VISA PROCESSING TIPS

All "non-immigrant" (meaning temporary) status approvals (H-1B, L, O, etc.) by the Immigration Service in the U.S. are sent by the Service Center to the Kentucky Consular Center. The KCC scans the petition and supporting documents so they can be accessed electronically by the U.S. consulates abroad for visa issuance.

If the beneficiary is in the U.S. and changing or extending status, no visa is needed. But if the beneficiary is outside the U.S. and waiting to enter or is planning foreign travel, the timing of the notification is very important.

The Service Center will overnight the approval if the petition shows that the beneficiary will enter the U.S. in less than 30 days. Otherwise it will send the approval by regular mail to the KCC.

The KCC categorizes approvals for scanning as follows:

  • Expedited cases (as designated by the Service Center) are sent in one day
  • O, P, T, U are sent within 3 days
  • H, L, R and all other cases that are not for extension or change of status are sent within 5 days
  • Extension and change of status cases are sent within 10 days

When the beneficiary schedules the visa appointment, he or she should inquire whether the approval has been scanned by the KCC. If not, the consulate can contact the KCC in advance of the appointment and have the case scanned.

If the case is not scanned, the consular officer is prevented from issuing the visa until the approval is available electronically. This is true even if the beneficiary has the original approval notice in hand.

Strangely, a few consulates still require the original approval notice from the beneficiary despite the fact that the electronic approval is required for visa issuance and they have been instructed not to require it.

We always send the beneficiary a full copy of the petition and the original approval notice when we know that a visa is required.

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