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*This material is not intended to substitute as legal advice.

FAQ about What Happens after You File for a Visa

Congratulations! Your case has been filed and accepted by USCIS. We have successfully completed a significant step in your immigration case. But you are likely wondering, “What happens next?”

This document answers the most frequently asked questions we receive from clients about this phase of your process.

1. How long will it take for USCIS to process my case?

Once the petition is filed with USCIS, the review and adjudication process also takes time. How long it takes may vary significantly. If you would like an estimate of the processing times for each visa category, visit www.uscis.gov.

2. What can I do to accelerate the processing?

USCIS offers premium processing on selected types of employment visas for an additional government filing fee of \$1,225. In exchange, you receive 15-day business processing of your petition.

This means that you will receive a response from USCIS within 15 days. This response could be an approval, a request for additional evidence, or something else.

I recommend using premium processing when possible, as it provides you with more control over the processing times and your business plans. You also have enhanced access to the officer handling your case. You can upgrade to premium at the time of the initial filing or after.

3. How can I check on the status of my case?

You can check your [case status online](#) on the USCIS website in two different ways.

Enter your receipt number directly on this screen.

This number can be found on any official USCIS notice. Typically, it is located in the upper left-hand corner of the notice.

If you have filed more than one application, each one will have a unique receipt number. Make sure you use the correct number for each individual application.

For example, marriage-based adjustment cases have individual numbers for the I-130, I-485, I-765, and I-131.

Set up a free account.

We recommend this option, because once you set up an account, you will be able to check your status without having to locate your receipt number.

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If you have multiple receipt numbers for different applications, you can enter each of them once, and the system will keep track of them. You will never have to enter them again.

Perhaps best of all, people with accounts can have automatic updates sent to their email account to notify them of any actions in their case.

If there is no information in case status, there is an option to [submit an online inquiry about your case](#).

Alternatively, if you are unable to find the information you need online, there is a Customer Service number: 1-800-375-5283.

4. What are the processing times?

Processing times are difficult to ascertain. They vary based on the type of case and the Service Center where your petition is being processed. However, here are some general guidelines.

Identify the Service Center with jurisdiction over your case.

After your petition is filed, it will be forwarded to one of four USCIS Service Centers. Each Service Center has jurisdiction over a specific area of the country and cases.

Your receipt number contains three letters identifying which Service Center is processing your petition. You should use this receipt number to track the process of your case.

These three letters and the corresponding USCIS service centers are:

- EAC: Vermont Service Center;
- WAC: California Service Center
- LIN: Nebraska Service Center; and
- SRC: Texas Service Center

Find the estimated processing time for your case type at the Service Center.

Visit the USCIS Processing Time Information page.

On the 15th day of each month, USCIS posts the latest information about processing times at its Service Centers.

If the Service Center is operating within its normal processing timeline, you will see a timeframe designation given in number of months. For example: I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker, Extraordinary Ability (E11), 4 months.

But if the Service Center is running behind schedule, it will show only a date which corresponds with the *filing date* of the applications that it is currently processing. For example: I-129, Petition for Nonimmigrant Worker, L-Intracompany transfers, July 21, 2016.

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It is of note that: 1) USCIS periodically transfers cases between Service Centers to even out case load; and 2) you can accelerate your processing time by using premium processing if it is available for your case.

5. Could USCIS request additional evidence?

Requests for Additional Evidence (RFEs) are not routine, but they do happen.

Sometimes they are a result of government guidance to increase the scrutiny on certain petitions. Additionally, they are dependent on what is happening at each individual USCIS service center.

Bottom line: an RFE may be issued by USCIS if they determine that further information is required to proceed with a visa application.

As soon as we are notified of the RFE, we will reach out to you to strategize and prepare a response.

6. Do I need to inform USCIS if I change address?

Yes. In fact, as a lawful permanent resident, you are required to file an address change notification within 10 days of moving to a new address.

This is a *very important* obligation. Luckily, it is quite easy to file the required form. The best way to submit an address change notification is electronically. You can [file your notification with USCIS here](#).

Doing this is particularly important during the AOS process because if USCIS does not have the correct address, you may not receive your green card. USCIS is only required to send notices to the last address it has for you. “I never got my interview notice” is not an acceptable excuse for missing an interview or appointment if you moved and neglected to change your address with USCIS.

Moreover, you should not count on the U.S. Postal Service – or anyone living at your old address – to forward your mail to your new address.

The best way to avoid these types of issues is to simply not move during this process if possible.

7. How do I travel abroad? Are there restrictions to my travel?

Any foreign national on nonimmigrant status should take general precautions before traveling internationally.

Prior to traveling abroad, you should make sure that you have a current visa stamp that matches your current immigration status. You should also have a valid passport and ensure you don't have any immigration cases pending prior to traveling.

Because unexpected things can always occur that may delay your re-admission to the U.S., make sure to be flexible and proactive with your travel plans.

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