

Social Security

Emergency Message

Identification Number: EM-23045
Intended Audience: All RCs/ARCs/ADs/FOs
Originating Office: ORDP OISP
Title: Accepting the digital signature on Forms DS-2019 Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status (J-1 and J-2 Nonimmigrants)
Type: EM - Emergency Messages
Program: Records Maintenance (Earnings & Enumeration)
Link To Reference: See References at the end of this EM.

Retention Date: January 19, 2024

A. Purpose

This emergency message (EM) is to provide instructions for accepting a digital signature for Forms DS-2019 Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status (J-1 and J-2 Nonimmigrants).

B. Background

The Department of State recently informed SSA of a new regulatory change regarding Forms DS-2019 for J1 and J2 visa holders (exchange visitors). The Department of State uses Forms DS-2019 to administer the Exchange Visitor Program. Exchange visitors and their accompanying spouses or dependents, if any, must present paper Forms DS-2019 to apply for nonimmigrant J visas at U.S. embassies or consulates. Exchange visitors must obtain J-1 visas and accompanying spouses or dependents, if any, must obtain J-2 visas to enter the United States. They must carry their Forms DS-2019 to the U.S. port of entry and present their passports, visas, and Forms DS-2019 to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers to seek entry into the United States.

C. Department of State new Business Process

Exchange visitors are still required to have a paper copy of the Form DS-2019 when applying for their J-1/J-2 visa as well as during their program (i.e., port of entry, applying for benefits, etc.). With the publication of the Interim Final Rule effective April 27, 2023, sponsors will have new options for signing and transmitting Forms DS-2019.

- Sponsors will still have the option to sign Forms DS-2019 in ink (Blue ink is no longer required) and mail via postal or delivery service.

- Sponsors may now utilize digital signature software to sign Forms DS-2019.
- Sponsors may now electronically transmit (e.g., via email) Forms DS-2019. The option to transmit Forms DS-2019 electronically is available to those using both signature types (ink and digital). Sponsors may print the Forms DS-2019, sign in ink, scan the Forms DS-2019, and transmit them electronically. Blue ink is no longer required. (Note that sponsors may **not** transmit Forms DS-2019 electronically to foreign third parties.)

D. SSA Acceptance of DS-2019

SSA uses Forms DS-2019 for non-immigrants, such as those with a J-1 visa to establish eligibility for an SSN specifically for employment purposes. It verifies that the nonimmigrant is in the United States for a particular authorized exchange visitor program.

Accept printed Forms DS-2019 that are signed using digital software or printed and signed in ink.

Review Forms DS-2019 in accordance with [RM 10211.355](#), and when entering information from these forms into the Enumeration system follow existing procedures in [RM 10211.365](#).

Direct all program-related and technical questions to your Regional Office (RO) support staff or Program Service Center (PSC) Operations Analysis (OA) staff. RO support staff or PSC OA staff may refer questions, concerns, or problems to their Central Office contacts.

References:

[RM 10211.355](#) Reviewing the Student and Exchange Visitor (SEVIS) Form DS-2019 (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J1) Status)

[RM 10211.365](#) Entering Information from Form DS-2019 (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J1) Status) into the Enumeration System