

Driver's License and State ID Information for Non-US Citizens

I. Explanation

Many non-immigrants and their dependents obtain a Pennsylvania (PA) driver's license or state identification card. In addition to providing visitors the opportunity to drive, state-issued photo identification can be a good alternative to the passport. The license or state ID card may be used when opening a bank account, paying via personal check, or going to bars and restaurants where alcohol is served. Each state has different requirements for the issuance of driver's licenses and state ID cards. This handout provides detailed information for nonimmigrant J and H visitors who wish to obtain a PA driver's license or state ID card. The relevant rules are set by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) under the direction of the Pennsylvania state legislature.

II. Conditions and Limitations

1. Non-immigrants granted admission to the US for less than one year and those with less than one year remaining on their non-immigrant document (DS-2019 or H1B/H4 Approval Notice) are NOT eligible to apply for a PA driver's license or state ID card. (Exceptions may be available to some students and scholars who have **definite** plans to stay for a longer period at Temple University.) Generally, visitors who will be in the US for less than one year are expected to use their home country driver's license plus the international driver's permit (in English).
2. For identification, PennDOT will not accept birth certificates which are issued outside the US.
3. Applicants must present their Social Security Number (SSN). For those who are not eligible for an SSN at the time of application, PennDOT will allow use of the I-94 number in place of the social security number. (See specific information on next page.)
4. The validity period of the PA driver's license or state ID card will be the same as the validity period of the current non-immigrant document or four years, whichever is shorter.
5. All applicants are required to surrender any out-of-state driver's license or ID card prior to being issued a PA driver's license or ID card.

III. Process

STEP 1: Obtain a Social Security Number (SSN) or Letter of Denial from Social Security Administration

STEP 2: Request Driver License/State ID Verification letter from OIS

- This letter is required for both the driver's license and state ID for H and J status holders.
- Please allow OIS five business days to generate this letter

STEP 3: Gather required identification documents including proof of residency 2 Forms of Proof of Residency

- Current utility bill (gas, electric, telephone etc.)
- Tax records/W-2 form
- Lease Agreement
- Mortgage Documents (if you own a home)

Additional Required Documents

H1B Passport + Visa + I-94 + SSN Card + OIS Verification Letter

H4 Passport + Visa + I-94 + SSN Card or SSN denial letter + OIS Verification Letter

J1 Passport + Visa + I-94 + DS2019 + SSN Card + OIS Verification Letter

J2 Passport + Visa + I-94 + DS2019 + SSN Card or SSN denial letter + OIS Verification Letter

STEP 4: Complete the application form (DL-180) found in the PA Driver's Manual available in OIS or at any Driver's License Center

IV. Additional Information about the Driver's License Process

- Before you apply for a PA driver license you will be required to pass a physical exam. Temple University Health Services can perform the physical exam for a small fee. The physician's recommendation is reported on DL-180 which is included in the PA Driver's Manual.
- Three tests are required for the license: vision, knowledge, and driving. Detailed information on the tests is available in the PA Driver's Manual. These tests are not required for the state ID card.
- A waiver of some or all of these tests may be available for those who hold a US driver's license or citizens of France, Germany, and Canada who hold valid licenses from their home countries. However, you are still required to have non-immigrant documents that are valid for more than one year.

V. Other Important Information

Social Security Number (SSN) and alternatives

PennDOT requires the Social Security Number (SSN) from all applicants who are eligible to receive it. OIS has a detailed handout on the SSN application process. Those who are not eligible must request and receive a letter of denial from the Social Security Administration in order to apply for the PA driver license. As of October 2002, those not eligible for the SSN may use the I-94 number as an alternative for driver license only. **NOTE:** For other official purposes, the I-94 number is **not** a substitute for the SSN.

- J1, H1B, and TN scholars. All are eligible for the SSN.
- F2 Dependents: F2 dependents are not eligible for SSNs. F2s must receive the letter of denial from the Social Security Administration and then may use the I-94 for the application.
- J2 Dependents: J2s who have obtained work authorization from USCIS are eligible for the SSN. J2s who do not apply for work permission are not eligible for an SSN; those J2s must get the letter of denial from the Social Security Administration and then use I-94 number for the license application.
- H4 Dependents: H4s are not eligible for the SSN. H4s must receive the letter of denial from the Social Security Administration and then may use the I-94 number for the application.

Additional information is available on the PennDOT web site: www.dmv.state.pa.us