



Embassy of India/India Student Hub [8 April 2020]

Following the growing cases of COVID-19, US universities have taken measures to shut down on-campus operations and/or move classes online. The Embassy of India/India Student Hub has the following advisory for Indian students who may be impacted by these decisions. Please note that this advisory is based on information available as of **8 April 2020**. The [WHO](#), [CDC](#), Government of India [Ministry of Health and Family Welfare](#) (for India-specific updates), and your universities are the best sources for the latest information in this rapidly evolving situation. We are in touch with all stakeholders and relevant authorities, and further India Student Hub updates will be issued as needed.

*For emergencies, continue to contact the **24x7 Consular Emergency helplines** at the Embassy or Consulates per your present location. In addition, to help support Indian students during the COVID-19 crisis, the Embassy of India Student Hub has established a **non-emergency Peer Support Line**. Details for these are given at the end of the advisory.*

Please read this advisory carefully as sections may have been updated from previous iterations:

1. **Housing:** If you are staying on-campus and are/will in the foreseeable future be asked to vacate, check with your university about retaining on-campus housing or options for accessing off-campus housing. If you are in off-campus housing, please check your state or your city's official '.gov' website and with your landlord/housing for information on how COVID-19 may have impacted leases and rent collection.
2. **Access to services:** If your university/program is shutting down on-campus services, check with your university/program on how to avail your university's health services, mandatory health insurance (via the university or a third-party insurance company), international student services, and any other essential service(s) that may be impacted, including any prorated refund options for campus services not availed.
3. **Financial Assistance:** If you are in need of financial assistance, please check your university or your program's website for information on funds set up to assist students during COVID-19. If you are searching for a job or an internship, your university's career services, your alumni group and your professional network are a good place to start. Check with your Designated School Official (DSO) to understand Department of Homeland Security's guidance on how to apply to work off campus in these extenuating circumstances: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-help-hub/student-records/fm-student-employment/f-1-off-campus-employment-and-international-organization-internship>.

4. Temporary Emergency Resources: The Embassy of India/India Student Hub will be happy to provide information on temporary emergency resources. The Embassy is grateful to the members of the Indian community who have made these resources available for Indian students in an emergency. *During this extraordinary situation created by the pandemic, our commitment remains steadfast to ensure welfare of our students in the best possible manner within available resources and with the support of the US government.*

5. Matters pertaining to the US Government: The Embassy of India is in touch with the US government, which is monitoring the implications that this evolving situation may have for international students.
 - Please check your university website and official campus advisories for the latest university-specific information;
 - The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which is an agency of the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS), provides updated information on visitor visas, expiring visa status and on student CPT/OPT applications/extensions at <https://www.ice.gov/covid19>;
 - The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has confirmed that international students can temporarily engage in distance-learning, either from within the U.S. or outside the country, in light of COVID-19, without any penalty to their visa status. The five-month temporary absence rule will not apply for students who remain in Active status. Read the full SEVP guidance here: <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2020/COVID-19FAQ.pdf>;
 - For F-1 students, your DSO can also provide more information or clarification on F-1 visa or work authorization questions. If you have any concerns that your DSO is not able to address, you may contact SEVP at sevp@ice.dhs.gov;
 - J-1 Visa Holders should contact their sponsoring program for questions on visas, extension of visas, and health insurance. J-1 visa holders have a built-in 30-day grace period following the program-end-date for their visas. For J-1 specific queries that are not answerable by your sponsoring program, you may contact JVisas@state.gov or visit <https://j1visa.state.gov/covid-19/>;
 - The US Government is yet to issue guidance for students on/awaiting OPT who may be accruing unemployment days or are otherwise nearing/are out-of-status. Your DSO remains the best resource to access the most up-to-date information. You can also monitor the 'Nonimmigrant Students' section for the latest 'Guidance Documents' and 'FAQs': <https://www.ice.gov/coronavirus>
 - If you, a relative, or a friend were admitted on a visa that may be expiring (and were not admitted as an F-1 student for [Duration of Status](#)), you may need to take action to extend the authorized stay. We are given to understand that DHS is currently not in a position to offer a blanket extension of visa cases. However, they are working hard to quickly process urgent requests from individuals. We have been asked to advise Indian nationals whose visa status may be expiring (for any reason) to apply online as early as possible through USCIS. You may direct yourselves/family members to <https://www.uscis.gov/visit-united-states/extend-your-stay> for specific information regarding extensions of status for individuals who are unable to depart as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Travel: Please avoid all non-essential domestic or international travel, as recommended by the WHO and CDC:
- For official advisories for travel within (domestic) or departing (international) from the US, consult the US [Department of State](#), [US Transportation and Security Administration](#), and the relevant local, state, and transit/destination government websites;
 - Kindly note that India has currently suspended all scheduled international commercial passenger flights until 1830 hrs GMT on [14 April 2020](#). In addition, all domestic passenger flights within India are also suspended until 14 April 2020. This action has been taken in the interest of public health and safety of all Indian citizens. The latest Government of India travel advisories can be found at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare website: <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/>;
 - The Embassy of India Student Hub has received a number of messages and lists about rumored ‘evacuation flights’ or ‘airlifts’ for Indian students in the United States to return to India. As of 8 April 2020, no special flights are planned by the Government of India from the United States to India. Please continue to monitor official channels, including ishubus.com/covid19 and your local Embassy/Consulate in the United States’ website, to receive the most up-to-date information.
 - Remain in contact with your DSO for information on any possible impact international travel may have on your F-1 or J-1 status.

We understand that many of you are anxious and concerned, and desire to return back to India at the earliest. However, it may be remembered that our country is dealing with an unprecedented situation and any lapse at any end by anyone results in loss of precious human lives. We again request you to avoid travel, for your own safety and in the interest of general public health. There are no exceptions for travelling to India during the aforementioned travel ban for the reasons explained above. We will issue updates as soon as commercial flights to India resume.

7. Keeping Safe and Healthy:
- Based on the latest information from the CDC and the Government of India, we recommend all students to wear at minimum a cloth mask, if available, in places where social distancing is difficult to maintain. For simple immunity-boosting ideas, please also visit <http://ayush.gov.in/>.
 - Please practice social distancing (staying at home as much as possible, except to access essential services) and maintain a distance of at least 2 meters (6 feet) away from other people to minimize the transmission of COVID-19.
 - If you have flu-like symptoms, please self-isolate for a minimum of 14 days. Consult the [WHO](#) and [CDC](#) websites for further information about the disease, preventative measures, and what to do if you experience any symptoms. Reach out to your healthcare provider.

This is an unprecedented situation, but we can successfully manage it and mitigate risk by making prudent decisions with a calm mind. Continue to take prudent health precautions and carefully review information and future advisories.

The Embassy of India Student Hub is working with Campus Leads on creating programs and events across campuses. Details on upcoming events will be added on ishubus.com/covid19 and updated every 3 days.

To receive the latest Embassy of India Student Hub advisory(s), [register here](https://www.indianembassyusa.gov.in/Indian_Students_Registration):
https://www.indianembassyusa.gov.in/Indian_Students_Registration

Contact Information

For **peer support and advice**, contact the **India Student Hub’s COVID-19 Peer Support Line** by phone or text (414)-404-6342 or (414)-40-INDIA (11 AM - 5 PM EDT daily), or by email at: covid19@ishubus.com

For **emergency consular services by jurisdiction**, please visit:

Residents of Bermuda, Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia	https://indianembassyusa.gov.in/ cons4.washington@mea.gov.in Tel: 202-213-1364 and 202-262-0375
Residents of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virgin Islands	https://www.indiainatlanta.gov.in/ cons.atlanta@mea.gov.in Tel: 404-910-7919 and 404-924-9876
Residents of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin	https://www.cgichicago.gov.in/ visa.chicago@mea.gov.in Tel: 312-687-3642 and 312-468- 3276
Residents of Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado and Nebraska	https://cgihouston.gov.in/ enquiriescgi@swbell.net Tel: 713-626-2149
Residents of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont	Reach out through PRAMIT available on our website: https://pramit.indiainnewyork.gov.in/ Tel: 212-774-0607/347-721-9243
Residents of Alaska, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming	https://www.cgisf.gov.in/ oci2.sf@mea.gov.in Tel: 415 483 6629