



## F-2 Visa For Family Members

An international student may be accompanied to the U.S. by his or her dependent(s) at any time. Dependents are defined as spouses and/or unmarried minor children. Children over the age of 21 are not eligible to enter as the dependent of an international student (F-1 student). An international student's dependents may apply for their F-2 visas at the same time that the international student applies for an F-1 visa, or they may apply for their F-2 visas at a later date. If they are granted the visa, they may enter the United States when the international student does, or they may enter the U.S. at a later date.

If you wish to bring a dependent to the U.S. please contact AAIT DSO to learn what information you need to submit to request a dependent I-20. It is important to determine whether you have sufficient funds to support yourself and your dependents. The AAIT School requires proof of funds that range between \$5,000-\$7,000 for a spouse and \$5,000-\$7,000 for each child in order to prepare the dependent I-20. Such proof of funding is required because the U.S. government necessitates that all international students and their dependents present proof of financial resources to ensure they do not become a public charge.

**If your family members are abroad** and you want them to join you in the US, follow these steps to obtain F-2 visas for any dependent family members:

**Step 1.** Get from AAIT Admissions the new I-20 Form after providing the following documents:

- Financial documentation (e.g. bank statement, electronic form proof of graduate assistantship, letter from employer or sponsor, etc.)
- Copy of biographical page of passport

**Step 2.** Provide your dependents with the following documents for visa application:

- Your dependents' new F-2 Form I-20 (original)
- Your new I-20 (copy)
- Your passport biographical page (copy)
- Your F-1 visa stamp (copy)
- Your I-94 or copy of front and back side of card
- Your financial documentation (e.g. bank statement; proof of graduate assistantship, letter from employer or sponsor)
- Your letter of invitation
- Visa support letter from AAIT (optional)
- Financial documentation for F-2 dependent (e.g. bank statement, letter from sponsor, etc.)

**Step 3.** Your dependents should contact their local U.S. Embassy/Consular Office and follow the procedures for F-2 visa application.

**If your family members are already in the US** on another type of visa and you wish to change their status to F-2, you should meet with an AAIT DSO. In some cases it may not be possible to change status while in the US or there may be deadlines to consider.

**Children born in the United States** are US citizens. As such, they are ineligible for F-2 status. AAIT DSO will not include family members who are US citizens in your documentation.

## **Securing a dependent visa**

**(If applying separately from F1)**

Once the dependent I-20 is received, the student should mail the document to his or her spouse. The spouse should make an appointment with the nearest U.S. Consulate to request an F-2 visa. The spouse should bring a valid passport, dependent I-20, proof of student's relationship to them, e.g., marriage certificate translated into English, proof of birth for dependent children and proof of funding to the consular interview. Once the visa has been secured, dependents must each present a valid I-20, a valid F-2 visa (except citizens of Canada) and a passport that is valid at least 6 months from the date of entry in order to successfully enter the U.S.

## **Inviting other family members**

Only the spouse and unmarried minor children (under 21 years old) of an F-1 student are eligible to enter the United States in F2 dependent status. Frequently international students wish to invite their parents or other family members to the U.S. to attend graduation or for a visit. If parents or other members of an international student's family, including children over the age of 21, wish to enter the U.S. temporarily to visit the international student in the U.S., they may enter on a B-2 tourist visa. Students with F-1 visa may request an invitation letter from AAIT DSO to send to a relative to assist them with applying for a B-2 visa.

## **Travel**

The same rules apply to dependent travel as to travel by international students. A current travel endorsement is required for re-entry to the U.S. The dependent may not remain in the U.S. after the F-1 student is absent from the U.S. unless the absence is temporary (5 months or less).

## **Study/Education**

A spouse with an F-2 visa is not allowed to study full-time in the U.S., and F-2 dependents who are children may only study full-time in an elementary or secondary school (kindergarten through 12th grade). F-2 spouses may only engage in part-time study that is avocational or recreational in nature, but not to obtain a degree. Local schools and community colleges offer recreational courses, such as cooking, swimming, driver's education, car maintenance, dancing, etc. that F-2 spouses may enroll in.

An F-2 spouse desiring to engage in full-time study must apply for and obtain a change of non-immigrant classification to F-1 status. Most importantly, F-2 spouses and children who wish to study for a degree at a U.S. college must change their status to F-1 before attending any classes. They may wish to apply for an F-1 visa at a U.S. Consulate outside the U.S. Or change of status may be done while staying in the U.S. Students whose spouses wish to change their status should always seek guidance from the AAIT DSO.

## **Work/Employment**

Dependents of F-1 students may not apply for work authorization in the U.S. as the F-2 visa does not allow it. F-2 dependents may not be employed in the US.

## **Volunteering**

F-2 dependents may participate in volunteer activities.

## **Addresses**

All non-US citizens, including F-1 visa holders and their F-2 dependents are required to keep their current US residential address and contact information up-to-date by filling out “Student Information Change Form”.

## **When Does F-2 or J-2 Status End?**

F-2 dependents are eligible to remain in the US as long as the F-1 student remains in valid status. Once an F-1 has completed the program of study, the F-1 and F-2 dependents are eligible to stay in the US for up to 60 days.

Note the following situations where F-2 ends even if the F-1 remains in valid status:

If F-1/F-2 spouses obtain a divorce, the F-2 is no longer the dependent of the F-1. The F-2 cannot remain in the US on a dependent visa. The F-2 should depart the US or, if eligible, apply for an alternate visa status prior to the finalization of the divorce.

If an F-2 child marries or reaches the age of 21, s/he is no longer the dependent of the F-1 parent. The F-2 or child cannot remain in the US on a dependent visa. The F-2 should depart the US or, if eligible, apply for an alternate visa status in a timely manner.

## **English language program/community programs**

Visit AAIT DSO to learn what campus programs are available to dependents of international students. AAIT School offer English classes to the spouses of international students. Dependents may join social or special interest groups, i.e., gardening, hiking and nature clubs, civic organizations, etc. There are also many opportunities to volunteer in local libraries, hospitals, day care centers, animal shelters and social agencies.

## **Adapting to life in the U.S.**

Prepare your spouse and children for life in the U.S. by sharing the information that you learned about the U.S. Help your family to adjust their expectations and to keep open minds when they experience cultural differences.

If English is not you and your family’s first language, prepare your spouse and children by ensuring that they begin learning some English prior to moving to the U.S. Then make arrangements for more English training after they arrive in the U.S.

Discuss issues of loneliness and other symptoms of culture shock with your family prior to and after arriving in the U.S.

Help your family develop coping strategies. Even before you leave home, try consulting with others who have studied overseas or lived abroad. This may be helpful in preparing for the initial stress of relocating. Ask your friends and colleagues about their experiences and ways they resolved initial difficulties.

Support your spouse’s interests and activities in the U.S.

Help your children by acknowledging their negative feelings about the move, help them maintain their friendships and relationships with family in both countries, and give them something to look forward to during the move (a new privilege, possession or activity). Be aware that schools at home may have focused differently on educational topics and there may be gaps in your children's education. You can help by providing supplemental teaching for your children at home, hiring a tutor, or securing extra books or software.

Remember that family members will need your time and attention, and you will need to find a way to balance those needs with your studies.