

## OPT definition

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a temporary work authorization for international students. It is designed to give F-1 and M-1 students an opportunity to further their education by gaining work experience in the U.S. in **jobs directly related to their field of study**. Students can be authorized to receive up to 12 months of OPT either **before** (pre-) or **after** (post-) completion of studies.

## Eligibility Requirements

- The work must be directly related to your field of study.
- You must have a valid F-1 or M-1 status.
- You must have completed one academic year (3 quarters consecutively) by the time you wish to start your OPT.
- You cannot previously have had OPT authorization for the same degree level.

## Length of OPT

**F-1 students** can request a **maximum of 12 months OPT per degree level**.

- If you obtain two Associate degrees you will only be given one period of OPT for those degrees.
- If you complete your first OPT after obtaining an Associate degree, you can apply for OPT again after obtaining a higher degree level, such as a Bachelor's degree.

**M-1 students** can request one month of OPT for every 4 months of study. This means, if your program is 12 months you can request a **maximum of 3 months of OPT**. The total time cannot exceed 6 months.

## When to Apply

For post-completion OPT, the **earliest** you can apply is **90 calendar days before your program end date** (noted on your I-20), and USCIS must receive your application **no later than 60 calendar days after your program end date** (30 days for M-1 students). Note that the application packet has to be **received** by this date and not postmarked by this date.

**Apply early!** Although USCIS will accept your application 60 days after your program end date, ISS highly recommended you apply early within the timeframe. There is no way to expedite an application, and you cannot begin work until the application has been approved and you've received your EAD card.

## Pre-Completion (before graduation)

- An F-1 student can apply for pre-completion OPT after he/she has been enrolled for one full academic year.
- The student must work part-time (up to 20 hours a week) while school is in session. When school is not in session, they may work full time.
- Any pre-completion OPT used will be deducted from the total 12 months available OPT. Part-time OPT is deducted at one half the full-time rate (i.e., 4 months of part-time is the equivalent of 2 months of full-time).

*If you want to engage in pre-completion OPT, contact International Student Services to get more information.*

## Post-Completion (after graduation)

- F-1 or M-1 students may be authorized to participate in post-completion OPT upon completion of studies.
- Students can request full-time or part-time OPT.

## Which one do I choose?

While pre-completion OPT can help ease financial burdens during school, post-completion OPT provide students with the opportunity to work a complete year anywhere in the U.S. Most students at LACM chose to apply for post-completion OPT. Sometimes, OPT is also used as a bridge to another visa type.

For F-1 students only

## What can happen if I apply late?

If you apply late there is a chance that you lose some of the workdays you initially requested. If the application is denied you can stay until the end of your grace period, but if you receive a denial notice after your grace period, you are required to depart the U.S. immediately.

# What qualifies as OPT employment?

Any and all jobs you take during OPT must be **within your major field of study**, meaning it must be directly related to your degree program. The job must also be **appropriate to your degree level**.

You should be employed at least 20 hours per week. Regardless of your job title or how the position is classified, such as “intern,” “freelance musician,” “guitar teacher,” etc., the following employment options are allowed:

## PAID EMPLOYMENT

**Multiple employers:** Students may work for more than one employer, as long as the employment is related to the student’s degree program. However, students cannot work more than one full-time job.

**Short-term multiple employers (performing artists):** Musicians and other performing artists may work for multiple short-term employers (gigs). In this case, the student should keep and maintain a list of all gigs, dates, and durations. If requested by USCIS/DHS, he/she must be prepared to provide evidence.

**Work for hire:** Work for hire means that an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. This is also commonly referred to as “1099 employment” because people who “work for hire” receive Internal Revenue Service Form 1099-MISC, which shows how much money was earned for a particular year from the contracting company. If requested by DHS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.

**Self-employed business owner:** Students may start a business and be self-employed in their field of study. However, the student must work full-time, have a business license, and document their active engagement in the business. LACM International Office cannot advise on how to start a business.

**Employment through an employment agency.**

## UNPAID EMPLOYMENT

**Volunteer Service:** Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns in their field of study, as long as this does not violate any labor laws.

### IMPORTANT!

If you work in a job unrelated to your area of study, you are in violation of your status. In this case, Immigration and Customs Enforcement can terminate your SEVIS record. **It is your responsibility to evaluate how a job relates to your major area of study.** If the relationship between the job and the field of study is called into question by USCIS/DHS, the burden of proof is on you, the student to demonstrate the relationship.

*Example: if you have a degree in Vocal Music Performance, a job as an office clerk will not meet the requirements.*

### NOTE:

Once you start working you are required to report your employer information to International Student Services.

## What is Form I-94?

The I-94 is the Arrival and Departure Record, in either paper or electronic format, issued by a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer to foreign visitors entering the United States. If you initially entered U.S. before April 30, 2013, your I-94 number is most likely attached in your passport (white paper card with a 11 digit number). If you entered after April 30, 2013, and did not receive a paper card, your number was created electronically.

To obtain a paper version of your I-94 record, visit [www.cbp.gov/I94](http://www.cbp.gov/I94), answer the questions as shown in your passport, and print the record page.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
Securing America's Borders

Get I-94 Number: I-94 FAQ

Admission (I-94) Number Retrieval

Admission (I-94) Record Number: 6900888062

Admit Until Date (MM/DD/YYYY): 10/10/2012

Details provided on Admission(I-94) form:

Family Name:	LI
First (Given) Name:	LYDIA
Birth Date (MM/DD/YYYY):	01/01/1990
Passport Number:	P12323213
Passport Country of Issuance:	Mexico
Date of Entry (MM/DD/YYYY):	04/11/2012
Class of Admission:	B1

Individuals can visit [www.cbp.gov/I94](http://www.cbp.gov/I94) to retrieve a copy of their electronic Form I-94.

Electronic I-94 sample

Exemption Number: SAMPLE

742832036 01

U.S. IMMIGRATION  
250 WAS

Immigration and Naturalization Service  
SEP 13 1991

I-94  
Departure Record

ADMITTED: L-1  
UNTIL: (CLASS)

14 Family Name: DOE  
15 First (Given) Name: JOHN  
16 Birth Date (Mo. - Yr.): July 10, 1993  
17 Country of Citizenship: U.K.

Paper I-94 sample

## Choosing your OPT Start date

The “Start Date” is the date your work permission begins. You cannot work earlier than the start date, but you can start working later than – as long as you do not exceed the 90 days of unemployment.

The date you choose **must be within 60 days after your program completion date**. Choose the start date carefully, as changing it after the application has been mailed can be very difficult.

### Things to consider when choosing your start date:

#### Early start:

- Good if you have a job offer and/or if you wish to begin work soon after completing your program.
- Consider travel plans.

#### Late start:

- Good if you do not have a job offer and need time finding work.
- Will not cut into days of unemployment.
- Consider travel plans.

If your I-94 record is not retrievable, you need to visit a local CBP Deferred Inspection Site or port of entry to have your admission record corrected. A list of Deferred Inspection Sites and ports of entry can be found at [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov), under the “Ports” link. Here is one alternative:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
300 N. Los Angeles St., Room 2067  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
(213) 830-5972

Contact the CBP office via phone and make an appointment to have your I-94 record corrected. To the appointment, bring all original immigration documents (passport, visa, and I-20 or DS-2019).

# How to Apply - Checklist

## STEP 1

- Make sure you meet the eligibility requirements.
- Read all the instructions in your OPT packet carefully.

## STEP 2 - *Once you are ready to start your application:*

- Pick a start date and fill out the “**OPT Recommendation Request Form**”.
- Make a clear copy of your: **Visa** and **passport** (photo page), **I-94 number** (see instructions), and **all I-20s that have been issued to you** (exclude the instruction pages).
- If you would like to schedule an OPT meeting with your DSO (email:international@lacm.edu), and bring the prepared your prepared documents.
- Using the start date you picked, your DSO will give you a new I-20 endorsed for OPT. *You will need to send a copy of the new I-20 with your application to USCIS.*

## STEP 3

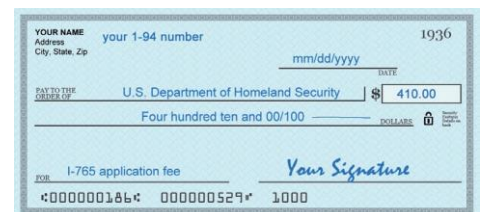
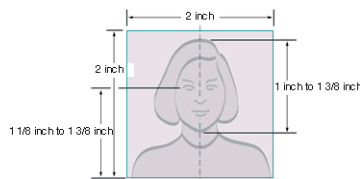
- Follow the instructions on how to **complete Form I-765**. *See sample application for your reference.*
- Prepare **2 identical passport-style color photos** of yourself. Using pencil or felt pen, **lightly print your name and Alien Receipt Number (if you have one) on the back of each photo**. Write “photos” on a small envelope and place the photos inside.

### Photo requirements:

- Must be 2” by 2”, in color with full face, frontal view.
- Head height should measure 1” to 1 3/8” from top to bottom of chin, and eye height between 1 1/8” to 1 3/8” from bottom of photo. Your head must be bare.
- Must have a white to off-white background, be printed on thin paper with a glossy finish, and be unmounted and unretouched.
- Must be taken within 30 days of filing your application.

### Where can I get passport photos?

CVS and the **post office** are two alternatives.



Sample of personal check

- Prepare the **filing fee**
  - The **fee to apply is \$410**, which can be paid via **check, credit card or money order**. It must be drawn on a bank or other financial institution located in the United States and must be payable in U.S. currency. Use Form G-1450 to pay with credit card.
  - Make the check or money order payable to **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**.
  - A personal check that has your full name and address in the top left hand corner is usually recommended. Next to your name, print your I-94 number. Leave the back blank.

90 days before program end date - Before grace period ends

Within 30 days of getting your new OPT-I-20

90 days before program end date - Before grace period ends

Within 30 days of getting your new OPT I-20

- Make copies of everything for your own record!
- Get a large envelope.

#### STEP 4

**Assemble your packet - Double check your documents and arrange them in the following order:**

- **Filing fee** - paperclip it to the front of the packet.
- **2 passport-style photos** - paperclip it to the front of the packet under the filing fee.
- **Form G-1145** (optional) - complete this form if you wish to receive a text or email when USCIS accepts your Form I-765.
- **Form I-765** (the original).
- Copy of **your new I-20** endorsed for OPT.
- Copy of **all your old I-20s**.
- Copy of **passport**.
- Copy of **student visa**.
- Copy of **I-94 number**.
- Copy of **previous EAD** (if you've applied for OPT before).

Place the documents in the large envelope and **send to USCIS via USPS Certified Mail**. You may also send by FedEx, UPS, DHL.

The image shows two USPS forms. The left form is a 'U.S. Postal Service CERTIFIED MAIL RECEIPT' with a barcode and 'OFFICIAL USE' stamp. The right form is a 'PS Form 3811, July 1999 Domestic Return Receipt' with sections for 'SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION' and 'COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY'.

If you live in California, send your packet to this address:

**USCIS  
PO Box 21281  
Phoenix, AZ 85036**

FedEx, UPS, DLS use this address

**USCIS  
Attn: NFBAOS  
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S, Suite 100  
Phoenix, AZ. 85034**

*For most current address information, visit:  
[www.uscis.gov/I-765](http://www.uscis.gov/I-765)*

#### **IMPORTANT:**

USCIS must receive your application no more than 90 days before your program completion date noted on your I-20, no more than 60 days beyond your program completion date, and within 30 days of the new I-20 issue date. Failure to file within these timeframes will result in a denial of your application. **If you change your address after submitting the packet, it is very important that you notify USCIS of your new address.**

# How to Complete Form I-765

1. **Download the form I-765 from [www.uscis.gov/i-765](http://www.uscis.gov/i-765) and type your answers.** *Do not complete the form by hand if possible. The form is read by a machine-readable scanner.*
2. **Check the first box:** “I am applying for: **permission to accept employment.**”
3. **Complete the entire form Part 1-6 - if a question is not applicable, state "N/A". #Full**

**Name:** Type your Last Name, First Name (and Middle Name if applicable)

**U.S. Mailing Address:** This must be an address at which you can receive mail for at least the next 90 days. If the EAD is sent to an address with a forwarding order, or if you cannot receive mail at the address you use, your EAD will be returned to the immigration service. If you cannot provide a current address because you are moving, you may use LACM as address, but check with your DSO first.

NOTE: If the mailing address you indicate on the I-765 is not located in California, refer to the I-765 instructions ([www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)) or ask your DSO for the proper mailing address for your application.

**#8 Alien Registration Number:** If you did not receive your I-94 number in paper form (white card stapled in your passport) when you entered U.S., you can obtain your I-94 number here: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>

**#13 Social Security Number: Only include if you have one.**

**#14-15: answer yes and you will be mailed a Social Security Card**

**#27 Eligibility Categories:** For F-1 OPT, fill out as follows: For summer or part-time OPT PRIOR to graduating:

(c)(3)(A)  
(c)(3)(B) - *most common*

For POST-Completion (after graduating) OPT:

**Certification:** Print your typed I-765 application. Sign and date using a pen with **black ink**. Be careful not to cross the lines. The signature has to be **WITHIN the 2 lines**. This is the signature that USCIS will print on your EAD card.

	Example
Signature	Signature
NO	YES

4. **Copy:** *After signing the application, make a copy for your record. Send the original to USCIS along with the other documents.*

# While your OPT is Pending

## Processing Time

The average USCIS processing time to issue the Employment Authorization (EAD) is **90 calendar days**. For most up to date USCIS processing times, go to: [egov.uscis.gov/cris/processTimesDisplayInit.do](https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/processTimesDisplayInit.do)

## Notice of Action

Once the application has been received by USCIS, within two weeks you should receive a “Notice of Action” letter, which confirms USCIS has received your application. The notice contains:

- A **receipt number** - (WAC number in the upper left hand corner). This number can be used to monitor your application status online (see Check Application Status).
- The date USCIS received your application and the date the receipt was issued.

## Check the Application Status

Once you have submitted the application and received the “Notice of Action” letter, you will be able to monitor the status of your application online. Remember, it can take up to 90 days or more for USCIS to reach a decision.

**To check the status**, go to: [egov.uscis.gov/casestatus](https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus) and type in your receipt number (WAC number) listed in the upper left hand corner of the “Notice of Action” letter.



## Request for Evidence

If your OPT application is missing evidence, contains errors, or if the officer needs additional documents to determine your eligibility, USCIS might send you a Request for Evidence (RFE). If you receive a RFE, follow the instructions precisely.

- The RFE will explain what additional evidence or information is needed from you, the deadline for your response, and include mailing instructions. Immediately mail back what is requested, otherwise you risk having your request for OPT significantly delayed or denied.
- Your application or petition will be held in suspense during this time.

If you receive a RFE and have questions about what you need to submit, you may call the **National Customer Service Center** at **1-800-375-5283**.

### PLEASE NOTE

The LACM international Student Services has neither control over nor the ability to influence OPT application processing times or results.

# When your OPT is Approved

## Employment Authorization document (EAD)

An Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is a work permit card issued by USCIS that provides temporary employment authorization to noncitizens. Once your OPT is approved, USCIS will first mail a “Notice of Action” letter, followed by your personal (EAD card). **You may not begin work before receiving the EAD or before the start date on your card.**



**If you travel**, the EAD is “Not Valid for Re-entry” alone. The card must be presented with:

- **Valid passport and visa.**
- **I-20 Form** endorsed for OPT.

**If your EAD is lost**, stolen or destroyed, it may be replaced by filing a new Form I-765 with the filing fee.

## 90-day Unemployment

While students are not required to have an employer when OPT is requested in SEVIS, students authorized for post-completion OPT are expected to be employed. A student on post-completion OPT can be unemployed for a total of **90 days**.

- Unemployment is monitored through the required “**OPT Employer Reporting**,” so keep that information accurate and up-to-date.
- A student whose record lacks employer information is considered unemployed. If you accrue 90 consecutive days of unemployment or more, **SEVIS or SEVP officials can terminate your work permission** and student status.

To avoid this from happening, make sure to report your employer information after receiving your EAD card.

If it happens, you will need to take immediate steps to settle your affairs, leave the U.S., or otherwise change your status.

## OPT Employer Reporting

**IMPORTANT:** The U.S. government monitors that students with OPT authorization are working and that the job(s) is directly related to their field of study. Once your OPT is approved and as soon as you start working, **it is very important that you report your employer information to LACM International Student Services (ISS).** It is your responsibility to do so. You are also required to **report changes to your employment within 10 days**, as well as to **send a copy of your EAD card to ISS** upon receipt.

## What can happen if I don't report my employer information?

If you do not report your employer information to ISS, the U.S. government can terminate your F-1 student record 90 days after the OPT start date printed on your EAD card. A terminated record cancels OPT authorization and requires you to leave the U.S.

To report your employer information or changes to your employment, use this form:

**Employer Reporting Form:**  
<https://goo.gl/TyaEJJ>

To send a copy of your EAD card, please scan the card and email the copy to:

[international@lacm.edu](mailto:international@lacm.edu)

## Social Security Number

A Social Security number (SSN) is issued to track earnings over a worker's lifetime. Students who are employed in the U.S. must apply for a Social Security number. Dependents in F-2 status are not eligible for a Social Security number. *See the document "International Students and Social Security Numbers" for detailed information.*

### How do I apply?

You can apply for a Social Security number in person at a local Social Security Administration (SSA) office, [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov). SSA verify student's status, so apply on or after the OPT start date, listed on your EAD card. When you go to apply, you will need the following documents:

- **Form SS-5:** [www.socialsecurity.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf)
- **Your new I-20** endorsed for OPT.
- **Any older signed Form I-20s** issued to you.
- **Valid Passport.**
- **I-94** record or a copy of your **F-1 admission stamp** in your passport.
- Your **EAD card.**

## Taxes

In general, as an F-1 student you will be exempt from Social Security (FICA) taxes for your first five years in the U.S., as long as you continue to declare nonresident status for tax purposes. Unless you qualify under a tax treaty between the U.S. and your home government, your earnings as an F-1 student will be subject to applicable federal, state and local taxes, and employers are required to withhold those taxes from your paychecks. For more information on taxes, consult the **Internal Revenue Service:**

[www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers/Taxation-of-Nonresident-Aliens](http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers/Taxation-of-Nonresident-Aliens)  
[www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers/Foreign-Students-and-Scholars](http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers/Foreign-Students-and-Scholars)

## Can I study while on OPT

If you are approved for part-time OPT, you may take recreational courses (courses that are not for credit) during your OPT, but if you begin a new degree program or transfer to another school, your OPT is automatically terminated. A student on OPT must actively search for employment. Students on full-time OPT may not study while on OPT.

## What to report to ISS during OPT

During your time on OPT, you are still in F-1/M-1 status and your DSO at LACM continues to maintain your SEVIS record. Just like when you were a student, **you are responsible for reporting any changes related to your student status to ISS.** Some of the changes to report are, but are not limited to:

- Status of your OPT request.
- Any changes to your U.S. or foreign address.
- Changes in your name.
- Employer information.
  - Loss of employment.
  - Any periods of unemployment.
  - New employer information of changes.

Must be reported within 10 days

# After OPT

## Grace Period

Students who have maintained valid F-1 or M-1 status are automatically granted a grace period after completing their program/OPT. The grace period is the time through which the student may make preparations to leave the United States. The length of the grace period is:

- **F-1 students: 60 calendar days**
- **M-1 students: 30 calendar days** - However, with an M-1 visa the program and the grace period cannot exceed a total period of one year.

During the grace period, you may also choose to:

- **Pursue another program at LACM** – you will then need to request a new I-20.
- **Transfer to another school** – speak to your DSO and fill out an “Intent to Transfer” form.
- **Apply to change status to another visa category** – for other visa types, see an immigration lawyer.

## Returning to School

If you decide to return to school after your OPT, you must, **before** your grace period ends:

- Be admitted to the new program of study.
- Have your DSO update and/or transfer your SEVIS record to the other school.

It is highly recommended to **start the transfer process at least one month before the end of your grace period.**

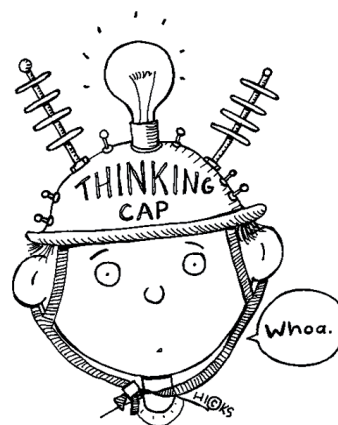
- Your new program of study must begin the next available regular session, and the time between your OPT end date and the new program start date cannot exceed 5 months.
- Immigration regulations require you to have an I-20 Form at the new school no later than 15 days after the first day of classes.
- If you are not in valid status, your record can still be transferred but the receiving school must file for reinstatement of your immigration status upon you arrival.

## Another Visa Type

If you plan to apply for another type of visa after OPT, such as an artist visa (O-1) or H-1B visa, we advise you to see an immigration lawyer.

### NOTE:

You cannot work during your grace period. If you leave the U.S. during your grace period (including trips to Canada or Mexico), you are not eligible to reenter with your current I-20. In this case, the remaining days will be canceled.



## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TRAVEL

Traveling outside of the U.S. as an international student can be complicated, so it's important you are aware of the rules related to your situation before you travel. While this information can serve as a general guide, it may not provide all the information you need to determine whether it is appropriate to travel or whether U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will

re-admit you to the United States. Each person's individual circumstances differ. Please remember that the CBP officer at the port of entry decides whether to admit non-immigrants into the United States. The facts and circumstances presented at the time you apply to enter are the basis of this decision. **You should consult your DSO prior to travelling.**

### Questions to Ask yourself:

#### Is my passport valid? When does it expire?

See more information regarding passports below.

#### Is my visa valid?

In order to reenter, your visa has to be valid. You can stay in the U.S. on an expired F-1 visa as long as you maintain your student status. However, if you travel outside the U.S. you will need to renew your visa before re-entering.

#### Has my DSO endorsed my I-20 for traveling? How old is the signature?

- If you are a student, the signature cannot be older than **12 months**.
- If you are on OPT, the signature cannot be older than **6 months**.

#### What is my current status?

### Travel Outside the U.S. as a Student, BEFORE Applying for OPT – 5 months or less

You may travel outside the U.S. while you are a student. In this case, be prepared to present the following items at the U.S. port of entry:

- **Current passport** valid for at least six months after the date of your reentry. Some countries have an agreement with the United States that allows you to enter on a current passport up to the actual date of expiration. To see if this applies to your country, visit: [www.ice.gov/sevis/travel](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel). Your passport should remain valid throughout your stay in the U.S.
- **Valid, current visa & EAD Card** - If your visa expires while you are in the U.S., the next time you travel abroad you must obtain a new visa in order to be readmitted.
- **Valid Form I-20**, endorsed for travel and signed by your DSO at LACM. The travel signature is required for you to re-enter. Each signature is valid for 12 months and can be used for multiple entries.
- **Proof of enrollment** at LACM, such as a copy of your current class schedule.
- **Financial Statements** showing proof of necessary funds to cover tuition and living expenses.

If you are from a **visa exempt country**, you do not need a visa to reenter the United States from the western hemisphere, but make sure that you present your I-20 to be admitted as an F-1 student and not a visitor.

#### NOTE:

*Be sure that you are able to return before your program end date. If you leave during your grace period, you cannot re-enter using the same I-20.*

## Travel Outside the U.S. AFTER Graduation, While OPT is PENDING

### F-1 Students

While this scenario is allowed, it is **NOT** advisable. Travel during this time should be undertaken with caution.

#### Why is it not advisable?

- USCIS may send you a request for evidence while you are away. If you are not present at your U.S. address and available to send in the requested documents before the stated deadline, your application will be denied.
- If USCIS approves your OPT application, you will be expected to have your EAD card and proof of employment with you when you travel. If you do not, you might not be allowed to re-enter the United States. USCIS can only send the EAD card to your U.S. address.

If you do choose to travel before your OPT is approved, when you seek re-entry, be prepared to show proof that you have applied for OPT. **Along with the regular documents, bring your OPT Notice Receipt (I-797).**

### M-1 Students

You cannot re-enter if you leave while your OPT is pending.

## Travel Outside the U.S. AFTER OPT Has Been Approved; EAD Card Has Been Issued, and you Have a Job Offer:

You may travel during your OPT as long as you do not exceed the limits on unemployment. However, do not travel before having a job offer, as you will need to provide proof of employment. Be prepared to present the following items at the port of entry:

- **Current passport** (see previous section for more information)
- **Valid, current visa**
- **Valid Form I-20** (travel signature cannot be older than 6 months)
- **EAD card**
- **Proof of employment in the U.S.** (job offer letter, pay stub, etc.)

If you know you need to travel soon after graduation, make sure to apply for OPT early.

## Travel within the United States

Although you do not need your immigration documents in order to travel between U.S. states (aside from identification such as a passport), federal law requires that you always carry your immigration documents with you. We do recommend you to keep the documents collected in a safe place at normal times. However, if you travel, even if it's within the U.S., you should carry them with you. Also store copies of all your immigration documents in a separate location, in case something were to happen to your originals.

When traveling within the U.S. be prepared to present:

- **Current passport**
- **Valid, current visa**
- **Valid Form I-20**
- **EAD card** (if you are on OPT)
- **I-94 card/record**

## Dependents

For more information regarding dependents and traveling, please contact your DSO. Also visit: [www.ice.gov/sevis/travel](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel).