

IMPORTANT: This document contains information that is no longer current but remains on our site for reference purposes.

Employment Authorization

What information are you interested in obtaining? (Please choose an option below)

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Chapter 1 Overview of Employment Authorization in the United States

OVERVIEW

Before any person can be employed in the U.S., he/she must prove to an employer that he/she can legally work here. U.S. citizens, permanent residents and others granted long-term status prove this by showing an unrestricted Social Security card, U.S birth certificate, a US passport, naturalization certificate, permanent resident card, employment authorization card and/or Form I-94 which can be accessed at www.cbp.gov/I94.

A person who is not eligible to work can apply for a special Social Security card that is not valid for work in the U.S. but may be used to open a bank account. For information about how to apply for a Social Security card, call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213.

In order to be legally employed in the United States, employees are required to present documentation to an employer to show evidence of their authorization to work.

- **U.S. citizens** can meet this requirement by showing proof of their United States citizenship and a valid identity document.
- **Permanent Residents** can meet this requirement by showing their permanent resident card.
- Refugees can meet this requirement by showing their Form I-94 that has a red stamp indicating employment is authorized.
- Asylees (persons granted asylum in the U.S.) can meet this requirement by presenting an unrestricted Social Security card, employment authorization card and/or I-94 that has a red stamp indicating employment is authorized.
- Certain nonimmigrant visa holders who are eligible to work based upon employment with a specific employer can show their Form I-94 Arrival and Departure record with their nonimmigrant visa, which will indicate the name of the employer with whom they are authorized to be employed. A copy of your Form I-94 can be accessed at www.cbp.gov/I94.

Most other customers will need to obtain an employment authorization document (EAD).

Note to Representative: E- filing may also be available for certain categories on the I-765. Please refer to Volume 3, Getting Ready to file, if the caller has questions about E-filing.

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Chapter 2 **Verification of Employment Eligibility by an Employer on Form I-9****OVERVIEW**

Immigration law requires employers to verify that employees are eligible to be lawfully employed in the U.S. Each employer and employee must complete certain portions of Form I-9, Employment Verification, upon hiring or, in certain instances, when employment eligibility is being re-verified.

USCIS may issue notices which state “Employment Authorized” or “Employment Authorized Pursuant to Status.” In these instances, even if you are authorized to be employed, you must still obtain some form of acceptable documentation specifically outlined in regulation and law before the employer can legally hire you.

The easiest way to remember the differences is:

1. **Employees** obtain and must show evidence of employment authorization and identity.
2. **Employers** must verify that the employee is who he/she claims to be and that he/she is authorized to be employed.

Before the hiring process is completed, the employer must receive legal document(s) from the employee showing that he/she is authorized to work in the U.S.

See “[Employee Responsibilities When Completing the Form I-9](#)” for a list of acceptable documents.

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Chapter 3 Your Responsibilities as an Employee When Completing the Form I-9

OVERVIEW

The purpose of having U.S. employers complete Form I-9 on each and every new employee is to verify the employees' status to legally work in the United States. Completing and maintaining I-9 records demonstrates that an employer is complying with the U.S. immigration laws.

Filling Out and Completing the I-9

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Who needs to complete an I-9?

Every newly hired employee at a company must complete the Form I-9, including citizens and nationals of the United States. Both the employer and the employee are responsible for completing the Form I-9.

Who is responsible for completing the different sections of the I-9?

The employee is obligated to complete Section One.

The employer is obligated to complete Section Two and Section Three.

When should Section 1 be completed?

Section One of the I-9 must be completed and signed by every newly hired employee on or before the date of hire. The employee must attest that he/she is a United States citizen, lawful permanent resident or is otherwise authorized to work for the employer.

The employer must ask each employee to provide documents that prove both his/her identity and his/her eligibility to work. There are 3 lists on the back of the Form I-9 which describe what is acceptable documentation:

List A

Describes documentation that proves BOTH identity and eligibility to be employed.

List B

Describes acceptable documentation to establish ONLY identity.

List C

Describes acceptable documentation to establish ONLY eligibility to be employed.

Note to Representative: Other documents that are acceptable, but not indicated on the Form I-9 are:

Form I-94 for refugees to establish initial employment eligibility.

Form I-94 issued to asylees with "employment authorized" indicated on the reverse side for employment eligibility only.

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What is List A? – Acceptable Documentation

The following documents are acceptable as evidence for both identity and employment eligibility:

- A U.S. passport or U.S. Passport Card;
- Permanent Resident Card or Alien Registration Receipt Card (Form I-551);
- Foreign passport that contains a temporary I-551 stamp or temporary I-551 printed notation on a machine-readable immigrant visa;
- Employment Authorization Document that contains a photograph (Form I-766);
- In the case of a nonimmigrant alien authorized to work for a specific employer incident to status, a foreign passport with Form I-94 (you can obtain a copy of your I-94 at www.cbp.gov/I94) or Form I-94A bearing the same name as the passport and containing an endorsement of the alien's nonimmigrant status, as long as the period of endorsement has not yet expired and the proposed employment is not in conflict with any restrictions or limitations identified on the form.
- Passport from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) or the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) with Form I-94 or Form I-94A indicating nonimmigrant admission under the Compact of Free Association Between the U.S. and the FSM or RMI.

Note to Representative: Citizens of the Republic of Palau must possess a valid employment authorization document before working in the United States. (The legislation approving the changes to the CFA with the FSM and RMI authorized changes for those nations only, not Palau).

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What is List B? – Acceptable Documentation**The following documents are acceptable to establish identity only:**

- 1) For individuals 16 years of age or older:
 - Driver's license or ID card issued by a State or outlying possession of the U.S.
 - ID card issued by federal, state or local government agencies or entities, provided it contains a photograph or information such as name, date of birth, gender, height, eye color, and address;
 - School ID card with a photograph;
 - Voter's registration card;
 - U.S. military card or draft record;
 - Military dependent's ID card;
 - U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Card;
 - Native American tribal document; or
 - Driver's license issued by a Canadian government authority.
- 2) For individuals under age 18 who are unable to produce a document listed in paragraph (1) above, the following documents are acceptable to establish identity only:
 - School record or report card;
 - Clinic doctor or hospital record;
 - Daycare or nursery school record.
- 3) Minors under the age of 18 who are unable to produce one of the identity documents listed in paragraph (1) or (2) above are exempt from producing one of the enumerated identity documents if:
 - The minor's parent or legal guardian completes on the Form I-9 Section 1--"Employee Information and Verification."
 - In the space for the minor's signature, the parent or legal guardian writes the words "minor under age 18."
 - The minor's parent or legal guardian completes on the Form I-9 the "Preparer/Translator certification."
 - The employer or the recruiter or referrer for a fee writes in Section 2--"Employer Review and Verification" under List B in the space after the words "Document Identification #" the words "minor under age 18."
- 4) Individuals with disability, who are unable to produce one of the identity documents listed in paragraph (1) or (2) above, and who are being placed into employment by a nonprofit organization, association or as part of a rehabilitation program, may follow the procedures for establishing identity provided in this section for minors under the age of 18. Where appropriate, they may substitute the term "special placement" for "minor under age 18" and, in addition to a parent or legal guardian, may permit a representative from the nonprofit organization, association or rehabilitation program placing the individual into a position of employment to fill out and sign the appropriate section of the Form I-9. For purposes of this section, the term individual with disability means any person who:
 - Has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities;
 - Has a record of such impairment, or;
 - Is regarded as having such impairment.

What is List C? – Acceptable Documentation

The following are acceptable documents to establish employment authorization only:

- Social Security Account Number card other than one that specifies on the face that the issuance of the card does not authorize employment in the U.S.;
- Certification of Birth Abroad issued by the Department of State (Form FS-545);
- Certification of Report of Birth issued by the Department of State (Form DS-1350);
- Original or certified copy of a birth certificate issued by a State, county, municipal authority, or territory of the U.S. bearing an official seal;
- Native American tribal document;
- U.S. Citizen ID Card (Form I-197);
- Identification Card for Use of Resident Citizen in the U.S. (Form I-179); or
- Employment authorization document issued by the Department of Homeland Security.

Note to Representative: To establish initial employment eligibility, a refugee may use Form I-94. Then, within 90 days of being hired, the refugee must present either: an unexpired Form I-766 or a Social Security card that does not display any employment restrictions. The refugee must also present a document which establishes the individual's identity. If an individual has been granted asylum, the individual must present a Form I-94 which indicates that the bearer has been granted asylum status. An asylee should also present a Social Security card, which does not display any employment restrictions, within 90 days of being hired.

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Can the I-9 be filled out before a job is offered?

An individual cannot complete a Form I-9 for an employer until after they have accepted the position.

Can my employer tell me what documents I must bring for verification?

An employer cannot tell someone what documents to bring, but they can point out the list of acceptable documents shown on the back of the Form I-9.

It is only when an employee presents documents not appearing on the list that the employer may ask for additional proof of identity and/or employment authorization.

Note to Representative: A citizen and a non-citizen must be treated identically when completing the Form I-9.

Can photocopies of documents be accepted?

No, photocopies of documents cannot be accepted for I-9 purposes. Employees must present original documents.

Note to Representative: The only exception is that a newly hired employee may present a certified copy of a birth certificate.

Is a receipt showing that the employee has filed for a new employment authorization document acceptable as evidence of continuing eligibility for employment?

The employer may not accept a receipt showing that the employee has filed for an extension or an initial document.

Receipts for applications for employment authorization can only be accepted as evidence of continuing eligibility to be employed in cases where the original document has been lost, stolen, or mutilated. In these cases, the previous document must still have been otherwise valid (still would have been within the validity period previously granted if not lost, stolen, etc.) and the employee must provide the valid replacement document within 90 days.

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Are there any special exceptions for people in a certain status?

The only exception of the requirement to provide one of the documents listed in list A, or one from both Lists B and C, is for the initial hiring of an applicant in refugee status.

(THE FOLLOWING DOES NOT RELATE TO ASYLEES; THIS EXCEPTION IS FOR REFUGEES ONLY)

An individual granted refugee status will be issued a Form I-94 indicating refugee status. The employer can use this to verify employment and identity as long as the employee presents:

- The departure portion of Form I-94 containing an unexpired refugee admission stamp, which is designated for purposes of this section as a receipt for the Form I-766, or
- A Social Security card that contains no employment restrictions,

And within 90 days of the hire or, in the case of verification, the date employment authorization expires, presents either

- An unexpired Form I-766, or
- A Social Security card that contains no employment restrictions and a document described under list (B).

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Chapter 4 Filing an Application for Employment Authorization

OVERVIEW

To apply for an employment authorization document, the customer begins the process by filing a Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization. Form I-765 can only be filed by certain customers. Employment authorization is granted based upon a person's immigration status in the U.S.

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What is the Combined Employment Authorization and Advance Parole Card?

Effective February 14, 2011 USCIS will begin issuing employment and travel authorization on a single card for applicants filing Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status. The card is identical to the current Employment Authorization Document (EAD) but will include text that reads, "Serves as I-512 Advance Parole." The new card will serve as both employment authorization and a travel document with this endorsement.

Employers may accept a combined EAD with Advance Parole endorsement as a List A document for completion of Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification.

How do I apply for the combined EAD-Advance Parole card?

You may receive this card when you file Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, and Form I-131, Application for Travel Document, concurrently with or after filing Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status. You must file the Form I-765 and I-131 at the same time in order to receive a combined EAD-Advance Parole card. Please ensure that you enter your name and address exactly the same on both forms.

How long is the combined EAD-Advance Parole card valid?

The combined travel and employment authorization card will be valid for one year, if the applicant's immigrant visa is currently available. If the immigrant visa is not currently available, then the combined card will be valid for two years.

Do I have to request a combined EAD-Advance Parole card when I apply for adjustment of status?

No. If you submit Form I-765 and I-131 concurrently with your Form I-485, and you are granted both benefits, you will receive a combined EAD-Advance Parole card.

You may also request a combined card while your adjustment of status application is pending, if you did not request it at the time you filed your Form I-485. When you make the request, you must submit Form I-765, Form I-131, and the Notice of Action (Form I-797C) for your Form I-485 at the same time. Form I-797C will show that you filed your Form I-485 on or after July 30, 2007. If you filed Form I-485 before July 30, 2007 (or before August 18, 2007 for employment-based cases), you may also request a combined card; however, Forms I-765 and I-131 must be filed with the correct filing fees.

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If I receive a combined card, does that guarantee my re-entry into the U.S. if I travel?

As with the current advance parole document, obtaining a combined card allows an adjustment applicant to travel abroad and return to the U.S. without abandoning the pending adjustment of status application. Upon returning to the U.S., you must present the card to request parole through the port-of-entry. The parole decision is made at the port-of-entry. If you have been unlawfully present in the U.S., and subsequently depart and seek re-entry through a grant of parole, you may be inadmissible and ineligible to adjust your status.

How much does the combined card cost?

If you submitted an application for adjustment of status on or after July 30, 2007 (or on or after August 18, 2007, for employment-based cases), you will pay only one fee to file Form I-485, Form I-765, and Form I-131. The fee for Form I-485 is \$1,070, and there is no separate fee for Forms I-765 and I-131 associated with a Form I-485. For those cases that were filed under the old fee structure, the costs for the combined card will equal the combined costs of filing Form I-765 and I-131, which is a total of \$740.

Will USCIS still issue separate EAD and travel authorization documents?

Yes. USCIS will continue to issue separate EAD and Advance Parole documents for many situations. For example, you will receive an EAD without permission to travel if you do not request advance parole or if your Form I-765 is approved but your Form I-131 is denied.

What if I already have an EAD or a travel document?

If your travel document and EAD card have different expiration dates, it may not benefit you to apply for a combined card, unless both documents are about to expire or the EAD is about to expire and the Advance Parole document is for a single entry only. If you decide to apply for a combined card by filing Forms I-765 and I-131 simultaneously, do not apply more than 120 days before your current EAD expires.

If I lose or damage my combined card, how do I get another one?

You must file Forms I-765 and I-131, concurrently, with the appropriate fees. Although applicants who file under the current fee structure obtain their first card at no cost, they are required to pay the current fees for any card that is lost or damaged.

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What is an Employment Authorization Document (EAD)?

Certain aliens who are temporarily in the United States may file a Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, to request an EAD, which authorizes them to work legally in the U.S. during the time the EAD is valid.

Why does my new Employment Authorization Document (EAD) look different than my prior one?

USCIS has enhanced the EAD with new security features to reduce fraud. This is part of USCIS's ongoing efforts to improve the integrity of the immigration process. USCIS will replace EADs already in circulation with the new security enhanced EADs as individuals apply for the renewal or replacement of their current EAD.

How do I know if I can get an Employment Authorization Document (EAD)?

Whether you can obtain, or even if you need, an EAD depends upon what status you have in the United States or, many times, if you have filed or are filing for certain other benefits.

- If you are in, or want to be in, a valid nonimmigrant category, including a NATO category, please refer to the "Nonimmigrant Services" section.
- If you are an asylee or refugee, please refer to the "Services for Asylees and Refugees" section.
- If you have, or are filing for, Temporary Protected Status (TPS), please refer to the "Temporary Protected Status" section.
- If you are filing a Form I-485, Application for Permanent Resident Status, you can apply for employment authorization at the same time you file your I-485 or at any time while your I-485 is pending.
- If you are filing, or have filed for political asylum on Form I-589, please refer to "Special Programs and Services" section.
- You may also be able to apply for employment authorization if:
 - You have been granted deferred action by USCIS or ICE,
 - You have been granted voluntary return under the Family Unity program, or
 - You are under an order of supervision issued after receiving a final order of deportation or removal from an immigration court.

How do I apply for or renew an Employment Authorization Document (EAD)?

To apply for or renew an Employment Authorization Document, use USCIS [Form I-765](#), which can be obtained by downloading it from the USCIS website.

Note to Representative: E-filing may also be available on certain categories on the I-765. Please refer to [Volume 3, Getting Ready to File](#), if the caller has questions about e-filing.

Note to Representative: If the customer is calling about employment authorization under the Family Unity Program, employment authorization can be obtained and extended by filing [Form I-817, Application for Family Unity Benefits](#). It is not necessary to file a Form I-765. Please advise the customer to read the instructions to Form I-817 carefully

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When should I file for a renewal of my Employment Authorization Card (EAD)?

You should not file more than 120 days before the expiration date shown on your current employment authorization document; however, you should file 90 days before the expiration date.

Under the “I am applying for” area of the form, there are three different blocks. Which one should I check?

- Initial EAD (this is your first application under a specific category),
- A Renewal EAD (an extension of previously granted employment authorization), or
- A Replacement EAD (to replace a lost, mutilated, or destroyed EAD, or to update information, such as a name change on the EAD),

Initial EAD

An application for an initial EAD is one in which the applicant is filing for an EAD under a specific category for the first time. For example, if the applicant previously had an EAD under the Form I-765(c)(8) category and is now filing under the (a)(5) category, the application is considered an initial application because it is the first one filed under the new category (a)(5), even though they had been issued a previous card under a different category. Each applicant who is required to have an EAD must have it in their possession before they can begin working.

Renewal EAD

An application for a renewal EAD is one in which the applicant is filing for an extension of his/her EAD under the same category as he or she previously had. Except for applicants in refugee or asylee status, each person must have a valid card in their possession to be eligible to continue working. Therefore, it is important to stress that renewal EADs should be filed at least 90 days before the expiration of the old EAD in order to avoid lapses in employment.

Replacement EAD

An application for a replacement EAD is filed if a card has been lost, stolen, or mutilated, or when the previously issued card contains erroneous information, such as a misspelled name or name change. If an application for a replacement EAD is approved, the replacement EAD will have the same dates and category as the EAD that was lost, stolen, etc.

Persons applying for replacement documents can present the receipt for the I-765 as evidence of employment eligibility but must produce a valid card within 90 days of showing the receipt.

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For question 16, how do I know for which category I should apply?

- If you are filing for Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, file under category (c)(33)
- If you are an asylee, file under category (a)(5)
- If you are a refugee, file under category (a)(3)
- If you were paroled as a refugee, file under category (a)(4)
- If you were paroled in the public interest, file under category (c)(11)
- If you are filing for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), file under category (c)(19)
- If you have been granted TPS, file under category (a)(12)
- If you are filing a Form I-485, Application for Permanent Resident Status, file your I-765 under category (c)(9)
- If you are filing, or have filed for political asylum on Form I-589, please refer to Volume 4.4.3.5, Special Programs and Services before filing. If it appears you can file for employment authorization, file under category (c)(8)
- You may also be able to apply for employment authorization if:
 - You have been granted deferred action by USCIS or ICE, file under category (c)(14)
 - You have been granted voluntary return under the LIFE Act Family Unity program, file under category (a)(14)
 - You are under an order of supervision issued after receiving a final order of deportation or removal from an immigration court, file under category (c)(18)
 - You have been granted withholding of deportation by an Immigration Court, file under category (a)(10)
- Beginning May 26, 2015, H-4 spouses of certain H1B nonimmigrant's who are seeking employment-based lawful permanent resident status are eligible to apply for work authorization (**Note to Representative: For more information see [Volume 4.4.1: As an H1B, can my family come with me? Can they work or go to school?](#)**)
 - File under category (c)(9) if you are filing a Form I-485, Application for Permanent Resident Status, with the Form I-765, or if you have already filed the Form I-765;
 - File under category (c)(26) if your H-1B spouse is the beneficiary of:
 - An approved Form I-140; OR
 - Form I-140 that was filed 365 days prior to the end of the H-1B's sixth year and Form I-140 is still pending; OR
 - A labor certification application filed with the Department of Labor 365 days prior to the end of the H-1B's sixth year and the labor certification application is either still pending or was approved and timely filed with Form I-140;

For these and other categories, please follow the instructions to Form I-765.

Note to Representative: E- filing may also be available on certain categories on the I-765. Please refer to the "Getting Ready to File" guide, if you have questions about e-filing.

Do I have to submit photos with the Form I-765?

Yes, you must submit two standard passport-style photos. The photos must have been taken no earlier than 30 days prior to the date you file the I-765. Please see the Form I-765 for the required specifications for the photos.

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Do I need to submit a “signature card,” I-765A, with my I-765 application?

No, the signature card is no longer required as part of the filing process.

How long does USCIS have to make a decision on my Application for Employment Authorization?

The required times in which USCIS must make a decision on an I-765 are:

- Ninety (90) days of receipt of applications filed under categories other than initial asylum-based, or
- Thirty (30) days if filing based upon a pending asylum case and filing for an initial EAD.

One exception to this rule is if USCIS requires additional evidence. The processing time limit is extended by the amount of time it takes for you to receive the request for evidence and respond to it. Also, the processing time is extended when a request for evidence is issued for any Form filed concurrently with the I-765.

If USCIS has to send out a Request for Evidence, the processing “clock” stops. The maximum allowed time to submit evidence is 12-weeks. Once USCIS receives your response, the processing “clock” starts up again.

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Can I get a Social Security card after I get my Employment Authorization Document (EAD)?

In most cases, you can apply for a Social Security card after you receive an employment authorization document. You will need another type of officially issued photo identification, a passport, I-94 bearing a stamp of refugee or asylee status and/ or driver's license.

For more information about how to apply for a Social Security card, please call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213.

What if my Employment Authorization Document (EAD) has incorrect information on it when I receive it?

For help with this question, please call our toll-free number: 1-800-375-5283.

Who is eligible for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) that is valid for two years?

The two-year EAD is only available to pending adjustment applicants who are currently unable to adjust status because an immigrant visa number is not currently available. In order to be eligible for an EAD with a two year validity period, an applicant's I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker, must be approved.

When will applicants expect to receive the new two-year Employment Authorization Document (EAD)?

Applicants filing Form I-765 began receiving their two-year EAD after June 30, 2008.

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Will applicants get a two-year Employment Authorization Document (EAD) when they file an I-765 with their I-485 adjustment of status application?

Generally, no. Initial EAD filings will generally receive an EAD that is valid for one year because they are usually submitted with the Form I-485 which can only be filed when there is an immigrant visa number immediately available to the individual. Applicants are only eligible for a two-year EAD if their immigrant visa availability date retrogresses (i.e., when actual demand for visa numbers exceeds forecasted supply) after the Form I-485 is filed. If an immigrant visa number is available, USCIS will grant the one-year EAD.

How will USCIS decide whether to issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) valid for one or two years?

USCIS will decide whether to renew an EAD for either a one or two-year validity period based on the most recent [Department of State Visa Bulletin](#). If an applicant's visa number has retrogressed and is unavailable, USCIS may issue a renewal EAD valid for two years. USCIS will continue to issue the EAD in one-year increments when the Department of State Visa Bulletin shows an employment-based preference category is current as a whole or the applicant's priority date is current.

If I am filing for a replacement Employment Authorization Document (EAD), how long is the EAD valid?

If an individual requests to replace an EAD that has not expired, USCIS will issue a replacement EAD that is valid through the same date as the previously issued EAD. However, if the previous EAD has expired, USCIS will process the request for a renewal EAD and determine the appropriate validity period based on the [Department of State Visa Bulletin](#) and the applicant's priority date.

Why is USCIS changing the validity period for some Employment Authorization Documents (EADs)?

USCIS views this change as a way to better serve its customer base, and in particular, persons who are waiting to become lawful permanent residents and are impacted by the lack of immigrant visa numbers.

When I file Form I-765, how long will it take to receive a decision?

You should receive a decision within 90 days (30 days for initial Asylum applicants) from the receipt date on your Form I-765. In some cases, an EOIR-granted asylee will receive an EAD card valid for 2 years by mail within 7 to 10 days from the day the biometrics information is received.

Note to Representative: If you have not received a decision and over 75 days (25 days for Asylum applicants) has passed, please call our toll-free number at 1-800-375-5283 for further assistance with this issue.

Will the new Employment Authorization Document (EAD) affect my current valid EAD card?

No, it does not affect your current valid EAD card and you do need to file for a new card before your current card expires.

Why USCIS redesigned the Employment card?

The new features of the EAD will better equip workers, employers and law enforcement officials to recognize the card as definitive proof of authorization to work in the United States.

For more information about the new EAD card, please visit www.uscis.gov and the resource can be found under [USCIS Fact Sheets](#).

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