



UNDERSTANDING

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

IRC WASHINGTON



THE BOTTOM LINE:

Many refugees, asylees, parolees, and other humanitarian immigrants are authorized to work in the United States. Employers must verify employment authorization through the Form I-9 process using acceptable documentation. Employers cannot require specific documents if an employee presents valid I-9 documentation.



Complete Form I-9 for every employee.

Use the Lists of Acceptable Documents.

IMPORTANT FORM I-9 REMINDER FOR EMPLOYERS

- ✓ Employees may choose which acceptable Form I-9 documents to present. Employers may not tell workers which acceptable document(s) to provide.
- ✓ Employers must accept any valid document or combination of documents from the Lists of Acceptable Documents that reasonably appears genuine and relates to the employee.

✗ Do NOT require a specific document such as:

- Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
- Green Card (Permanent Resident Card)
- Social Security Card
- U.S. Passport

COMMON IMMIGRATION CATEGORIES AND WORK AUTHORIZATION



1. REFUGEES

✓ Authorized to work immediately upon arrival in the U.S.

MAY PRESENT:

- Form I-94 (refugee status)
- EAD (if presented)
- Other acceptable I-9 doc

KEY EMPLOYER INFO:

- Refugee status alone authorizes work — no EAD required.
- An expired EAD ≠ lost authorization.



2. ASYLEES

✓ Authorized to work indefinitely.

MAY PRESENT:

- Form I-94 (asylum granted)
- EAD (if presented)
- Other acceptable I-9 doc

EMPLOYER NOTE:

- Stays authorized even if the EAD expires, with proper I-9 documentation.



3. ASYLUM SEEKERS

✓ May be authorized to work with a valid EAD.

MAY PRESENT:

- Employment Auth. Document (EAD)

EMPLOYER NOTE:

- A pending application alone is not work authorization — a valid EAD is required.



4. GREEN CARD HOLDERS (LPRs)

✓ Authorized to work while maintaining LPR status.

MAY PRESENT:

- Permanent Resident Card
- Other acceptable I-9 doc

EMPLOYER NOTE:

- May work for most employers. Some federal or security-sensitive roles require citizenship by law or contract.



5. TPS HOLDERS

✓ May be authorized to work with a valid EAD.

MAY PRESENT:

- Employment Auth. Document (EAD)

EMPLOYER NOTE:

- Authorization may shift with DHS extensions or redesignations — check EAD validity.



6. PAROLEES

✓ May be authorized to work.

MAY PRESENT:

- Employment Auth. Document (EAD)
- I-94 showing eligibility

EMPLOYER NOTE:

- Authorization depends on parole category and documentation presented.

✗ MYTH

"The refugee's EAD expired, so they can no longer work."

✓ FACT

Refugees remain employment-authorized by their refugee status — an expired EAD does not mean lost work authorization.

QUICK EMPLOYER REFERENCE GUIDE

Category	Work authorized?	Key employer takeaway
Refugee	Yes	Authorized to work upon arrival
Asylee	Yes	Authorized through asylee status
Asylum seeker	With valid EAD	Must present evidence of employment authorization
Green card holder	Yes	Authorized while maintaining LPR status
TPS holder	Depends on docs	Depends on EAD validity & DHS guidance
Parolee	Depends on docs	Depends on category & documentation

NEED HELP UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION?

IRC SPOKANE

☎ 509-258-5774 ✉ Spokane@rescue.org

IRC SEATTLE

☎ 206-623-2105 ✉ Seattle@rescue.org

IRC can help employers:

- Understand employment authorization documents
- Recruit qualified candidates
- Navigate refugee and immigrant workforce hiring
- Connect with workforce resources

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE — IMMIGRANT AND EMPLOYEE RIGHTS SECTION (IER)

☎ Employer Hotline: 1-800-255-8155
TTY: 711

IER can help employers with:

- Form I-9 documentation questions
- Requests for specific documents (EAD or Green Card)
- Employment verification questions
- E-Verify requirements
- Citizenship status discrimination concerns
- National origin discrimination concerns
- Avoiding discrimination during hiring/onboarding
- Questions about refugee, asylee, TPS, and LPR status



FROM HARM TO HOME.

Thank you for building a welcoming workplace for all.