

1. DS-160

Once the visa petition is approved the first step is to fill the DS-160 forms for the primary applicant (beneficiary) and the dependants.

1.1. Steps

1. Go to the US Department of State Consular Electronic Application Center website (<https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>);
2. Select the location where you will be applying for the visa, from the dropdown list. This would be mentioned in your approved I-797 (petition) form;
3. Click on Start Application to fill the DS-160 form;
4. Select a security question and answer. This would be required to access your application online at a later point in time;
5. All the questions in the form are intuitive and self explanatory. You could use many of the blogs (listed in the resources below) which explain each of the questions to be filled;
6. Submit the DS-160 form towards the end of the application;
7. SAVE and PRINT the DS-160 confirmation and the DS-160 applications.

1.2. Additional Info

1. If you do not plan to submit the application within 30 days of creating the application, save a copy on to your computer. Website gives you this option;
2. Remember, the primary applicant and any dependants should have a separate DS-160 form filled. There are two ways of filling the DS-160 for the dependants
 - a. Once you fill the primary applicant's form and submit, you will get an option to submit a family application. Using this option you will get some pre-populated data (from the primary applicant's application) and fill it for one dependant. Then you can create another one for next dependant etc.

OR

 - b. You can create fresh DS-160 forms for each of the dependants from scratch. It's just that you have to refill all the data;
3. ADULTS NEED NOT TAKE ANY PHOTOS FOR THE VISA PROCESS; NEVER. For dependants below the age of 14 years, get the photo as per the visa specifications (<http://www.ustraveldocs.com/in/in-niv-photoinfo.asp>) and keep with you. You will need one copy of it (only) during the fingerprinting process;

1.3. Resources

1. US Department of State Consular Electronic Application Center – DS-160 form - <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>;
2. Guides for filling the DS-160 form
 - a. immihelp - <http://www.immihelp.com/visas/ds-160-usa-visa-form-guide.html>
 - b. Path2usa - <http://www.path2usa.com/h1b-visa-guide/application-form-ds160>
 - c. US Travel Docs - <http://www.ustraveldocs.com/in/in-niv-ds160info.asp>.

1.4. Documents & Info required

1. Passports;
2. I-129 form (LCA);
3. I-797;
4. Dates of last 5 visits to the US (if any);
5. Countries visited in the last 5 years.

2. Scheduling the OFC & Consulate appointments

Once the DS-160 forms for the primary applicant and the dependants is submitted and the DS-160 Confirmations are available, the next step is to schedule the OFC (fingerprinting & photographing) and Consulate (visa interview) appointments.

2.1. Steps

1. Go to the US Travel Docs website (<http://www.ustraveldocs.com/in/index.html>);
2. Select "Yes" for the pop up question "Is this your first time applying for a visa and/or visiting our site?";
3. Select "Non-immigrant";
4. Go thru the Nonimmigrant Visa Information section (<http://www.ustraveldocs.com/in/in-niv-visafeeinfo.asp#>);
5. Create a profile of the primary applicant (https://cgifederal.secure.force.com/SiteRegister?country=India&language=en_US);
6. Go to "New Application / Schedule Appointment" section;
7. Fill all the information as requested. Include your dependent's information also;
8. You will be presented with a fee payment page.
9. Choose the appropriate channel of payment and do the payment.
10. Within a couple of hours of the visa fee transfer you would receive a mail confirmation along with the "Receipt Number(s)";
11. Log back to the US Travel Docs website and continue with your application process. The Receipt Number(s) should automatically appear against your DS-160 application numbers;
12. Complete the process and you would be presented with a calendar to schedule the Visa interview. Select a suitable date and time;
13. Then you will be presented with a calendar to schedule the OFC (fingerprinting & photographing) process. Select a suitable date and time;
14. Then you will be presented with an "Appointment Confirmation Page". SAVE and PRINT it.

2.2. Additional Info

1. If you choose to pay via the online NEFT channel, you will be given a page with the account information and amount details
 - a. Use the IFSC Code (BOFA0MM6205 (Bank of America N.A.)), Unique Beneficiary Account Number (i.e. the recipient's account number. Something like "TIER5850...") and the Beneficiary Name ("BANA MUMBAI US VISA SFA") to register a New Payee in your bank account;
 - b. Since this is NEFT (most probably you would have a different bank account than Bank of America), money transfer would only happen during the NEFT business hours (check your bank site for details);
2. You will be given an option to select the Visa interview date and time first and then the OFC. And OFC has to be at least a day before the Visa interview. In case you have to travel to a different city to attend these two events, you need to be extra careful in choosing the dates. E.g. if you choose a Monday (or a day after a holiday) as the date of Visa interview, the latest you can schedule the OFC would be the Friday (or the previous working day) before the Visa interview day. So you would have to plan to stay at a different city over the weekend;
3. Try to book the appointment times during a comfortable period of the day (and not necessarily the first available slot). E.g. booking a mid day slot in Chennai can be very very uncomfortable.

2.3. Resources

1. US Travel Docs website - <http://www.ustraveldocs.com/in/index.html>

2. Nonimmigrant Visa Information section - <http://www.ustraveldocs.com/in/in-niv-visafeeinfo.asp#>
3. US Travel Docs - Create profile of the primary applicant - [https://cgifederal.secure.force.com/SiteRegister?country=India&language=en_US](https://cgifederal.secure.force.com/SiteRegister?country=India&language=en_US;);

2.4. Documents & Info required

1. Filled DS-160 form

3. Attending OFC

The next on list is attending the OFC at the address specified in the Appointment Confirmation page. Here is my account of attending the OFC in Chennai. The steps may differ a bit depending on your city

3.1. Steps

1. Await in the queue for your turn to be let in;
2. Keep your Appoint confirmation printout, DS-160 confirmation printouts and your passports handy and easy to reach;
3. Each of the adults will be given a separate token number. Minor dependents will accompany the mother;
4. Get into the waiting area and keep an eye on the token number display;
5. Get to the counter, pass your passport and the DS-160 printout to the agent there;
6. Give your fingerprints and get your picture taken;
7. In case of minors less than 14 years of age they will take the photo mentioned in section 1.2 above;
8. Your passport and the DS-160 with a date stamp will be given back. Keep them very safely.

3.2. Additional Info

1. There will be no waiting area outside of the OFC center. You wouldn't be allowed to stand in the queue either in advance of your scheduled time;
2. Try to reach the OFC center about 15-20 mins before the scheduled time so you can go and join the queue directly;
3. The Appoint Confirmation printout and the DS-160 Confirmation printout will be asked to be shown multiple times! So keep them in a way to easily access without spilling other documents from your folder;
4. Dress comfortably. There is no necessity to be formally dressed. It's your comfort level;
5. Try to avoid carrying anything other than your documents folder to the OFC center. Mobiles and other electronics are big no-no. There wouldn't be any facility to store the items outside of the OFC. A complete list of dos and don'ts will be available in your Appoint Confirmation;
6. If accompanied by kids, take only minimal that is required and be ready to dump them in a dust bin if required.

3.3. Resources

1. -

3.4. Documents & Info required

1. Passports;
2. Appoint Confirmation printout;
3. DS-160 Confirmation printout;
4. Photo – in case of a minor less than 14 years of age;

5. It may be a good idea to carry all the documents (mentioned in 4.4) along with the above, just in case.

4. Attending Visa Interview

The last and most important step in the whole process is attending the Visa interview at the US Consulate at the address specified in the Appointment Confirmation page. Here is my account of attending the interview at US Consulate in Chennai. The steps may differ a bit depending on your city

4.1. Steps

1. Await in the queue for your turn to be let in;
2. Keep your Appoint confirmation printout, DS-160 confirmation printouts and your passports handy and easy to reach;
3. Primary applicant will be given a token number (stuck on the passport);
4. Wait in the queue for your turn to get your fingerprints verified;
5. Get into the waiting area and keep an eye on the token number display;
6. Get to the counter, and pass your documents, as requested by the visa officer;
7. Answer the questions appropriately – briefly and to the point;
8. If Visa is approved, you will be handed over a leaflet of your rights in the US. Your passports will be retained.

4.2. Additional Info

1. There will be no waiting area outside of the Consulate. You wouldn't be allowed to stand in the queue either in advance of your scheduled time;
2. Try to reach the Consulate about 15-20 mins before the scheduled time so you can go and join the queue directly;
3. The Appoint Confirmation printout and the DS-160 Confirmation printout will be asked to be shown. So keep them in a way to easily access without spilling other documents from your folder;
4. Dress comfortably. There is no necessity to be formally dressed. It's your comfort level;
5. Try to avoid carrying anything other than your documents folder to the OFC center. Mobiles and other electronics are big no-no. There may not be any facility to store the items outside of the Consulate. A complete list of dos and don'ts will be available in your Appoint Confirmation;
6. If accompanied by kids, take only minimal that is required and be ready to dump them in a dust bin if required;
7. Answer all the questions only to the point. Do not go overboard;
8. Talk confidently (i.e. keep all the information ready with you and practice your answers to typical questions a couple of times before the interview) and don't sound suspicious;
9. If Visa is approved ALL the documents except passports will be returned. In case they do not, make it a point to ask for them back.

4.3. Resources

Some of the websites listed below are loaded with information on various aspects of US Visas. Tons of accounts of Visa interviews are listed here, along with master lists of questions that you can expect. Try to get answers to all these questions and keep them ready before the interview. Towards the end of document is my compilation of the questions from various websites.

1. Immihelp - <http://www.immihelp.com/>
2. Immihelp - <http://www.immihelp.com/visas/h1b/h1-visa-interview-sample-questions-answers.html>

3. Path2usa - <http://www.path2usa.com/>
4. Path2usa - <http://www.path2usa.com/h1b-visa-guide/interview-questions>
5. Redbus2us - <http://redbus2us.com/>
6. Redbus2us - <http://redbus2us.com/category/visa-experiences/>

4.4. Documents & Info required

1. Passports (old and new)
2. DS-160 confirmation
3. Appointment Confirmation
4. I797
5. I129
6. LCA
7. Client invitation letter
8. Client contract
9. Business level service agreement
10. Latest CV (matching the duties)
11. Last 3 months' bank statements
12. Academic records (certificates, marks sheets, copies)
13. Appointment letter from Company
14. Consulate letter
15. Latest IT returns
16. Past visits and visa information
17. Employment Verification Letter
18. Experience letter from previous employers
19. Information about your employer;

It might be a good idea to keep a photocopy of the above documents, along with the originals.

5. Collect the stamped passports from the Collection Center

You would be required to specify a collection center for picking up your passports after the Visa stamping. In all probability your residence city would have a collection center. Once the Visa is stamped and your passport is ready for collection you will receive an email

5.1. Steps

1. Go to the Collection Center with an original ID proof and a copy of it;
2. You will get a token. Get into the waiting area and await your token number;
3. Once called, go to the counter, give your original ID and copy of it;
4. The agent will give you a sealed envelope containing your stamped passport;
5. Sign the receipt acknowledgement;
6. Open the envelope in the waiting area itself and check the Visa stamp for all your details (passport number, name, visa type, entries, issue and expiry date etc.)

5.2. Additional Info

1. Configuration of the Collection Center may not always be intuitive. These centers sometimes serve visa related activities for various other countries too. Don't hesitate to ask for the right directions;
2. The envelope is made of tough polythene. Be prepared to open it somehow ☺;
3. Leave the premises only after you are completely satisfied with the information on the Visa stamp and that you received all your passports (including dependents).

5.3. Resources

1. -

5.4. Documents & Info required

1. An original ID proof and self attested copy of it
2. It may be a good idea to carry the copy of the passports that you are about to receive
3. I carried a photocopy of all the documents that I had taken for the Visa interview just in case, but never used.

6. Possible Questions at the Visa interview

My compilation.

Employment	Which company do you work?
Employment	Do you work at the company or the client location?
Employment	Where do you work (place in the US)?
Employment	What are your duties?
Employment	How long have you been working with this company?
Employment	What will be your salary?
Employment	How long will you be working?
Employment	EC or EVC or E model?
Employment	Will you be working for the petitioner or the client?
Employment	To whom will you be reporting to?
Employment	Usual professional benefits?
Employment	How will you manage your expenses before your first pay check?
Employment	Why are you the only one eligible to be sent to the US?
Employment	What are the differentiating qualifications?
Employment	How long have you been working with this company?
Client	Who is your client?
Client	What does your client do?
Client	Clients address?
Company	How many employees from your company work for the client?
Company	Size of your company?
Company	Business of the company?
Company	Name some other clients of your company?
Company	Company address?
Company	Who is the president/chairman of your company?
Company	How many years has your company been doing the business?
Company	Organization chart?
Company	Address of the company
Applicant	Have you been to the US?
Applicant	Highest education qualifications?
Applicant	How many years of experience do you have?