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## **H-1B Work Visas Are Still Available for Professional Workers.**

The main visa which allows people to stay and work in the U.S. is the H-1B visa for temporary professional workers. In order to qualify, the employer must demonstrate that the position requires a professional in a specialty occupation and that the intended employee has the required qualifications. Typically, the minimum qualification is a university (bachelor's) degree or its equivalent. Employers must also pay a wage to every H-1B worker the "prevailing wage", that is at least as much as what is typically paid in the region for that type of work

There is a limited number of H-1Bs every year and the period for applying starts on April 1<sup>st</sup>. In the past, before the recession, all of these visas were used up for the year by summer or earlier. However, presently, the window for applying for the H1B visas is still open due to reduced hiring related to the recession.

The H1B visas are good for three years and can be extended for another three years. After six years of working in the U.S., the person must return home for one year prior to obtaining a new H-1B. There are a few exceptions to the six year limit. Also in many cases workers can obtain the green card during that six year period.

A person holding an H-1B visa can bring their spouse and children to live with them in the U.S. while they are legally holding the visa. Dependents obtain an H-4 visa.

The H-1B visa is designed for professional workers coming to do professional work and it does not involve any advertising or other testing of the U.S. market for similar employees. For instance, a computer engineer with a degree in computer science who is coming to work as a systems analyst would be the classic example of an H-1B. However many H-1Bs are also used by teachers, accountants, management analysts, designers, writers, engineers, hotel managers, and many other "professional" positions.

When the petition is approved, the U.S. Embassy in the person's country of residence issues the actual work visa. If the person is in the U.S. in another status such as a J-1 summer exchange visitor or F-1 student, often times a change of status can be done which delays the embassy trip until the first time the person being sponsored departs the U.S.

The H1B program is an ideal way for someone with an education and a professional job offer to stay here and work with their families. This year, due to the recession, the availability of these visas is greater than it has been in the last four years. But persons interested should apply right away before the quota is used up..