

Active Intern/Trainees

Dear Interns and Trainees

We are writing with important information about a **new U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) rule** that affects all J-1 exchange visitors currently in the United States, including you. Please read this message carefully and keep it for your records.

What Is Changing?

On July 17, 2026, DHS published a [final rule](#) that ends the long-standing "Duration of Status" (D/S) framework for J-1 exchange visitors. The rule takes effect on **September 15, 2026**.

Under the old system, your Form I-94 arrival record simply showed "D/S," meaning you could remain in the U.S. as long as you were within the dates on your DS-2019 or in the 30-day grace period following your program end date. Under the new system, J-1 participants will be admitted for a **fixed period of time** tied to their program length (capped at four years), and anyone who needs to stay beyond that fixed date must apply directly to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for an **Extension of Stay (EOS)**.

How This Affects You

Because you were admitted to the U.S. under Duration of Status **before September 15, 2026**, you qualify as a "**legacy D/S**" participant. That means:

- You may **remain in the United States with your current D/S I-94** through the program end date listed on your DS-2019 — you do **not** need to file anything with USCIS just because the rule is changing.
- If you **travel outside the U.S. and re-enter after September 15, 2026**, or if you file for an extension after that date, you will be **admitted under the new fixed-period rules**.
- Filing an extension after September 15, 2026 will now require **biometrics, USCIS filing fees, and background/fraud screening** — this is a significant change from the previous process where Cultural Vistas could extend your program directly.
 - *Note: If you choose to extend your program after September 15, 2026, you may continue program activities for up to 240 days while the EOS application is processed as long as you submit the EOS application prior to your program end date.*

What You Need to Do Now

1. Check Your DS-2019 Program End Date

Look at **Box 3** of your most recent DS-2019. This is the date your current program is authorized until. If your program is scheduled to end **before September 15, 2030**, no immediate action is needed.

If you are not currently at your maximum program duration and you know — or think — you will need more time to complete your exchange objective, we strongly encourage you to talk with your host company and submit your extension request to Cultural Vistas. Please allow adequate time for our review, host documentation, and issuance of an updated DS-2019 before September 15, 2026.

- Extensions processed before the effective date do not require an I-539 (EOS) filing with USCIS, biometrics, or the associated USCIS filing fees.
- Your extended program will be reflected on an updated DS-2019 under the existing D/S framework, meaning you remain admitted for Duration of Status.
- You avoid the uncertainty, cost, and processing time of the new EOS process at USCIS.

2. Do Not Ignore Your I-94 Going Forward

After September 15, 2026, your I-94 becomes a critical document. Save a current copy from **i94.cbp.dhs.gov** and check it after any international travel.

3. Plan International Travel Carefully

If you are considering leaving and re-entering the U.S. after September 15, 2026, know that:

- You will re-enter under the **new fixed admission period**.
- The full USCIS extension process will apply if you need more time to complete your program later.

If you have any questions about how this rule applies to your specific situation, please contact participantsupport@culturalvistas.org. If you would like to begin an extension request, please contact your Cultural Vistas Visa Specialist as soon as possible. We are here to help you understand your options and complete any needed steps before deadlines arrive.

We will continue to monitor DHS and USCIS guidance closely and will share updates as more information becomes available, including any legal challenges that may affect the rule's implementation. We will begin posting updates and Frequently Asked Questions on our [Knowledge Hub](#).

Thank you for your continued participation in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. We remain committed to supporting you throughout your exchange experience in the United States.