

7 Ways to Prepare for Your Upcoming Fiancé Visa or Spouse Green Card Petition

Law Office of Tanya M. Lee, PLLC; <http://aboutusvisas.com>; tlee@aboutusvisas.com

Most international couples seeking a U.S. green card or immigrant visa fall into one of three categories:

- The couple is not yet married and the U.S. citizen seeks a fiancé visa to bring the foreign national to the U.S. for marriage and to become a Legal Permanent Resident (green card holder).
- The couple is married and the foreign national spouse lives abroad or is in the U.S. but needs to apply for an immigrant visa at a U.S. Consulate abroad. This process is called consular processing.
- The couple is married and the foreign national spouse lives in the U.S. already and seeks to apply for a green card from within the U.S. This process is called adjustment of status.

Regardless of the scenario, there are some things that international couples can do in advance to prepare for filing the immigration paperwork. Following these tips can help reduce the amount of time required to prepare and file the paperwork. This can make the process smoother, regardless of whether you plan to prepare the paperwork yourself or seek the assistance of an experienced attorney.

1. Document, Document, Document the romantic relationship - gather or start taking pictures together, especially with family members and friends, and note the date and occasion of the photo; collect evidence of trips taken to visit each other or vacation together (airline boarding passes, hotel receipts, photos); track evidence of your communications, e.g., emails, letters, and phone calls; collect or take photos of engagement/wedding rings; select a few wedding/engagement party photos and include some of people who attended the ceremony (even if the wedding was performed before a judge) and/or any follow-up receptions or celebrations.



2. Start saving money - the government filing fees can be expensive, and additional costs include U.S. passport -style photos, costs to obtain and/or translate certain documents, travel costs to the U.S. Consulate or local U.S. immigration offices; vaccinations and doctor's fees for the required medical exam. You may wish to consult with an experienced attorney like Tanya M. Lee for assistance - need to factor that in too.

3. Check out the income requirements for the required Affidavit of Support well in advance to ensure that the US citizen or Legal Permanent Resident spouse can prove to the government that there is enough household income or assets such that the foreign national spouse will not seek government assistance/aid. If the US citizen or LPR sponsor cannot meet the Affidavit of Support requirements, seek a joint sponsor now. To see if you meet the income requirements, check out the current Poverty Guidelines [here](#).
4. Gather the vaccination and medical history of the foreign national spouse/fiancé in advance to save time when attending the required medical exam. This will also help save money - the applicant will not have to repeat vaccinations already taken just to pass the medical exam.
5. Start drafting statements of the relationship (for married couples) and statements of intent to marry within 90 days of the foreign national fiancé's arrival in the U.S. (for fiancé visas).
6. Obtain the original or certified copies of required documents such as marriage certificates, birth certificates, divorce decrees or death certificates of prior spouses.
7. If any document you plan to submit is not written in English, obtain a certified translation (the translator must sign a statement certifying that s/he is competent in English and the other language, and that the document is an accurate translation of the original. The certification format should include the certifier's name, signature, address, and date of certification. A suggested format is the following:

I [typed name], certify that I am fluent (conversant) in the English and _____ languages, and that the above/attached document is an accurate translation of the document attached entitled

_____.

Signature _____

Date _____ Typed Name _____

Address _____

Working now to prepare for your fiancé or spouse's immigration filing will save you time in the long run. The process may help you identify missing documents which may take time to obtain. You may also determine that there are issues or questions you may have that may require advice from an experienced immigration attorney.

SCHEDULE A LEGAL STRATEGY SESSION FOR ADVICE

The Law Office of Tanya M. Lee, PLLC is happy to offer advice on or assistance with your fiancé or spouse green card petition. To arrange a legal strategy session via telephone or Skype, please contact us or send an email to tlee@aboutusvisas.com.