

2023 J-1 Visa: Application Process and Instructions

The J-1 Visa, as approved by the U.S. Department of State, is an exchange visitor visa that allows foreign nationals to participate in a cultural exchange program. The Aspen Music Festival and School is a U.S. J-1 Intern Visa and J-1 Trainee Visa Sponsor. Qualifying students must complete the application process as detailed below, to legally enter the United States and attend the Aspen Music Festival and School. Please read this information thoroughly to gain a full understanding of the J-1 Visa Application process and required materials.

Any documents not in English MUST be submitted with translations and signed translation certifications attached. A sample translation certification can be found [here](#). Any applications submitted without necessary translations will be considered incomplete.

Step 1: Complete the J-1 Visa Eligibility Form

Complete the J-1 Visa Eligibility Form through the [AMFS Portal](#). The Eligibility Form requires the information and document uploads explained below. It is best to gather all materials before beginning the Eligibility form.

Passport Information- Passport must be valid at least 6 months after the end date of the AMFS program.

- **Photocopy of Passport photo ID page**
- **Photocopy of current U.S. visa or I-94** (if currently in the U.S.)
- **Small ID-sized color photo** taken in the last 6 months

Financial Documentation/ Proof of Sufficient Funds- The J-1 Visa Applicant is responsible for showing proof of sufficient funds to cover time in Aspen, plus any unforeseen emergencies.

- Option 1: Provide a personal bank statement proving funds to cover at least \$1,000 USD per month during time in the U.S., and an additional \$1,000 to cover a 30-day grace period, PLUS any remaining balance due on the student account.
 - Must show J-1 Visa Applicant's name on the account
 - Ex. At least \$3,000 USD for Full Session students, or at least \$2,000 USD for Half Session students.
- Option 2: If the J-1 Visa Applicant cannot prove sufficient funds as described above, a guarantor is required to assume financial responsibility in case of emergency in the U.S. A guarantor can be a family member or close friend that resides in the Applicant's country of residence. Please remember that insurance will cover most medical emergencies and a guarantor will only become involved under extreme circumstances. The guarantor must provide the following documents.
 1. Copy of Guarantor's bank statement proving sufficient funds
 2. Guarantor Photo ID (passport or driver's license)



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3. Guarantor Statement of Financial Responsibility stating that he/she will take full responsibility for J-1 Visa Applicant during the AMFS program and stay in the U.S. The letter must also state the guarantor's relationship to the J-1 Visa Applicant.

Education Documentation

- **J-1 Intern Category:** Proof of current enrollment or copy of diploma proving recent graduation from a post-secondary institution outside of the United States.
- **J-1 Trainee Category:** Copy of diploma or transcripts proving graduation from a post-secondary institution outside of the United States. Education documentation is only required for trainee applicants who have completed a degree.

Portfolio of Professional Work Experience (J-1 Trainee Category Only)

Portfolio must contain a resume and work contracts/invoices or employment verification letters to prove full-time professional work experience in your field of study (music).

- **One year** of professional work experience is required of applicants *with* a degree.
- **Five years** of professional work experience is required of applicants *without* a degree.

Written Essay

- Written Essay (maximum 500 words). The applicant should explain the following topics in the essay. This should be similar to an admission essay. Grammar and spelling should be correct.
 1. Interest in the field related to university studies (instrumental/vocal performance, conducting or composition)
 2. Why the applicant wants training and experiences in the U.S.
 3. How the experience in the U.S. will help with career-building
 4. Why cultural exchange is important

Two Year Repeat Participation Regulation 212(e) Agreement (J-1 Trainee Category Only)

- J-1 Visa Applicants in the Trainee category must agree to the two-year repeat participation regulation. Exchange visitors who attend the AMFS on a J-1 Trainee visa in 2023 are not eligible to apply for another J-1 visa for 2 years. Click [here](#) for more information on this regulation. Please contact mmcdevitt@aspenmusic.org if any problems are anticipated.

STEP 2: AMFS Eligibility Form Review

The AMFS will review the Eligibility Form to check for accuracy and completeness. Once approved, the AMFS will begin visa processing with the Department of State.

STEP 3: Video Interview

Contact Megan McDevitt, mmcdevitt@aspenmusic.org to schedule a recorded zoom interview. The purpose of this interview is to demonstrate sufficient English language skills and understanding of the J-1 Visa application requirements. The J-1 Visa Applicant will be asked to discuss the purpose of their time in the U.S., why it is important to attend the AMFS and what they will gain from the experience in Aspen.



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- J-1 Intern Visa Applicants: Time at AMFS is classified as an **internship** under the Department of State J-1 rules.
- J-1 Trainee Visa Applicants: Time at AMFS is classified as a **training program** under the Department of State J-1 rules.

Step 4: SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) Record and Department of State Forms

The AMFS will create a SEVIS record and submit Department of State forms, including the DS-2019 and DS-7002.

- The DS-2019 "Certificate of Eligibility" permits a prospective exchange visitor to seek an interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate to obtain a J visa to enter the US. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- The DS-7002 "Training/Internship Placement Plan" outlines the exchange visitor's program activities while in Aspen. AMFS will email a copy of the DS-7002 for applicants review and signature. A signed copy will need scanned and returned by email.

This process may take two or more weeks. Please be patient during this process and contact nmcdevitt@aspenmusic.org for any updates.

STEP 5: Medical Form and Insurance Purchase

The Medical Form and insurance purchase must be completed before the AMFS will mail visa documents.

Medical Form

The Medical Form is a required checklist form as part of the Enrollment process and must be completed through the [AMFS Portal](#).

International Student Insurance Form

J-1 visa holders are required to have health insurance for the duration of their stay in the U.S. plus a 30-day grace period. **J-1 Visa students are required to purchase their insurance plan from ISO Insurance as this plan meets all J-1 Visa government requirements.** Students can select from 2 plan options starting at \$39 per month.

- Students must choose one of the following plans and click the link below to enroll, before completing the International Student Insurance Form.
 - [J-1 Plan](#) (\$39 / month)
 - [J-1 Superior Plan](#) (\$58/ month)
- Enroll for the AMFS program duration plus the 30-day grace period. Proof of purchase must be provided in either one of the following two formats:
 - PDF copy of original confirmation email showing insurance company logo, date of email, and original sender's email.
 - Scan of the registration document showing insurance company logo, contact information, stamp, and signature of sender.



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- Required Coverage Dates (program dates plus 30-day grace period)
 - Full Session: June 21-September 20, 2023
 - First Session: June 21-August 21, 2023
 - Second Session: July 24-September 20, 2023
- Description of required coverage.
 - Medical benefits of at least \$100,000 per accident or illness
 - Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$25,000
 - Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to their home country in the amount of \$50,000
 - Deductibles not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness

COVID-19 and Insurance Reimbursement- ISO will consider reimbursements on a case-by-case basis if a student cannot acquire a visa or if programming is cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Reimbursement requests can be submitted to Niraj Jani Niraj@isoa.org. Affiliation with the Aspen Music Festival and School must be included in the email.

Step 6: Issuance of DS-2019 Package

After steps 1-5 are complete, the AMFS will mail a package of all completed documentation including the **DS-2019 Certificate of Eligibility** and the **DS-7002 Training/Internship Placement Plan**, signed by AMFS and the J-1 visa applicant. This document package is required at the in-person visa interview. Exception: Canadian citizens do not need a visa but must bring their document package and SEVIS Fee receipt while traveling to the U.S. for the AMFS program.

Step 7: Schedule Visa Interview

An in-person interview is required at a U.S. embassy or consulate to obtain a J-1 visa. To schedule an appointment, students must complete the [DS-160](#) non-immigrant visa application and pay the MRV (machine readable visa) fee through the U.S. embassy or consulate's website. Scheduling an interview can take anywhere from 1 to 3 weeks. Students must plan accordingly when starting the visa application process.

- Travel suspensions and average appointment wait times are available at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas.html>.
- Email mmcdevitt@aspenmusic.org with the scheduled interview date.

Students applying with a Canadian passport are not required to attend an interview or receive a Machine Readable Visa (MRV) in their passport. Canadian citizens can enter the U.S. with the DS-2019, visa documents package, and SEVIS receipt.

DS-160 Non-Immigrant Visa Application

The following information must be provided in the [DS-160](#). Canadian citizens do not complete this form.

1. Address of stay in the U.S. - 225 Music School Road, Aspen CO 81611.
2. Contact person in the U.S. - Megan McDevitt, Assistant Dean of Enrollment and Student Programming, Aspen Music Festival and School.
3. Two home country contacts who can verify eligibility for the J-1 program.



MRV Fee

AMFS does not cover the \$160 MRV fee. Details on how to pay this fee are available on the U.S. consulate or embassy website. Applicants **MUST** bring proof of payment to the in-person interview. If proof of purchase is not presented, applicants will be required to pay this fee again to complete the interview. Canadian citizens do not pay this fee.

*** The MRV fee is non-refundable in the event of program cancellation or visa processing delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Costs will not be covered by the AMFS.**

SEVIS Fee

AMFS does not cover the \$220 SEVIS I-901 fee. The I-901 fee is payable at www.fmjfee.com. Canadian citizens are required to pay this fee and bring proof of payment to the border. All other students must pay this fee before their scheduled interview.

*** The SEVIS I-901 fee is non-refundable in the event of program cancellation or visa processing delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Costs will not be covered by the AMFS.**

Step 8: Attend Visa Interview (Canadian citizens are exempt from this requirement.)

Certain documents are required for the in-person interview. Depending on the country in which a student is applying for the J-1 visa, the following list of required documentation may vary. However, the general list is as follows:

1. Completed DS-7002 Form (Training/Internship Placement Plan)
2. Completed DS-2019 Form (Certificate of Eligibility)
3. Completed DS-160 Form (Non-immigrant Visa Application)
4. Completed SEVIS I-901 (SEVIS Fee)
5. Passport, which must be valid for six months after the end date of the AMFS program.
6. Evidence of sufficient funds to cover all expenses during stay in the U.S. – we suggest students bring a copy of their offer letter which outlines any scholarship or financial support from AMFS
7. Recent photograph (visit the Embassy's website for photo size requirements)
8. Proof of ties abroad (in country other than U.S.)
9. Evidence of the MRV fee payment with the paying-in slip

Step 9: Communicate with the AMFS and Book Your Travel

Students must email mmcdevitt@aspenmusic.org once their visa has been received. This email should include an attached PDF of travel itinerary as well as a scanned copy of the J-1 visa. **Students should NOT to book travel to the U.S. until after the visa has been received.** Delays can occur in visa processing.

- Students may arrive within 30 days of the start date listed on the DS-2019. Start dates are June 21 (Full and First Session) or July 24 (Second Session).

Travel to Aspen and Additional Requirements

Step 10: Travel to Aspen with all Visa Documents

Students must travel with their entire visa documents folder including the J-1 visa, Department of State forms, and other supporting documents. These documents must be presented to the U.S. customs officer at the port of entry. The AMFS recommends students keep their visa documents folder in a carry-on bag for easy access.

Information for Canadian Citizens

Canadian citizens are not required to have a non-immigrant visa for entry into the U.S. (with few exceptions). Therefore, they are not required to pay the MRV fee and are not required to complete the visa interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate before entry to the U.S. Instead, Canadian citizens may apply to enter the U.S. at the border with the following documents (those included in this packet are underlined).

1. Valid ID and proof of Canadian citizenship (e.g. passport)
2. Valid DS-2019 Form (Certificate of Eligibility)
3. Proof of having paid the SEVIS Fee

Step 11: Attend J-1 Visa Orientation and Provide Copy of Visa Paperwork

All J-1 visa students are required to attend an orientation meeting in Aspen. The Health Service Fee will only be reimbursed after attendance is registered. In addition, the AMFS will require copies of Department of State forms stamped by customs to validate the SEVIS record. A Student Services representative will facilitate this process in-season.

Step 12: Exit Meeting and J-1 Visa Final Evaluation

J-1 visa students are required to attend an exit meeting and turn in the J-1 Visa Final Evaluation before the end of their session. This evaluation must be signed by the J-1 visa holder and program supervisor. The exit meeting and J-1 Visa Final Evaluation are part of required check-out procedures. Failure to complete these steps will result in a \$50 charge to be deducted from the security deposit.

Step 13: Leaving the U.S.

There is a 30 day grace period to leave the U.S. after the end of the program / session. Students should carry their visa documents package, visa, and Department of State forms while traveling outside of the U.S. Program end dates are August 20 (Full and Second Session) or July 23 (First Session).