

UPDATE: H-4s & Work Authorization



Strengthening South Asian
Communities in America



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DHS Extends Eligibility for Work Authorization to Some H-4s

SAALT applauds the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for **announcing** this morning that DHS will extend work authorization, effective **May 26, 2015**, to some H-4 dependent spouses of H-1B visa holders who are seeking employment-based lawful permanent resident (LPR) status. An estimated 179,600 H-4 dependent spouses will be eligible to apply for employment authorization in the first year of implementation, and an estimated 55,000 H-4 spouses will be eligible to apply in subsequent years.

Not all H-4 dependent spouses will be eligible to work under the new announcement. Eligible individuals include certain H-4 dependent spouses of H-1B nonimmigrants who:

- Are the principal beneficiaries of an approved **Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker**; or
- Have been granted H-1B status under sections 106(a) and (b) of the American Competitiveness in the Twenty-first Century Act of 2000 as amended by the 21st Century Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act. The Act permits H-1B nonimmigrants seeking lawful permanent residence to work and

remain in the United States beyond the six-year limit on their H-1B status.

Numerous South Asians enter the U.S. through the H-1B visa program, and figures from the State Department show that approximately 76% of those who received H-4 status in 2013 were from South Asian countries. Many H-4 dependent spouses have found themselves to be involuntary homemakers upon their arrival to the U.S., which not only impacts their family income and sustainability, but also diminishes their ability to expand upon professional skills.

SAALT **has called** on USCIS to allow all employment authorization for all H-4 visa holders, as H-1B workers and their families are most successful when H-4 visa holders have the ability to contribute to their household income and our economy, and pursue their goals. Today's announcement is a welcomed first-step that will dramatically help some families in the U.S., but the success of H-1B workers, their families, and our nation's economic growth is limited when only some H-4 visa holders are eligible for work authorization.



South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) is a national, nonpartisan, non-profit organization that elevates the voices and perspectives of South Asian individuals and organizations to build a more just and inclusive society in the United States. SAALT is the coordinating entity of the **National Coalition of South Asian Organizations (NCSO)**, a network of 49 organizations that serve, organize, and advocate on behalf of the South Asian community across the country.

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to Rita, sahelidvadvoa.

Rita, thank you for sharing this wonderful news about H4 visas. I shall put it on our website and on Facebook. This is a giant step forward.

Vandana, this is the topic you and I were looking for. For the March 25th meeting, let us ask Rita and Salita to speak about this topic to your group. What do you think? 1/2 hour conversation, your usual yoga and food at Faxon. I shall approach Trupti Patel to do a more formal presentation on the South Shore on this topic, if you agree for April. Do look into the availability of Roche Hall for April. Just let me know your progress, thanks and stay safe in this cold weather. Gouridi



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