

The U.S. Department of State has recently announced regulatory changes to its J-1 Exchange Visitor Program that are effective as of January 5, 2015.

Determining English Proficiency of Prospective Exchange Visitors

It has always been a requirement to ensure that a prospective exchange visitor's English proficiency was sufficient to enable the student or scholar to participate in our program. The Department of State has expanded our role to determine not only that the prospective visitor's English is sufficient to participate in the program, but is adequate enough "to function on a day-to-day basis" outside of the laboratory. We are required to make a determination regarding English proficiency using an "objective measurement of English language proficiency," by means of one of the following three methods:

1. A recognized English language test
2. Signed documentation from an academic institution or English language school **or**
3. A documented interview conducted by the sponsor either in-person or by videoconferencing, or by telephone if videoconferencing is not a viable option

Since the regulations do not specify methodological details, we as sponsors can exercise some discretion to ensure that the methods used to verify English language proficiency, as well as the documentation being retained, fit into one of the three methods set forth in the regulations. It is also within our discretion to invite an EV who may not possess the appropriate English language skill as long as we provide the use of an interpreter and provide access to ELOS support.

There are FREE ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) classes available at:

- The NY Public Library. There are classes at many Bronx Locations including our Morris Park Avenue Branch. Further information can be found on their site:
<http://www.nypl.org/events/classes/esol>

The City University of New York also offers classes:

<http://www.cuny.edu/about/resources/citizenship/info4noncitizens/FreeEnglishClasses.html>

- Hostos Community College Adult Learning Center:
<http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/Continuing-Ed/Basic-Ed-Literacy>
- Lehman College Institute for Literacy Studies:
<http://www.lehman.edu/literacy-studies/adult-learning-center/who-we-are.php>

SEVIS Reporting Requirements

All J-1 exchange visitors will be required to:

- Provide an email address for themselves and all dependents
- Report if an accompanying spouse or dependent departs from the US prior to the Exchange Visitor's departure date

- Report as soon as possible (but no later than 10 days) any change in US address, phone number, email address or site of activity.

New Exchange Visitor Insurance Amounts: (Effective May 15, 2015)

The level of health insurance that Exchange Visitors are required to carry has gone up. Exchange Visitors and their dependents must now be insured for the entirety of their stay in the following amounts.

	Expiring Regulations	New Regulations
Medical benefits	\$50,000	\$100,000
Repatriation of remains	\$7,500	\$25,000
Medical evacuation	\$10,000	\$50,000
Deductible per accident or illness	\$500	\$500