

PURPOSE OF THIS FORM

F-1 students who experience severe economic hardship because of unforeseen circumstances beyond their control may apply for off-campus employment authorization. Examples of unforeseen circumstances include (but are not limited to):

- Medical bills
- Inordinate increases in tuition or living costs
- Substantial fluctuations in currency value or exchange rate
- Unexpected changes in the financial condition of your source of support
- Loss of financial aid or on-campus employment (through no fault of your own)
- Other substantial and unexpected expenses

Things to Consider:

Applying for severe economic hardship work authorization is a long process and may not make sense for every student, even if you do meet the eligibility criteria.

Processing Time: It may take several months to hear back from USCIS about your application. You can view current USCIS processing times for Form I-765 on the [USCIS website](#).

Application Fee: There is a \$410 application fee for severe economic hardship work authorization. It is possible to submit your application with a fee waiver instead of the filing fee, but historically the fee waiver has generally not been accepted. Students may visit the [USICS Fee Waiver website](#) for more information on how to request a fee waiver.

Employment Limitations: Severe economic hardship work authorization is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session. Students may work more than 20 hours per week during official school breaks.

Adequate Documentation of Economic Situation: You should collect as much documentation about your current financial situation as possible in order to make a compelling case that you qualify for the authorization. The more documentation, the better.

Eligibility Requirements:

In order to apply for severe economic hardship work authorization, all of the following must be true:

- You have been in F-1 status for one full academic year (fall and spring semesters)
- You are in good academic standing as a student
- You are carrying a full course of study
- Acceptance of employment will not interfere with your carrying a full course of study
- Employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship due to unforeseen circumstances beyond your control
- On-campus employment is unavailable or is not sufficient to meet the needs that have arisen due to the unforeseen circumstances

USCIS Processing

USCIS processing can take 90 days or more. You cannot begin employment before being approved and receiving the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card. Working prior to approval is illegal employment and violates F-1 status.

How to Apply for Severe Economic Hardship

Prior to submitting the application to USCIS, students must complete the and submit a letter of explanation for ISS processing. If eligible the DSO will issue an updated, I-20 with a recommendation for severe economic hardship.

Once you receive the updated I-20 you must file [I-765](#) online with USCIS, be sure to enter code **(c)(3)(iii)** on item# 20, and have the following items prepared to be uploaded with your application:

1. **Letter of Explanation:** Verify your unforeseen hardship situation and attach any backup documentation (e.g., news articles, a letter from home telling of a change in family circumstances or proof of a currency devaluation in the student's home country, or any other supporting evidence, as applicable).
 - a. Copies of the current and previous I-20s
 - b. Copy of [I-94](#)
 - c. Copy of a recent transcript
 - d. Copy Passport ID page with valid expiration date
 - e. Copy of F-1 visa (except Canadians) or I-797 (if approval of change of status to F-1, if applicable)
 - f. Two full-face passport-style photos (see [photo guidelines](#))

IMPORTANT: *Students found ineligible will **not** be authorized to work off-campus and must determine an alternative plan. Students unable to verify the ability to cover their estimated cost of attendance will be ineligible to continue to study and be required to return to their home country.*

Conditions and Restrictions of Employment

If USCIS authorizes your hardship employment application, you will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS granting you permission to work off-campus. Typically, permission is granted for one year or for the remainder of your academic program, whichever period is less. Please also note the following:

- You may work off-campus up to 20 hours per week while school is in session and full-time during vacation periods.
- You may work in any job, related, or not related to your studies.
- You may not start employment until you have received an EAD or before the start date indicated on the EAD.
- Hardship employment does not count towards your ability to work on-campus or affect your eligibility for practical training.
- If you transfer to another institution, your EAD becomes invalid.
- You may apply each year to renew the employment authorization. The process to renew is the same as the initial application process. You should be prepared to demonstrate that you continue to have a severe financial need that cannot be met by other sources of employment.
- It is important to plan your renewal application carefully if you do not wish to have an interruption in your employment. Be sure to submit the application with enough time for it to be processed before your current EAD expires.