



FOREIGN APPLICANT GUIDELINES

The Chicago School of Violin Making welcomes foreign students to its program. We believe all students benefit from the cultural exchange of ideas, skills, and artistic values. We are approved by the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Service (USCIS) and SEVIS (Student/Exchange Visitor Information System) as an M-1 (vocational) school, and all foreign students must obtain an **M-1 student visa** in order to study here. This process can be involved and sometimes lengthy; the following guidelines have been established to make the process as smooth as possible for both students and the school. All correspondence to the school must be in **English**.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

These guidelines are not intended to scare foreign students but to prepare them for living/studying in the United States and to minimize problems that arise from insufficient information.

1. The school does not require a proficiency in English when applying for a student visa. However, it is **strongly** recommended that foreign students have a good command of English before arriving in the United States. If, upon starting the course, the school feels that a student's English is not sufficient, he/she will be required to take evening English classes in the community.
2. Housing is not provided by the school. We will assist students if we know in advance what assistance they need. Students should plan to arrive at least 1-2 weeks before the trimester starting date to allow time to find housing. Rent varies widely in Chicago, but students should expect to pay around \$700.00-900.00 per month for a one-bedroom apartment.
3. Students will be required to show proof of financial support to the school and when applying for a student visa. It is **vital** that foreign students have enough support for their **entire** 3 years. Inability to pay tuition can be cause for dismissal from the school. Financial aid is not available through the school, and foreign students cannot be employed during their period of stay in the United States. The school estimates that students will need approximately **\$2,000.00 per month** to cover tuition, housing, food, and other expenses.
4. It is highly recommended that foreign students obtain health/medical insurance. Medical costs in the United States are very high and insurance is not provided by the school.

APPLICATION PROCESS

It is suggested that a foreign applicant begin the visa/application process at least six (6) months in advance of the desired starting date.

1. Upon request, the school will mail an application form, catalog, and the foreign applicant guidelines sheet.
2. The applicant will fill out the application form completely, sign it, and return it to the school with the \$90.00 application fee.
3. The school will send a letter of acceptance (if applicable) and an Affidavit of Support form (I-134) to the applicant. The I-134 form may also be obtained at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the applicant's country, or online at www.immigration.gov.
4. **The student's financial sponsor will fill out the Affidavit of Support (I-134) completely, have it notarized, and return a photocopy or fax a copy to the school. The student must also write a letter indicating the amount of personal funds (in U.S. dollars) he/she will contribute each year. This letter must be signed by the student and sent or faxed to the school with the Affidavit of Support (I-134). NOTE: Item #11 (page 2 of the I-134) MUST be filled out stating, in U.S. dollars, the amount of support, how often, and how long the support will be sent. The school estimates \$20,000.00 per year for expenses. The total amount of support should equal or exceed this amount.**
5. The school will enter the student's information into SEVIS (Student/Exchange Visitor Information System) and prepare and send the I-20 form to the student after receiving copies of all financial support information. The I-20 form is necessary for the M-1 visa application.
6. **All students seeking an M-1 student visa must pay the required application fee to the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, using Form I-901, prior to application for the visa. Form I-901 can be found online at: www.FMJfee.com. The form may be submitted online, using the information found on the I-20 form, and payment made via credit card. A receipt for payment should be printed and used as proof of payment when applying for the student visa at the U.S. Consulate or Embassy.**
7. After payment of the application fee, the student will make an appointment to apply for an M-1 student visa at the U.S. Embassy/Consulate. The student will need the school acceptance letter, the I-20 form, the original Affidavit of Support form (I-134), the receipt for payment of application fee (I-901), and any additional financial information (i.e. bank statements, etc.). It is best to call the U.S. Embassy/Consulate and verify what information/forms are required before applying for the visa.

8. Once the M-1 student visa is obtained, the student must mail or fax a copy of the visa document to the school.
9. The school will send an Enrollment Agreement and other pertinent information to the student.
10. The student will complete and sign the Enrollment Agreement and return it to the school with the required fees.

PLEASE NOTE:

Due to USCIS policy, the M-1 visa will only be valid for one year. It will be the student's responsibility to extend his/her visa as needed to complete the program; the school will assist the student with the extension process, as needed.

The visa application process can sometimes be problematic. If the student experiences any problems, they should contact the school immediately. The school will assist if possible. We cannot change the final ruling if a visa is denied.

If a student's visa is not approved by the school deadline for approval, the student will be automatically accepted for the next trimester. Students cannot arrive once the trimester has started. If a visa is denied, the student is advised to wait and re-apply at a later time.

It is very important that the student keep in contact with the school during the visa application process. If plans change, and a student decides not to attend school or wants to enroll in a later trimester, the school must be notified **immediately**.

U.S. immigration forms that can be downloaded and printed can be found on the internet at: www.USCIS.gov