



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS Proposes More Effective and Efficient Processing of Work Authorization Requests for Asylum Applicants

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WASHINGTON—Today, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced a proposed regulation to improve the process for granting or denying an initial application for employment authorization documents (EADs) by reforming the current 30-day timeline pertaining to pending asylum applicants.

These proposed changes will allow USCIS the time needed to receive, screen, and process applications, which in turn would strengthen national security, maintain technological advances in identity verification, and further deter those who may be attempting to defraud the legal immigration system under an improved process.

The original 30-day timeline was enacted more than 20 years ago. Since then, there have been additional requirements in background screening and vetting procedures to reduce fraud and identify threats to national security and public safety.

“Established before 9/11, this processing timeline does not reflect the operational realities USCIS currently faces when adjudicating employment authorization applications,” said USCIS Acting Director Ken Cuccinelli. “Our first priority as an agency is to safeguard the integrity of our nation’s legal immigration system from those who seek to exploit or abuse it. This proposal allows us to conduct the kind of systematic vetting and identity verification procedures expected of an agency charged with protecting national security.”

Initial applications for employment authorization from pending asylum applicants are the only category of employment authorization applications adjudicated by USCIS that have a required processing timeline attached to them. Because of this, the agency must frequently divert resources away from other legal immigration application processing categories in order to meet the 30-day deadline for asylum seekers. These categories include family members of certain high skilled employees and those seeking adjustment of status in the United States, among others.

USCIS is also proposing to change the provision requiring that applicants submit their renewal requests to USCIS 90 days before the expiration of their employment authorization. This would reduce confusion regarding employment authorization renewal requirements for pending asylum applicants, minimize potential gaps in employment, and ensure consistency with the 2017 American Competitiveness in the Twenty-First Century Act of 2000 (AC21) Rule and implementing policies.

For more information, read the [Notice of Proposed Rule Making \(NPRM\)](#). It will be published in the Federal Register on Sept. 9, 2019. USCIS encourages public feedback on the proposed rule before the comment period ends on Nov. 8, 2019.

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