



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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United States - Department of State Phased Resumption of Certain Visa Services

On November 12, 2020, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) announced that as post-specific conditions improve, U.S. Embassies and Consulates will begin providing **additional services**, eventually leading to a complete resumption of routine visa services.¹ The DOS has announced that the resumption of routine visa services will occur on a post-by-post basis, as post-specific – largely coronavirus-related – conditions permit, and prioritized after services to U.S. citizens.

In March 2020, the DOS suspended routine visa services worldwide in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. 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. In July 2020, U.S. Embassies and Consulates began a phased resumption of routine visa services.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The gradual resumption of routine visa services by the U.S. Embassies and Consulates should be welcome news for travelers – including business travelers – and assignees and their accompanying family members, as well as their employers, global mobility professionals, and immigration counsel. This will facilitate the hiring of foreign nationals by U.S.-based companies. The resumption of routine visa services will also greatly impact the ability of many other stakeholders to enter the U.S., including foreign national students, researchers, academics, as well as athletes, actors, artists, and entertainers, whose travel and entry to the U.S. may have been impeded due to U.S. Consulate closures.

Key Details

Consulates and Embassies will phase in the processing of some routine immigrant and nonimmigrant visa cases.

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Specifically, foreign nationals should be aware of the following:

- Posts that process immigrant visa applications will prioritize “Immediate Relative” family members of U.S. citizens including inter-country 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).
- Applicants with urgent travel needs can continue to request emergency appointments.

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

KPMG NOTE

Further Information: Approach to Resuming Certain Services and Timing

U.S. Embassies and Consulates will only resume adjudication of all routine nonimmigrant and immigrant visa cases when adequate resources are available, and it is safe to do so. The DOS will continue to monitor local conditions in each country where there is a U.S. presence. At this juncture however, they are unable to provide a specific date for when each U.S. Embassy or Consulate will resume specific visa services, or when each mission will return to processing at pre-pandemic work-load levels. For more information, please visit: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/phased-resumption-routine-visa-services.html>

The U.S. immigration team with KPMG Law LLP anticipates more and more U.S. Embassies and Consulates to resume routine services around the world; however, this will depend on local circumstances relating to COVID-19.

Advice on Next Steps

Given the overall fluidity of the circumstances, we do not expect complete resumption of routine services to take place anytime soon and it continues to be prudent for foreign nationals to remain in the U.S. and avoid international travel, where possible. This will help ensure that nonimmigrant visa holders and their dependents avoid the risk of being unable to return to the U.S. should there be any unexpected changes to current travel restrictions. Foreign nationals requiring visa services should monitor their local U.S. Embassy or Consulate for updates.

Monitoring the Situation

KPMG Law LLP in Canada will endeavor to keep readers of GMS *Flash Alert* posted on any important developments as and when they occur.

FOOTNOTE:

- 1 See: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/phased-resumption-routine-visa-services.html> .

Contact us

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