



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

U.S. Immigration Law in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)

On May 8, 2008, the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 (CNRA) extended most provisions of U.S. immigration law to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (the CNMI) for the first time in history. The transition period for implementing U.S. immigration law in the CNMI began on Nov. 28, 2009, and is now scheduled to end on Dec. 31, 2019.

CNMI-Only Nonimmigrant Investor (E-2C) Program Extended until Dec. 31, 2019

Congress has extended the CNMI-Only Investor (E-2C) nonimmigrant visa classification until Dec. 31, 2019. This visa classification allows eligible foreign, long-term investors and their spouses and children to remain lawfully present in the CNMI from Nov. 28, 2009, through Dec. 31, 2019. For more information, visit the [E-2C Web page](#).

NOTE: Disregard the note in the Form I-129 instructions that indicates that the E-2C classification expires on Dec. 31, 2014. USCIS will correct the instructions to reflect the five-year extension of the E-2C nonimmigrant investor program until Dec. 31, 2019.

Working in the CNMI

The United States welcomes thousands of foreign workers in many employment categories every year. These include religious workers, investors, scientists, athletes, nurses, agricultural workers, artists, researchers, cultural exchange participants, information technology specialists, and others. Because the CNRA extends U.S. immigration law to cover the CNMI, numerous immigrant and nonimmigrant employment-based classifications are available to foreign workers in the CNMI.

All foreign workers must have permission to work legally in the United States and in the CNMI. Each employment classification has different requirements for admission, conditions of employment, and authorized periods of stay. You must follow the terms of your particular employment classification and visa. For more information about temporary and permanent worker categories, visit our [Entrepreneur Pathways Web page](#).

CNMI-Only Transitional Workers

If you do not qualify for any of the traditional temporary worker categories under the Immigration and Nationality Act, you may be eligible for the CNMI-Only Transitional Worker classification (CW visa). This visa classification enables employers in the CNMI to apply for temporary permission to employ nonimmigrant workers who are otherwise ineligible to work. For more information about this classification, go to the [CW-1: CNMI-Only Transitional Worker](#) Web page.

NOTE: Premium Processing Service is currently unavailable for all Form I-129 filings that request a change or a grant of status for workers within the CNMI. Premium Processing Service is also unavailable for I-129CW filings.

Temporary Worker Categories: H-1B and H-2B

Foreign nationals in H-1B and H-2B nonimmigrant classifications who are admitted to perform labor and services in the CNMI and Guam are exempt from the H-1B cap and H-2B cap from Nov. 28, 2009 to Dec. 31, 2019. To qualify for this exemption, your prospective employer's petition must include a certified Labor Condition Application (LCA) for the H-1B classification or a certified Temporary Labor Certification (TLC) for the H-2B classification. The LCA or TLC must show that the employment or services will only be in the CNMI and/or Guam.

The spouse and qualifying children of an H-1B or H-2B worker may apply for H-4 (dependent of an H worker) classification. There is no cap for the H-4 classification. Family members seeking H-4 classification may apply directly at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate for a visa or, if lawfully present in the CNMI, may apply to USCIS for a grant of status. Once you obtain H-4 status, you must file future requests to extend that status with USCIS using [Form I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status](#).

NOTE: Disregard the note in the Form I-129 instructions that indicates that the H visa cap exemption for Guam and the CNMI expires on Dec. 31, 2014. USCIS will correct the instructions to reflect the five-year extension of the cap exemption until Dec. 31, 2019.

Please see the [H-1B](#) and [H-2B](#) Web pages for more information about these temporary worker categories.

Employment Authorization Verification

Beginning on Nov. 28, 2011, employers must use the standard [Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification](#) for all new hires and [reverifications](#) in the CNMI. The [CNMI page on I-9 Central](#) provides additional guidance on the Form I-9 for employers hiring individuals in the CNMI.

E-Verify to Verify Employment Eligibility of Newly Hired Workers

Employers in the CNMI may enroll in [E-Verify](#). E-Verify can verify the employment eligibility of all newly hired employees, including employees with CNMI-Only Transitional Worker (CW-1) or CNMI-Only Investor (E-2C) nonimmigrant statuses.

Enrolling in E-Verify is easy. The E-Verify website has a variety of resources to help you prepare. Visit the [Getting Started](#) page of the E-Verify website to explore enrollment resources.

USCIS also offers [Self Check](#), the free online service that allows individuals in the United States to check their own employment eligibility

Parole in the CNMI

In U.S. immigration law, the term "parole" means "permission to be in the United States." There is no fee for a parole request.

The following groups in CNMI may be eligible for a grant of parole:

- CNMI permanent residents
- Immediate relatives of CNMI permanent residents
- Immediate relatives of citizens of the Freely Associated States (Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, or Palau)
- [Caregivers of Critical Medical of Special Need Individuals](#)
- [Immediate Relatives of U.S. Citizens and Certain Stateless Individuals](#)

Individuals who have been granted ANY nonimmigrant status, including CW status, are ineligible to apply for parole.

Go to the [Requesting Parole for the First Time in the CNMI](#) or Extending Parole in the CNMI Web pages for more guidance about how to apply for parole.

Asylum in the CNMI

Currently, people physically present or arriving to the CNMI are not eligible to apply for asylum. This includes people brought to the CNMI after being intercepted in international or U.S. waters. This bar will be lifted on Jan. 1, 2020.

Grant of Status

In most cases, individuals in the United States without a nonimmigrant status need to leave the country in order to obtain nonimmigrant classification. However, exceptions can be made for individuals in the CNMI with parole authorization.

For more information about applying for a grant of status, please see the [Grant of Status](#) link to the right.

Travel for Foreign Nationals Present in the CNMI

If you need to leave the CNMI for any reason, you will need an appropriate visa from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad or a grant of advance parole by USCIS in order to return to the CNMI.

Go to the U.S. Department of State website for information about:

- [How to obtain a visa](#)
- [Visa wait times](#) for each U.S. Consular post abroad

Contact Us

To get more information about immigration in the CNMI, you may:

- Call the [USCIS Contact Center](#) at 800-375-5283. During regular business hours, applicants who need more information or assistance can speak to a USCIS service representative. This toll-free number has automated information available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In the CNMI, live assistance is available Tuesday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. local time.
- Find the status of your case by using the [My Case Status](#) tool.
- [Make an appointment](#) to visit the USCIS Application Support Center (ASC) at TSL Plaza in Saipan. Walk-ins for emergencies only, will be seen after people with appointments.
- Email us at CNMI.CSC@uscis.dhs.gov.

More information on U.S. immigration-related and travel issues can be found through the links on the right.



Last Reviewed/Updated: 04/18/2018