Request for Dependent I-20: Frequently Asked Questions
Students in F-1 Status

Eligibility

Who is eligible for F-2 dependent status?
Students in valid F-1 status may request dependent I-20s for the following:
- Spouse (husband or wife)
- Unmarried child or children under the age of 21

Who is eligible to apply for an F-2 dependent?
F-1 Students may request a dependent I-20 at any point during their degree program or during Optional Practical Training (OPT).

Requesting a Dependent I-20

Why do I need to submit this request?
Students may request a dependent I-20 for their spouse (husband or wife) and for their eligible children to join them in the U.S.

What must I submit for this request?
- Request for Dependent I-20: Student Request form
- Documentation of relationship to dependent
  - For spouse: Marriage certificate, copy of both original and English translation
  - For child or children: Child's birth certificate, copy of both original and English translation
- Copy of dependent's passport
- Proof of financial support for next two semesters, or amount of time remaining in program of study
  - Please refer to the Estimated Expenses information found on the ISSO website
  - Financial documents more than 3 months old will not be accepted
  - Financial support must cover tuition and living expenses for you plus living expenses and health insurance for all dependents
  - Examples of financial documentations include: U.S. or foreign bank statements, Letter of Intent for graduate assistants, etc. Consult with an ISSO advisor on other types of acceptable financial support documentation

What do I need to know about the financial documentation?
Financial documents more than 3 months old will not be accepted. Please refer to the Estimated Expenses information found on the ISSO website.

How do I submit this request?
This is an electronic process completed through Cystart. The link for Cystart can be found on the ISSO homepage. Log in to Cystart using ISU NetID and password. Once in Cystart, select F-1 Student Services and complete the Dependent I-20 e-form.

What is the timeline for processing this request?
10 working days after there is a check mark in all boxes on the Cystart request page for a dependent I-20. When the request is approved, ISSO will prepare new I-20s for the F-1 and F-2 dependents. ISSO will send an email to the ISU email address on file notifying the student to pick up their new I-20. ISSO recommends sending an email to isso@iastate.edu if an e-mail has not been received within 10 working days.
Benefits and Limitations of F-2 Status

Can an F-2 dependent enroll in a U.S. college or university?
ISSO recommends the F-2 spouse meet with an ISSO advisor before any enrollment. An F-2 may enroll in a college or university, but there are some stipulations:

- F-2 dependent may enroll part time at a U.S. college or university. An F-2 dependent is never eligible for full-time enrollment at a U.S. college or university.
  - Fall and Spring Semesters: Part-time enrollment is 11 credits for undergraduate students and 8 credits for graduate students.
  - Summer: Part-time enrollment is 5 credits for undergraduate students and 4 credits for graduate students.
- Classes may be recreational or degree-seeking.

Can an F-2 child enroll in a U.S. school?
An F-2 child may enroll full time in an elementary or secondary school (kindergarten through 12th grade). Beyond twelfth grade, an F-2 child is only eligible for part-time enrollment (see above).

Can an F-2 dependent work?
No, an F-2 dependent is never eligible to accept employment, including CPT and OPT employment.

Is an F-2 dependent eligible for CPT and OPT?
No, only F-1 students are eligible for CPT and OPT

What must an F-2 dependent do in order to be eligible for CPT and OPT?
The F-2 dependent must become an F-1 student through a change of status. As an F-1 student, the spouse or child would be required to enroll full time and must be in valid F-1 status for a full academic year before being eligible for CPT and OPT. ISSO defines an academic year as a fall and spring semester.

What happens if my child will turn 21 years old during the time we will be in the U.S.?
An F-2 child must take action to continue to stay in the U.S., if desired. There are two options:

- The child may apply for a change of status without having to leave the U.S.
  - This application must be received by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services before the child’s 21st birthday
  - Most children would likely apply for a change to F-1 status
- Travel outside the U.S.
  - The child may leave the U.S. with a new immigration document, such as an I-20 for an F-1 student
  - The child would then apply for the new visa and return to the U.S. to obtain the new status

Social Opportunities in Ames

What options exist to help my spouse adjust to life in Ames?
See the "Get Involved" page of the ISSO website for information on various events and opportunities. Some opportunities that exist are as follows:

- Friends of International Women
- Engaging International Spouses
- Conversational English courses
- Story County Volunteer Center (and any other volunteer opportunities)
- Community resources such as the Ames Public Library and Ames Parks and Recreation
Other Considerations

What budget changes should I consider before bringing my family as F-2 dependents?
Students are encouraged to plan a budget to see if they will have sufficient funds to support themselves and their family. Budgetary considerations include: housing and food increases, phone bill increases, required health insurance for dependents.

What else should I consider before bringing my family as F-2 dependents?
Students should also consider how much time on campus, in their office, and/or in their lab versus how much time will be spent at home. Other possible considerations include how well one's spouse or child speaks English.

Dependent Departure

What should I do if my F-2 dependent has departed the U.S. permanently before the end of my program?
Students should report their dependent’s permanent departure to the ISSO to request that the dependent be removed from their SEVIS record. To report a dependent’s departure, email isso@iastate.edu.

Disclaimer: This Frequently Asked Questions is intended for general information and guidance. Please consult with an International Student and Scholar Advisor in the International Students and Scholars Office regarding your individual request.