



UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

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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.

***Remember:** Employees choose which acceptable Form I-9 documents to present. Employers may not require a specific document, such as an EAD, Green Card, Social Security card, or U.S. passport.

✗ **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 showing refugee status
- Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
- Other acceptable Form I-9 documentation

KEY EMPLOYER INFO:

- Refugees are authorized to work upon arrival.
- Refugee status itself provides employment authorization.
- An expired EAD does not automatically mean a refugee has lost authorization to work.
- Follow Form I-9 requirements and review valid documentation presented by the employee.



2. ASYLEES

✓ **Authorized to work indefinitely.**

MAY PRESENT:

- Form I-94 indicating asylum granted
- Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
- Other acceptable Form I-9 documentation

EMPLOYER NOTE:

- Asylees remain authorized to work even if an EAD expires, provided they have appropriate documentation for Form I-9 purposes.



3. ASYLUM SEEKERS

✓ **May be authorized to work with a valid EAD.**

MAY PRESENT:

- Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

EMPLOYER NOTE:

- An asylum seeker has a pending asylum application. Unlike refugees and asylees, asylum seekers are not automatically authorized to work based solely on their pending application. Employment authorization is generally demonstrated through a valid EAD.



4. LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENTS (GREEN CARD HOLDERS)

✓ **Authorized to work as long as the individual maintains lawful permanent resident status.**

MAY PRESENT:

- Permanent Resident Card (Green Card)
- Other acceptable Form I-9 documentation

EMPLOYER NOTE:

- A lawful permanent resident may work for most employers in the United States. Some federal positions, government contracts, and security-sensitive positions may require U.S. citizenship by law, regulation, executive order, or contract requirement.



5. TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS (TPS)

✓ **May be authorized to work with a valid EAD.**

MAY PRESENT:

- Employment Authorization Document (EAD)

EMPLOYER NOTE:

- TPS-related employment authorization may depend on valid employment authorization documentation and may be affected by DHS extensions, redesignations, or other policy changes.



6. PAROLEES

✓ **May be authorized to work.**

MAY PRESENT:

- Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
- Certain I-94 records showing employment authorization eligibility

EMPLOYER NOTE:

- Work authorization depends on the parole category and the documentation presented.

✗ MYTH

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

✓ FACT

Refugees remain employment-authorized because of their refugee status. An expired EAD does not necessarily mean the individual has 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 documentation	Authorization may depend on EAD validity and DHS guidance
Parolee	Depends on documentation	Depends on category and documentation

NEED HELP UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION?

IRC SPOKANE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TEAM

☎ 509-258-5774

✉ Spokane@rescue.org

IRC Spokane can help employers:

- Understand employment authorization documents
- Recruit qualified candidates
- Navigate refugee and immigrant workforce hiring
- Connect with workforce resources
- Learn about refugee, asylee, asylum seeker, TPS holder, and parolee hiring

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 (such as an EAD or Green Card)
- Employment verification questions
- Understanding which Form I-9 documents employers must accept
- E-Verify requirements
- Citizenship status discrimination concerns
- National origin discrimination concerns
- Avoiding discrimination during hiring and onboarding
- Questions about refugees, asylees, asylum seekers, TPS holders, and lawful permanent residents



FROM HARM TO HOME.

Thank you for building a welcoming workplace for all.