



Irish Immigration Center
59 Temple Place, Suite 1010
Boston, MA 02111
Tel (001) 617-542-1900
Fax (001) 617-338-6979
www.iicenter.org

J-1 Exchange Visitor Program FAQs

What is the J-1 Visa?

The J1 internship visa is a cultural exchange visa that allows students and recent graduates to intern with a U.S. based host organization (employer) for up to 12 months in a field related to their study. A student must be currently enrolled in and pursuing studies at a degree or certificate granting post-secondary institution. A recent graduate must have no more than 12 months between graduation and the program start date.

Do I need to find my own job?

IIC assists you with finding a job that meets the requirements of a J1 internship in your field of study. However, if you have done some research into companies you are interested in working for and have even made some contact with them about the possibility of doing an internship there, it will move things along much more quickly for you. Remember, you are your own best salesperson! IIC would then follow up with the companies and process the necessary paperwork for them.

What is required of a host employer?

The host employer must file an application with the IIC which outlines a training/internship program to meet the needs and desires of the intern in his/her field of interest and study. The application will also provide information regarding wages and benefits, and any other useful information for the internship. During the time of your internship, the host employer is responsible for mentoring and periodic evaluation of your progress.

How will I find accommodation?

IIC will offer assistance with your search for affordable housing. We will provide useful websites and leads from landlords you can begin to use before you arrive. Information about neighborhoods, leases, accessibility to public transportation etc. will be given at orientation upon your arrival. IIC will also provide a list of hostels and budget hotels for you to contact for your first few days in Boston should you not have been able to arrange permanent accommodation in advance.

What does the \$1200 fee cover?

The \$1200 fee to the Irish Immigration Center covers the cost of processing all the necessary paperwork for your application for the visa, assistance with securing employment, housing, and your Social Security number. It includes orientation to Boston when you arrive, free access to our downtown cybercafé, inclusion in social and cross-cultural events organized by the IIC and the ongoing support of IIC staff.

What expenses will I have besides the application

You will have to pay the \$100 U.S. government SEVIS fee, the visa application fee, your own travel costs and your living expenses in the U.S. Boston is not an inexpensive city but the experience of participants on past exchange programs has been that a gross wage equivalent to US \$10 per hour will enable you to live adequately and cover the cost of shared accommodation, transportation, health insurance, food, clothing, taxes etc. We would expect the typical placement on this program to pay in excess of \$10 per hour.

Do I really need to get health insurance?

Yes, the U.S. State Dept. requires that each participant in the J1 Exchange Visitor Program have insurance in effect which covers them for sickness or accident during their time on the program. They are very specific about what the insurance needs to cover. IIC has researched insurance plans which meet these requirements and recommends Gateway USA (www.gatewayplans.com). The other option is that your employer may offer insurance coverage through their plan. You will need to look into cost and whether it meets the requirements.

What will happen when I first arrive in Boston?

A member of the IIC staff will meet you at the airport and bring you to your temporary accommodation. During your first couple of days, IIC will provide a thorough orientation to Boston and the transportation system, accompany you to your place of internship, assist you with applying for a Social Security number, give you a permanent housing resource list and familiarize you with other helpful resources to meet your needs during your time in the U.S.

What do I do in case of an emergency during my time in the U.S.?

The IIC maintains an emergency hotline that is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That number will be given to you upon arrival.

Can I apply for a Social Security number before I arrive?

No, this must be done in person at the Social Security office in Boston with appropriate forms of documentation.

How long will it take to get my Social Security number?

Processing time for Social Security is approximately 4-6 weeks. When you apply, you are given a letter by Social Security acknowledging that you have applied. Most employers would accept this as proof until your number arrives.

Will my spouse and children be allowed to come with me?

Yes, dependents are eligible for J2 visas. The IIC can provide you with more information about this if necessary.

Will I have to pay taxes while in the United States?

Yes, anyone who earns income from a U.S. source must pay federal and state taxes. You will not have to pay Social Security, Medicare (FICA) or the Federal Unemployment tax (FUTA) because you will not be eligible to receive these benefits.

Will I be allowed to work a second job?

No, the J1 visa allows you to earn income only from the organization/company listed on your Certificate of Eligibility (DS-2019).

Will I be able to change positions to another employer if things don't work out with the initial placement?

You will need to discuss this with IIC staff and if it is decided that the internship is not working out and appropriate adjustments cannot be made, a new placement can be researched. However, that employer will have to be approved through the same process as the first one and you cannot begin to work for the new company until the change is officially approved.

Will I be eligible for another J1 internship in the future?

As long as you maintain student status or start within 12 months of graduation, you may undertake further internships as long as they are at a higher skill level than the initial internship or are in a different field. Once you are no longer eligible for internships, you may be eligible for J1 trainee positions. The requirements for this are five years of relevant employment experience or an academic degree plus one year of relevant employment experience. However, you would have to reside outside of the U.S. for two years between the end of your internship and the start of a trainee program.

Can I extend my J1 visa if the company wants me to stay longer than a year?

No, the maximum amount of time for the J1 intern visa is 12 months and it cannot be extended.

Still have questions?

If so, you contact Peggy Comfrey, Director of International Programs at:
(001) 617-542-1900 ext 14
or
pcomfrey@iicenter.org