

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Definition of OPT:

Optional Practical Training is defined in the regulations as “temporary employment for practical training directly related to the student’s major field of study.”

Who is eligible for OPT?

An F-1 student must have been “lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis in an approved college, university, or conservatory or seminary for one full academic year” to be eligible for OPT. ESL or language only program students do not qualify for OPT.

How long is the duration of OPT?

Optional Practical Training can be authorized for a maximum aggregated period of 12 months per educational level.

Legal Note: A student becomes eligible for 12 months of OPT when he or she changes to a higher education level, this student needs to be in this new level for another full academic year before becoming eligible for another OPT for this new education level.

Legal Note: The regulations state that “authorization to engage in practical training employment is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level.”

When should you apply for OPT?

You can **ONLY** apply for OPT before your program end date, but not sooner than 90 days from the last day of classes.

Can I travel out of the country after applying for OPT?

It is recommended by OISS that you do not leave the country after you have applied for your OPT (EAD) card until you have received it in the mail.

Can I travel after I get my card?

Yes, you may travel temporarily out of the country after you get your EAD. You need to make sure that your *I-20 has a valid signature; Each signature is valid for 6 months at a time. You would need a valid F-1 visa in our passport in order to re-enter the United States.

*Legal Note: A student who has been issued an EAD, for Optional Practical Training, might have an I-20 whose program completion date has passed. If this is your case, your stay in the country is still legal as long as you have a valid EAD.

You may travel with this expired I-20 as long as you follow the guideline explained above.

When can I start working?

You may not start working off-campus until you have received your Employment Authorization Card, and may not start working before the beginning date on your card.

What will happen after I apply for my EAD?

You will get a receipt from the BCIS in about 2 weeks from the mailing date.

How long will it take for me to get my card?

Depending on which immigration service you are applying at, it might take from 90-120 days for you to get your card.

What should I do if I don't get my card by the 90th day and I need to start work?

Regulations provide that if an EAD application has not been adjudicated within 90 days of receipt, the applicant may apply to BCIS for 240-day grant interim employment authorization card. You may go, in person, to the local Immigration Office. In our case their address is:

*665 W Rialto Ave.
San Bernardino, CA 92410-3327*

Driving Directions:

1. Start at **4700 PIERCE ST, RIVERSIDE** going towards **RALEY DR** - go **1.2** mi
2. Turn **L** on **MAGNOLIA AVE** - go **0.1** mi
3. Take **CA-91 EAST** towards **SAN BERNARDINO** - go **10.6** mi
4. Continue on **I-215 NORTH** - go **8.7** mi
5. Take the **2ND STREET** exit towards **CIVIC CENTER** - go **0.2** mi
6. Turn **R** on **W 2ND ST** - go **0.2** mi
7. Turn **R** on **N G ST** - go **0.1** mi
8. Turn **L** on **W RIALTO AVE** - go **0.1** mi
9. Arrive at **655 W RIALTO AVE, SAN BERNARDINO**

You need to take proof of identity and any documents received from the BCIS Service Center in connection with your initial application for employment authorization to prove that 90 days have elapsed.

Legal Note: You are required by law to inform us of your address change in a form AR-11 within 10 days of change. You must maintain your address in SEVIS or the USCIS will not approve your application.