

USCIS REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT FOR NON-CITIZENS: WHAT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES NEED TO KNOW¹

March 25, 2025

On February 25, 2025, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) [announced](#) a new registration requirement for non-citizens that seeks to enforce a longstanding registration requirement. The guidance requires certain non-citizens to register and get fingerprinted, as well as to report any address change, before the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), with penalties for non-compliance.

On March 12, 2025, DHS published an Interim Final Rule (IFR)² outlining how the process will work and the new form for this process.³ It is set to go into effect on April 11, 2025 (30 days after publication).⁴ This announcement was made to align with President Trump's [Executive Order No. 14159](#) highlighting that failure to comply with these measures will be treated as a civil and criminal enforcement priority.

This resource answers common questions in campus communities about the registration requirement, including the burdens it imposes on non-citizens, both those who are registered and those who are not. It explains how the registration process works, what constitutes proof of registration, and the potential implications of registering or not registering. Additionally, it outlines legal considerations and possible consequences to help individuals make informed decisions about registration—ideally with guidance from an immigration attorney.

Key Takeaways

- **Registration for Non-Citizens:** Non-citizens 14 years and older staying in the U.S. for more than 30 days must register with DHS, while parents or legal

¹ This resource is intended for information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Institutions and individuals should consult legal counsel to address their specific legal issues.

² An IFR is a rule adopted by a federal agency and issued without previous notice and public comments.

³ [Alien Registration Form and Evidence of Registration](#), 90 Fed. Reg. 12,345. See also 8 U.S.C. 1302(c).

⁴ *Id.*

guardians must register children under 14. The new registration requirement primarily applies to undocumented individuals who entered the United States unlawfully, as many individuals with lawful status are already considered registered.

- **No Path to Legal Status or Benefits:** Registering does not grant legal status, work authorization, or any immigration benefits.
- **Potential Risks of Registering:** Registration may expose individuals to immigration enforcement action, including detention, deportation, or criminal prosecution.
- **Penalties for Non-Compliance:** Failure to register may lead to fines of up to \$5,000, imprisonment, or removal proceedings.
- **Notification of Current Address:** Nearly every non-citizen is required to report any address change to DHS within 10 days of moving. Like with registration, failure to update address changes with DHS may also lead to civil and criminal penalties.
- **Seek Legal Advice:** The registration requirement takes effect on April 11, 2025, but legal challenges may arise, and individuals should seek legal advice before taking action.

1. What is non-citizen registration?

In the United States, non-citizen registration generally refers to the process by which non-citizens (i.e., individuals who are not U.S. citizens) are required to register with the U.S. government by sharing personal and immigration information with federal immigration agencies. The method of registration varies depending on the individual's immigration status, such as whether they are lawful permanent residents (LPRs), foreign visitors, individuals in certain visa categories, or undocumented. The government may use registration for different purposes, including tracking and enforcement. The latest registration requirement seeks to ensure that all non-citizens, including undocumented individuals, register with the federal government and be fingerprinted ("biometrics").

2. What are the origins of non-citizen registration?

The registration law originated in 1940 during World II and was permanently incorporated into Sections 261-266 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) in

1942, the primary statute governing U.S. immigration law. This requirement is also outlined in 8 USC § 1303(a). The most recent broad enforcement of a registration requirement was the National Security Entry Exit Registration System (NSEERS,) adopted in 2002 after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.⁵ The newly announced USCIS registration requirement is broader and distinct from NSEERS.

3. Who is required to register?

All non-citizens 14 years of age or older who remain in the U.S. for 30 days or longer are required to register with USCIS. Parents and legal guardians are required to register all non-citizen children under the age of 14 within 30 days after their 14th birthday. Many individuals with lawful status or who have applied for lawful status have already registered, as described in Question 4 below. Therefore, the new registration requirements primarily apply to undocumented individuals without any form of lawful status - i.e., non-citizens present in the United States who entered unlawfully and have not otherwise registered.

Note: Canadians who travel into the U.S. and do not receive a Form I-94 must register if they are staying 30 days or longer. Canadians nonimmigrants are exempted from fingerprinting after registering.

According to the U.S.C. Title 8,⁶ American Indians born in Canada if they possess at least 50 percent American Indian blood, as well as members of the Texas Band of Kickapoo Indians who entered the United States under the Texas Band of Kickapoo Act, are exempt. For them, registering is optional.⁷

4. Who is already registered?

Certain non-citizens are already considered registered,⁸ including:

- Lawful permanent residents (i.e., green card holders)

⁵ On September 11, 2002, the NSEERS and its Special Call-In Registration Program were implemented, requiring certain nonimmigrants to register and provide biometric information once arriving in the U.S. See Charles Gordon, Stanley Mailman, Stephen Yale-Loehr & Ronald Y. Wada, [Immigration Law and Procedure § 6.11](#) (Matthew Bender & Co., Inc., Release No. 187, 2025). The Call-In component of NSEERS applied to male nationals over the age of 16 from 25 designated countries, mostly from the Middle East and North Africa, who were required to register and be fingerprinted with local immigration offices. *Id.* Courts upheld NSEERS, ruling that it did not violate the Equal Protection Clause. *Id.*; see also *Rajah v. Mukasey*, 544 F.3d 427, 432 (2d Cir. 2008).

⁶ 8 U.S.C. §§ 1302 and 1359.

⁷ [Alien Registration Form and Evidence of Registration](#), 90 Fed. Reg. 12,345.

⁸ Gordon et al., [Immigration Law and Procedure § 6.11](#).

- Visa holders who registered while applying for their visa
- Non-citizens admitted into the U.S. as nonimmigrants and who were issued Form I-94 or I-94W (paper or electronic), even if the period of admission has expired
- Current or past applicants for lawful permanent residence who were fingerprinted (regardless of the outcome of the application)
- Individuals who were granted parole (including advance parole, even if expired)
- Individuals in immigration court proceedings
- Individuals granted employment authorization on any basis (including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients,⁹ even if expired)
- Refugees
- Individuals applying for voluntary departure

Non-citizens already registered do not have to register again. However, they are still required to report any change of address as explained below in Question 7.¹⁰ See [USCIS's registration webpage](#) for more information on who is already registered.

5. What constitutes evidence of registration?

The following documents are considered evidence of registration:

- I-94, Arrival-Departure Record
- I-95, Crewmen's Landing Permit
- I-184, Alien Crewman Landing Permit and Identification Card
- I-185, Nonresident Alien Canadian Border Crossing Card
- I-186, Nonresident Alien Mexican Border Crossing Card
- I-221, Order to Show Cause and Notice of Hearing
- I-221S, Order to Show Cause, Notice of Hearing, and Warrant for Arrest of Alien.
- I-551, Permanent Resident Card
- I-766, Employment Authorization Document (“EAD”)
- Form I-862, Notice to Appear
- Form I-863, Notice of Referral to Immigration Judge

⁹ This is because TPS recipients, as well as DACA recipients, may not have been issued the relevant documents for registration under 8 C.F.R. § 264.1(b). At the same time, the IFR identifies an employment authorization card as evidence of registration. Consequently, DACA and TPS recipients who have been granted work authorization should be considered as registered. *See* Alien Registration Form and Evidence of Registration, 90 Fed. Reg. 12,345.

¹⁰ 8 U.S.C. 1305(a) and 8 CFR 265.1.

- A valid and unexpired DHS stamp - must include information such as date of entry, visa category/class of admission, and duration of stay
- Proof of Registration issued by USCIS following submission of G-325R online and completion of biometrics (if required)¹¹

6. What is the registration process?

The new registration rule explains how the process of registration will work. The first step for unregistered non-citizens is to create a USCIS account for themselves or their children. The second step is to complete Form [G-325R](#) - 'Biographic Information (Registration)'.¹² Once the registration is submitted, if required, USCIS will schedule a biometrics (fingerprints) collection appointment at the nearest USCIS Application Support Center (ASC). The DHS Secretary has waived the fingerprinting requirement for children under 14 years of age.¹³ However, within 30 days of their 14th birthday, the child must apply in person for registration and be fingerprinted.¹⁴ For more on what to expect at a biometrics appointment, see USCIS's webpage on [preparing for a biometrics service appointment](#). Failure to attend the appointment may result in incomplete registration.

In the IFR, DHS indicates that registration data will be collected for identity verification, and background and security checks. However, such information could be used for tracking, detention, and deportation purposes.

7. Are there additional requirements for those registered?

The INA requires registered non-citizens to report any address change to DHS within 10 days of moving. Failure to comply with this can lead to a misdemeanor criminal charge punishable by a fine of up to \$5000 or even imprisonment for no more than thirty days.¹⁵ Individuals can also risk deportation if a reasonable excuse is not provided.¹⁶ This means that even if an individual complies with the registration requirement or has previously registered, they still must report any address change to avoid fines, criminal prosecution, and deportation. Although this requirement has not been widely enforced in the past, strict application of these laws remains possible.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² The form must be filed online.

¹³ Alien Registration Form and Evidence of Registration, 90 Fed. Reg. 12,345. See also 8 U.S.C. 1302(c).

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ 8 U.S.C. 1306(b); 18 U.S.C. 3559(a)(8), 3571(b)(6).

¹⁶ 8 U.S.C. 1227(a)(3)(A).

The change of address report has to be made using [Form AR-11](#) and submitted through the [USCIS Online Account website](#) following these [steps](#) or mailed to the DHS offices (though DHS encourages using the online resources).

This requirement does not apply to A and G visa holders and visa waiver program (VWP) visitors. Victims of Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking, and Other Crimes (VAWA/T/U cases, and I-751 Abuse Waivers) have [special procedures](#).

8. What are the potential implications of registering or not registering?

Both complying with and failing to comply with registration requirements may have negative consequences. The outcome will depend on your individual circumstances. Failure to register or to carry proof of registration could result in criminal prosecution, with penalties including fines, imprisonment, or both.¹⁷ For undocumented individuals who have not previously had contact with immigration authorities, registering could expose them to the risk of arrest and deportation. It could also lead to charges for immigration-related criminal offenses. The risk calculus is an individualized assessment and should be discussed with a qualified immigration legal service provider. Note that under ethical guidelines governing the practice of law, an immigration attorney cannot advise a person not to register, but they can provide individualized guidance as to the consequences of registering versus not registering. The impacted person must make the decision regarding whether to register.

It is important to note that this registration requirement **DOES NOT** constitute a legal status, nor does it provide a path to lawful status or any form of immigration relief. The requirement is not a benefit. Registering, undergoing fingerprinting, and updating address information do not change a person's immigration status, nor do they grant any right, benefits, or authorizations, such as work permits, under current laws and policies.

9. Is there a deadline or fee for complying with registration?

The new rule does not specify a deadline for registration. Currently, there is no fee to submit the form or complete biometrics; however USCIS is seeking public comments on a proposed \$30 fee to cover the costs of administering the registration process.

Please note that the new registration rule is set to go into effect on April 11, 2025, and individuals should not register before this date. It is important to

¹⁷ The DHS IFR clarifies that 8 U.S.C. 1306(a) refers to a fine up to \$1,000 but the agency would apply 18 U.S.C. 3571 that increases that fine to \$5,000.

consult a qualified immigration legal services provider to understand how registration may impact your situation before taking any action.

10. Is the registration requirement likely to be challenged in courts?

The most recent USCIS policies, particularly the IFR, may face constitutional or administrative challenges, similar to legal actions against other administration policies. Over a hundred [complaints](#) have been filed to challenge the administration's actions related to birthright citizenship, immigration policies, restrictions on access to counsel, the revocation of Temporary Protected Status, and asylum provisions, among others. As of March 24, 2025, no legal challenges have been filed against the new registration requirements, but a challenge is likely, particularly if the rule results in criminal prosecutions and immigration enforcement actions.

Given these uncertainties, individuals are encouraged to thoroughly evaluate the implications of registration and consult an immigration attorney for guidance.

11. What can impacted students do, and how can faculty and staff working with impacted students provide support?

If you have questions about the registration process or how it may affect you, consult an immigration attorney or [Department of Justice \(DOJ\) accredited representative](#) for legal guidance. Individuals who have already registered should carry proof of registration (as discussed in Question 5 above).

Higher education practitioners should not attempt to provide legal advice to impacted individuals, but can share resources, warnings about [“notario fraud,”](#) and referrals for legal consultations with qualified legal service providers.

The Presidents' Alliance will be monitoring the development of any legal challenges closely, and will share updates to our members and through our member updates (you can sign up for our weekly updates [here](#)). The Presidents' Alliance also will release guidance for institutions and individual higher education stakeholders who wish to submit a comment on the [interim final rule](#) before the April 11, 2025 deadline. Higher education practitioners can email the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration at info@presidentsalliance.org with questions about the current status of the rule. Please note that the Presidents' Alliance cannot provide legal advice.

Additional Resources

1. [American Immigration Council Registration Requirement Fact Sheet](#)

2. [NILC FAQ on history of immigrant registration laws](#)
3. [National Immigration Legal Services Directory](#)
4. [American Immigration Lawyers Association Directory](#)