

SEVERE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

WHAT IS SEVERE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP?

Severe Economic Hardship (SEH) is employment authorization granted by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to an F-1 visa holder who has suffered severe economic hardship due to unexpected economic problems.

SEH will not affect future eligibility for OPT or CPT. If granted, you will be authorized to work part-time (20 hours per week) during school and full-time (40 hours per week) during vacations and holidays. SEH employment can be authorized for up to one year and can be renewed up until you complete your current course of study.

ELIGIBILITY:

- **You must have been in legal, active F-1 status for at least one full academic year.**
- Authorization is granted only in one year increments, although you may re-apply for another employment period.
- You must be considered a full time student to apply for/engage in employment.
- You do not need a job offer prior to applying.
- Employment authorization does not affect eligibility for practical training.
- Employment authorized for SEH is not limited to your field of study. You may accept any kind of lawful employment once you have your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card.
- If you transfer to another institution, or if you violate F-1 status, your employment authorization is automatically terminated.
- You will need to have a Social Security number in order to work in the US.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT FORM I-765

- Question 1: Check “1a Permission to Accept Employment.” However, if you have already been granted Economic Hardship, you would check 1c.
- Question 5: You can use ISAO’s address as your Mailing Address if you would like. If you use your apartment/house for your mailing address, you must ensure that you will have access to it for the next 2-5 months.
- Question 8 and 9: You will only have an Alien registration number (A-Number) if you have been in deportation or removal proceedings or have submitted certain immigration applications, particularly for permanent residence. If you were in proceedings or had any immigration applications denied, especially for reasons such as fraud, be sure to see an immigration lawyer.
- Question 21c: You will not have a travel document number
- Question 25: Your current immigration status should be “F-1 student.”
- Question 27: Your eligibility category depends on the basis for your work permit. If applying for off-campus employment due to severe economic hardship, your category is **(c)(3)(iii)**
- Skip questions 28-31

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT FORM I-912: FEE WAIVER

- Line 2: if you do not have an A number, write “Not applicable”
- Line 6: write “I-765”
- SECTION 2: if you do not have any dependents, write “Not applicable” in the first line
- SECTION 3, line 8.c.: check this box
- SECTION 4: write “Not applicable”
- SECTION 5: fill out Line 10, 11, and 12 if you have on-campus work, attach a copy of your federal tax return or your most recent W2
- SECTION 6, line 13: Describe your situation. Don’t forget to include how much tuition you must pay each semester, how much you make each semester if you have on-campus work, how much you receive in scholarships (if applicable) and how much you still need each semester.
- Write “Not applicable” or “N/A” in lines 14, 15, 16
- Line 17: fill out costs
- SECTION 7, Line 18: sign and date (additional signatures are only if you have dependents/household members who are also requesting a fee waiver)

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HOW DO I CHOOSE THE DATES OF EMPLOYMENT?

Keep in mind that Immigration may take up to 3 months to issue a card. You should apply for SEH about 3 months before your desired start date. If granted, the employment period will last one year.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:

- Completed I-765 application
- Completed I-912 Fee Waiver application (if applicable)
- Completed G-1145 E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance
- A copy of the front and back of any previous work permits (if applicable)
- Two passport style photos taken within the last 30 days. Each photo must be cut to 2 inches by 2 inches with your name and I-94 # printed lightly on the back **in pencil**. Place the photos and check/money order in an envelope. Write your name and I-94 # on the outside of the envelope as well.
- Supporting documents to show economic need. For example, news articles about the economic situation in your home country, letters from those supporting you describing a change in their situation, a copy of a letter terminating your family or sponsor's employment, copies of medical bills, newspaper clippings, letter from home telling of a change in circumstances, proof of currency devaluation, etc.
- Your personal statement explaining why you are seeking work authorization (see details on preparing your statement below).
- Unofficial or official UMKC transcripts and/or letter of current enrollment
- A copy of your passport photo page and F-1 visa (or F-1 approval notice if you changed status in the U.S.)
- Copies of all I-20s
- Printout of your I-94: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html> or copy of the front and back of your I-94 card
- A check or money order for \$410 made out to the **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**. (DO NOT WRITE ON THE BACK OF THE CHECK) Your name and address must be on the check. Write your I-94 # on the bottom left hand corner of the check (in the "memo" or "for" section) **OR** a filled out I-912 fee waiver form
- Copy of I-20 with recommendation for Economic Hardship*-this will be issued upon review of all other application components after requesting SEH through SEVIS.

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PREPARING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Because your eligibility for a work permit depends entirely on your personal circumstances, you will have to explain these circumstances to USCIS, in a written statement:

- Address your letter to USCIS, print, sign and date it
- State your length of time enrolled as a full-time F-1 student and your current GPA
- Explain *why* you need to work off campus, and *how* your financial situation has changed (did your sponsor stop sponsoring you? Did a scholarship amount decrease? Did your parents lose employment? Etc.)
- Describe your attempts to locate other sources of income (additional on-campus work, campus/department scholarships, external scholarships, etc) and their outcomes
- If you currently have on-campus work and scholarships, explain why those are not sufficient
- Guarantee that employment will not interfere with your studies

Create and include a budget of current school/living expenses and current income to show how much is still needed. Provide documentation (copy of W2 if you have on-campus employment, copy of scholarship letters, etc.)

This is not a legal document, so try to use the type of language that you would use in speaking, rather than trying to make it sound official.

AFTER I HAVE GATHERED ALL OF THE ABOVE, WHAT DO I DO?

Bring in all of the above documents to ISAO. We will process the paperwork, create a new I-20 for you, and ask you to sign it. Once your packet is assembled, you will be directed to mail the packet to Immigration via certified return receipt mail. Address and other mailing information will be provided.

WHEN WILL I GET AN ANSWER FROM USCIS?

USCIS may take 3 months or more to make a final decision regarding your employment authorization. You may not work until you receive your card! When you receive your card, we will also need a copy of it. You should get a receipt notice from USCIS within two to three weeks. The receipt will include a case number that allows you to check its status online at www.uscis.gov. When your work permit is approved, you will receive a wallet-sized plastic card in the mail with your photo on it. The permit will be good for one year. You can only work during the dates on the card, and you cannot start work until you receive the card.

A final warning: If you apply to USCIS for a work permit, DO NOT leave the U.S. until it is approved. During this time, you may be tempted to leave the United States – perhaps to take a vacation or return home for a visit -- especially during summertime. Don't leave! Doing so will automatically cancel your work permit application. (In fact, leaving the United States is almost always considered an abandonment of applications filed with USCIS.)

Mail all documents to:

For U.S. Postal Service:

USCIS
P.O. Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036

For FedEx or UPS Service (i.e. express courier):

USCIS
Attn: AOS
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034