## **What is my deadline to apply for green card status?**

You **must** apply before your U nonimmigrant status **ends**.

If you let your U visa expire without applying for residency, you will:

- Lose your legal status in this country
- Lose the chance to become a permanent legal resident
- Risk being deported

## **What else should I know about becoming a permanent resident?**

USCIS grants this status if there are humanitarian grounds to do so, to keep family members together, or if it is in the public interest. **Many things can hurt your chances of becoming a permanent resident.**

These are some examples:

- **Any arrests** for any crime
- Committing crimes
- Using illegal drugs
- Not paying taxes

- Lying to government officials
- Saying you are a U.S. citizen when you are not
- Voting illegally
- Helping others come to the U.S. illegally

Unless it is unreasonable for you to do so, you must keep helping with the police investigation or prosecution of the crime that was the reason for your U nonimmigrant status.

**At the time you apply for permanent resident status, you must have a valid, unexpired passport.** It is your responsibility to renew your passport. You are also responsible for the passports of any family members who received U Visa benefits. Your local consulate has more information.

**If you are a derivative:** Changes in your life can keep you from becoming a permanent resident. Get legal advice from an immigration lawyer (<https://ailalawyer.com/>) if you are thinking about making big life changes.

### **Examples:**

- If you are married to the principal, getting a divorce could keep you from becoming a permanent resident.
- If you are a child of the principal, getting married could keep you from becoming a permanent resident.

**You should get legal help applying for permanent resident status.**

Get legal advice from an immigration lawyer (<https://ailalawyer.com/>) **before** applying for permanent residency. You can contact the Northwest Immigrants Rights Project (NWIRP) (<https://nwirp.org/get-help>) to see if you qualify for legal help.

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Find organizations that provide free legal help on our Get legal help page.

<https://assets.washingtonlawhelp.org/en/what-do-i-need->

[know-after-i-get-u-visa](#)