
Two-Year Home Country Residency Requirement: J-1 Exchange Visitors

Explanation of the Requirement

Certain Exchange Visitors are subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement. This means that they are required to return to their home countries and be physically present there for an aggregate of two years before they are eligible for immigrant status, an H visa or an L visa. Exchange visitors subject to this requirement are not eligible to change to permanent resident status or any other non-immigrant category (except A and G) while in the United States.

The Consular office will indicate on the visa and the bottom left-hand corner of the Form DS-2019 whether or not the Exchange Visitor is subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement.

This restriction generally applies under one of the following circumstances:

Exchange Visitors whose programs were financed in whole or part, directly or indirectly, by the US government or the government of their home country

Exchange Visitors who, at the time of the acquisition of Exchange Visitor status, were nationals or residents of countries designated by Department of State in which their particular specialized knowledge or skills are needed (see [Skills List](#))

Exchange Visitors who came to the United States or acquired Exchange Visitor status in order to receive graduate medical education or training.

Waiver of the Two-Year Home Country Residency Requirement

An Exchange Visitor may request that the Two-Year Home Country Residency Requirement be waived. Information regarding the waiver process is available on the [US State Department Web site](#).

Before seeking a waiver, it is advisable for Exchange Visitors to discuss the matter with their J-1 Advisor. Once granted a waiver, those in J-1 status cannot have their stay as a J-1 extended. They also cannot transfer to another institution.

NOTE: Exchange Visitors who are subject to the Two-Year Home Country Residency Requirement are not eligible to change status within the United States.