

September 24, 2015

How can I work in the U.S.?

Q. *I want to work in the United States, but of course I know you can't do that on a regular visitor's visa. My friend did go up last year and was allowed to work legally for several months. How can I work in in the U.S.?*

A. This is a timely question as the season for temporary worker visas is coming up! First, a bit of background: unlike a regular visitor's visa, the temporary worker visa permits travelers to work in the United States. This limited working visa allows people to travel to the U.S. in order to work for a specific employer and only for a specific period of time. The most common temporary worker visas here in Jamaica are in the H-2B category and involve work in the hospitality industry, which is an area of expertise for many Jamaican citizens! These include jobs such as housekeeping in hotels and landscaping jobs.

There are a wide range of temporary worker visas that fit different types of jobs. You can find a complete list of them at <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/employment/temporary.html>

One way that temporary worker visas are different from the regular visitor's visa is that they involve two approvals before the visa can be issued. Visitors visas, also known as B-1/B-2 visas, are usually issued after an interview at the US Embassy in Kingston in which the traveler's application is approved. The temporary worker visa has an additional step because the employer in the United States must also have an application approved by the U.S. Government before applicants can apply.

An important thing to keep in mind about temporary worker visas is that they only permit people to work for the one approved employer. If you receive a temporary worker visa, you will be required to work for the employer who applied for you and not for any other employer willing to offer a job in the United States after you arrive. Similarly, temporary workers can only travel to the United States a few days before their job is due to start. Depending on the visa class, they may only arrive in the United States up to ten days before their job starts. They must also leave as soon as the job ends.

All workers in the United States must be treated fairly according to U.S. labor law even if they are on a temporary worker visa. If you receive a temporary worker visa from the U.S. Embassy, you will receive a pamphlet that outlines your rights as a worker while in the U.S, including being paid the minimum wage and being treated fairly according to the conditions of the job you accepted. This is due to a law known as the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which is an important part of the U.S. government's commitment to fair work for all travelers. Look out for next week's Ask the Consul Column for more information on this important law protecting temporary visa holders who work in the United States.

You can find more information about how to travel to the U.S. on our website, www.kingston.usembassy.gov and the website of our authorized service provider at www.usvisa-info.com. Keep on top of Embassy news on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/pages/US-Embassy-Jamaica and by following @USEmbassyJA on Twitter. We also answer general visa questions on our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Remember, your appointment time is your arrival time NOT your interview time. Do not show up earlier than your appointment time.