



Carnegie Mellon University
 5000 Forbes Avenue
 Warner Hall, Third Floor
 Pittsburgh, PA 15213
 Tel: 412.268.5231
 Fax: 412.268.7832

Website: www.cmu.edu/oie
 Students and Scholars: oie@andrew.cmu.edu
 Study Abroad: goabroad@andrew.cmu.edu

Driver’s License and State ID Information for Non-US Citizens

I. Explanation

Many non-immigrants and their dependents obtain a Pennsylvania (PA) driver’s license or state identification (ID) card. In addition to providing visitors the opportunity to drive, state-issued photo identification can be a good alternative to the passport. The license or state ID card may be used when opening a bank account, paying via personal check, or going to bars and restaurants where alcohol is served. Each state has different requirements for the issuance of driver’s licenses and state ID cards. This handout provides detailed information for non-immigrant F, J, and H visitors who wish to obtain a PA driver’s license or state ID card. The relevant rules are set by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) under the direction of the Pennsylvania state legislature.

II. Conditions and Limitations

1. Non-immigrants granted admission to the US for less than one year and those with less than one year remaining on their non-immigrant document (I-20, DS-2019, or H-1B/H-4 Approval Notice) are NOT eligible to apply for a PA driver’s license or state ID card. (Exceptions may be available to some students and scholars who have **definite** plans to stay for a longer period at Carnegie Mellon. Contact an advisor in OIE.) Generally, visitors who will be in the US for less than one year are expected to use their home country driver’s license plus the international driver’s permit (in English). International driver’s permits must be obtained from outside of the US.
2. For identification, PennDOT will not accept birth certificates which are issued outside the US.
3. Applicants must present their Social Security Number (SSN) card. For those who are not eligible for an SSN at the time of application, PennDOT will allow use of the I-94 number in place of the SSN with a denial letter issued by the Social Security Administration (SSA). (See specific information on next page.)
4. The validity period of the PA driver’s license or state ID card will be the same as the validity period of the current non-immigrant document or four years, whichever is shorter.
5. All applicants are required to surrender any out-of-state driver’s license or ID card prior to being issued a PA driver’s license or ID card.

III. Process

STEP 1: Obtain either a Social Security Number (SSN) or Letter of Denial from Social Security Administration (see OIE’s Social Security Number application instructions)

STEP 2: Request Driver License/State ID Verification letter from OIE

- This letter is required for both the driver’s license and state ID for F and J status holders
- Letter will be available for pick up three days after request in OIE

STEP 3: Gather required identification documents including proof of residency

2 Forms of Proof of Residency	
<p>For Students and Scholars Living Off Campus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current utility bill (gas, electric, telephone etc.). <i>Note: cellular/mobile bills are not acceptable.</i> • Tax records/W-2 form • Lease Agreement • Mortgage Documents (if you own a home) 	<p>For Undergraduates Living On Campus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter Verifying On Campus Residency (request at Housing in Morewood Gardens)

STEP 3: Gather required identification documents (Continued)

Additional Required Documents	
F-1	Passport + Visa + I-94 + I-20 + Social Security Card or SSN denial letter + OIE Verification Letter
F-2	Passport + Visa + I-94 + I-20 + SSN denial letter* + OIE Verification Letter
H-1B	Passport + Visa + I-94 + SSN Card + Employer Verification Letter
H-4	Passport + Visa + I-94 + SSN denial letter* + Employer Verification Letter
J-1	Passport + Visa + I-94 + DS2019 + SSN Card + OIE Verification Letter
J-2	Passport + Visa + I-94 + DS2019 + SSN Card or SSN denial letter + OIE Verification Letter

*Or SSN card if obtained while in another immigration status.

STEP 4: Complete the application form (DL-180) found in the PA Driver's Manual available in OIE or at any Driver's License Center

IV. Additional Information about the Driver's License Process

- Before you apply for a PA driver's license you will be required to pass a physical exam. Carnegie Mellon Health Services can perform the physical exam for students. The physician's recommendation is reported on DL-180 which is included in the PA Driver's Manual. Scholars will need to find a local physician to perform the physical exam.
- Three tests are required for the license: vision, knowledge, and driving. Detailed information on the tests is available in the PA Driver's Manual. These tests are not required for the state ID card.
- A waiver of some or all of these tests may be available for those who hold a US driver's license or citizens of France, Germany, and Canada who hold valid licenses from their home countries. However, you are still required to have non-immigrant documents that are valid for more than one year.

V. Other Important Information

A. Social Security Number (SSN) and alternatives

PennDOT requires the Social Security Number (SSN) card from all applicants who are eligible to receive it. OIE has a detailed handout on the SSN application process. Those who are not eligible must request and receive a letter of denial from the Social Security Administration (SSA) in order to apply for the PA driver's license. Those not eligible for the SSN may use the I-94 number as an alternative for driver's license/state ID only (along with denial letter). **NOTE:** For other official purposes, the I-94 number is **not** a substitute for the SSN.

- **F-1 Students:** Are eligible for an SSN with proof of on-campus employment, CPT or OPT work authorization. Those without employment must receive the letter of denial from the SSA and then may use the I-94 number for the application.
- **J-1 Students:** All are eligible for an SSN.
- **J-1, H-1B, and TN scholars:** All are eligible for an SSN.
- **F-2 Dependents:** Are not eligible for an SSN. F-2s must receive the letter of denial from the SSA and then may use the I-94 for the application.
- **J-2 Dependents:** J-2s who have obtained work authorization from USCIS are eligible for the SSN. J-2s who do not apply for work permission are not eligible for an SSN; those J-2s must get the letter of denial from the SSA and then use I-94 number for the application.
- **H-4 Dependents:** Are not eligible for an SSN. H-4s must receive the letter of denial from the SSA and then may use the I-94 number for the application.

B. Local PA Driver's License Centers

State Office DL Center 300 Liberty Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15222 Phone: (412) 565-7781	Penn Hills DL Center Penn Hills Shopping Ctr. 11624 Kelekit Drive Pittsburgh, PA 15235 Phone: (412) 371-1960	Allison Park DL Center Duncan Manor Shopping Ctr. 1701 Duncan Avenue Allison Park, PA Phone: (412) 366-3502	Bridgeville DL Center 1025 Washington Pike Bridgeville, PA 15017 Phone: (412) 220-0273
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C. Additional Information

Additional information is available on the PennDOT web site: <http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/>.