

F-1 Cap-Gap: The Bridge to H-1B Status



Core Eligibility



Valid F-1 Status
(OPT/STEM or grace period)



Timely filed H-1B
petition as change of status

Two Types of Cap-Gap



Status + Work Authorization

- H-1B filed before OPT/STEM expires
- Status + work continue



Status Only

- H-1B filed during 60-day grace period
- May remain in U.S., but no work authorization

Timing



- Gap period starts when OPT/STEM ends
- May continue until April 1
- May end earlier depending on the H-1B case
- Consider premium processing when timing is tight

Travel & Case Changes



- Travel during cap-gap is high risk
- Leaving the U.S. will end change of status
- Cap-gap may end if the H-1B is rejected, denied, withdrawn, or revoked

Next Steps



Students

- Request updated cap-gap I-20
- Keep H-1B selection and receipt notices



Employers

- Monitor case approval
- Update and track work authorization

Key Takeaways



- Cap-gap is not automatic, eligibility matters
- Work authorization depends on when the H-1B was filed
- Travel and case changes can end cap-gap benefits
- Early planning can reduce disruption

This material is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Consult with a qualified immigration attorney for specific guidance.