SEVIS Release 6.51 Webinar FAQs

Date FAQs Released: **Initial release of FAQs.**

F and M Nonimmigrant SEVIS Changes

New City of Birth Field in F/M SEVIS

Q: **When was the City of Birth field added to SEVIS?**

A: The City of Birth field was added to SEVIS when SEVIS Release 6.51 deployed on February 28, 2020.

Q: **Was City of Birth a required field after SEVIS Release 6.51?**

A: No, City of Birth is an optional field until August 1, 2020. After August 1, DSOs will be required to begin collecting and entering the city of birth.

Q: **When will the City of Birth field become required?**

A: August 1, 2020.

Q: **What Code of Federal Regulation requires DSOs to collect city of birth information?**

A: 8 CFR 214.3(g)(1)(ii) requires the designated school officials (DSOs) to collect and report on the identification of the student, to include the date and place of birth.

Q: **Why is SEVP adding the City of Birth field?**

A: The city of birth is a data element already collected by the Exchange Visitor Program in J SEVIS. As SEVIS evolves into a person-centric system, this data point is needed not only to distinguish between individuals who may have the same name and birth date, but also to match records for individuals who may have records in both F/M SEVIS and in J SEVIS.

Q: **What evidence must a DSO see before entering the city of birth?**

A: DSOs may accept the information the student provides on any data intake forms used by the school. SEVP understands that not all countries issue birth certificates, and the city of birth is not a standard data element on all passports. The Department of State has used this process to enter the nonimmigrant's city of birth for decades.

Q: **If we do not know the city of birth, is "Unknown" acceptable for the City of Birth field?**

A: No, "Unknown" is not acceptable.

Q: **Will the City of Birth field be a drop-down list?**

A: No, City of Birth is a text field.

Q: **Will the City of Birth field allow accent marks?**

A: Yes, the City of Birth field allows special characters.

Q: **Will the City of Birth field print on the Form I-20?**

A: Yes, the City of Birth field will replace the Legacy Name on the Form I-20.

Q: **What happens if the city of birth is misspelled?**

A: DSOs may edit the field to correct the misspelling. SEVP recommends entering a comment to reflect the correction of the city of birth.

Q: **Will we be required to reprint the Form I-20 for each of our students to list city of birth, or can they continue using their existing Form I-20 indefinitely?**

A: The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) highly recommends reprinting the Form I-20 after the city of birth has been added to a student's record.

Q: **How will the addition of the City of Birth field affect batch processing until it is required on August 1, 2020?**

A: Since city of birth is still optional until August 1, 2020, there are no negative effects on schools using batch processing until that time. SEVIS will accept and process the batch with or without city of birth.

Q: **Was there a report or list of students without a city of birth?**

A: No, the February 28, 2020 release did not contain a report or list of students whose records lack the city of birth.

What Will Happen When City of Birth Becomes Required in the Future?

Q: **Will ALL active F and M students be required to have their city of birth entered into SEVIS by the time the field becomes required?**

A: No, DSOs do not have to enter the city of birth for every active student before the CIP code release. On August 1, 2020 DSOs should begin updating student records with the city of birth, as they touch the records.

Q: **When will SEVIS begin validating that the city of birth has been added to a record?**

A: SEVIS will begin validating after the release containing the 2020 CIP code conversion is deployed.

Q: **When SEVIS validates a value in the City of Birth field, what actions will require DSOs to enter a city of birth?**

A: In the future, the following SEVIS updates will trigger the need to enter a city of birth:

- Create Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20)
- Update personal information; including addresses, email, and telephone numbers
- Create Transfer-in Form I-20

Note: When a DSO clicks **Save**, SEVIS quickly validates that every required field on the page has a value in it. If a required field is blank, SEVIS will display an error.

Q: **After city of birth becomes required, if a DSO updates an address for a student on STEM OPT, will the DSO also have to enter the city of birth?**

A: Yes, city of birth will be required for any student whose address is updated in SEVIS.

Q: **If a student updates her address in the SEVP Portal, will that trigger the need for a DSO to enter a city of birth?**

A: No, address changes in the SEVP Portal will not trigger a need to enter the city of birth in SEVIS.

Q: **When city of birth becomes required, must DSOs enter the city of birth as part of initial registration?**

A: Beginning August 1, 2020, DSOs should begin entering city of birth as part of initial registration. SEVIS will not display error messages until after the release containing the 2020 CIP code conversion is deployed.

Q: **Will a student be negatively affected if she has a visa interview around the time the city of birth becomes required and her SEVIS record and/or Form I-20 lacks the city of birth?**

A: The student should not be negatively affected. DSOs *will not* be required to enter city of birth for every student in Initial or Active status before the field becomes a required field. DSOs will be required to enter the field on a record-by-record basis, as they update a student's personal information.

F, M, and J Nonimmigrant Searches and Exporting Search Results

Q: **Where do DSOs and AROs access the search function in SEVIS?**

A: To search for an F or M student or dependent, go to the *Listing of Schools* page. Click the **Search** tab above the Listing of Schools table. The *Search Students & Dependents* page opens.

To search for a J exchange visitor or dependent go to the *Listing of Programs* page. Click the **Search** tab below the Listing of Programs table. The *Search Exchange Visitors & Dependents* page opens.

Q: **The ability to export student search results is helpful. Please consider adding the following data elements to make it more useful: country and email address.**

A: Thank you for these suggestions. They have been shared with the SEVIS technical team for consideration in future improvements to this feature.

J Exchange Visitor SEVIS Changes

Foreign Phone Number for Exchange Visitors

Q: **If a foreign phone number is entered, does that replace the need to enter a U.S. phone number?**

A: No, a U.S. phone number is still required at time of validation. If the exchange visitor does not have a U.S.-based phone number, they can use the phone number associated with their primary site of activity. If the site of activity number is used, the phone number must be updated if the primary site of activity changes.

Gender Option: Other

Q: **Are exchange visitors allowed to choose what sponsors enter in the gender field, regardless of what the passport says?**

A: No, when choosing the gender in SEVIS, sponsors should use what is noted in the nonimmigrant's passport. If the passport notes the gender as Male or Female, select the same gender in SEVIS. If the gender is listed as anything other than Male or Female, sponsors should select Other.

Q: **When gender is not specified on the passport, can an exchange visitor choose Female or Male, or does it have to default to Other?**

A: If gender is not specified in the passport, the exchange visitor can choose the correct gender.

Exchange Visitor (EV) ID

Q: **Does the Exchange Visitor (EV) ID display in the exportable search results?**

A: Yes, the column 'Unique EV ID' will display in the exported search results.

Q: **Can the EV ID be their student ID?**

A: Yes, the EV ID can be any number that will be helpful to your institution, except for the social security number.

Q: **Will the EV ID field accept special characters such as "@" or "/"?**
A: No, only alphanumeric characters will be accepted in the EV ID field.

Q: **Can the EV ID be sent to SEVIS through batch?**
A: Yes, the EV ID can be entered and updated in SEVIS though batch.

Q: **Can EV ID be entered at creation of the Form DS-2019?**
A: Yes, it can be added when the Form DS-2019 is created.

Q: **Does the EV ID print on the Form DS-2019?**
A: No, the EV ID does not print on the Form DS-2019.

Q: **When the EV is transferred, will the new program see the EV ID?**
A: Yes, the EV ID does transfer to the new program. However, the EV ID can be edited by the receiving sponsor.

Exchange Visitor (EV) Remarks

Q: **What type of comments should be added in the EV Remarks field?**
A: Any comments that would help your program can be added to the EV Remarks field. This data can be seen by a CBP Officer during secondary inspection, if the exchange visitor has a problem when entering the United States.

Q: **Will the EV Remarks print on the Form DS-2019?**
A: No, the EV Remarks do not print on the Form DS-2019.

Q: **When the exchange visitor is transferred, will the new sponsor see the EV Remarks?**
A: Yes, the EV Remarks do transfer to the new program. However, the receiving sponsor can edit the EV Remarks, as necessary.

J-2 Address Fields

Q: **Can the J-2 dependent address be updated at the same time through batch when editing the J-1 record through batch?**
A: The J-1 and J-2 address updates can be submitted through the same batch. However, each address must be edited separately on the appropriate page in SEVIS.

Q: **If the J-1 changes their address, will batch programs require sponsors to re-click the "The same as" checkbox? Or will sponsors be required to do this through RTI?**
A: Officials will need to update the J-1 and J-2 addresses separately, if the J-1 address change affects the J-2 address. An address update can be done through RTI or batch. In RTI, re-checking "The same as J-1 address" checkbox after the J-1 address is updated will populate the J-2 address with the J-1's updated address.

SEVIS I-901 Fee

Q: **Will SEVIS be updated automatically when SEVIS I-901 fee is paid?**

A: Yes, processing timeframes vary depending on the method of payment. If paying via credit card or Western Union, payments are typically processed within two business days. If paying via cashier's check or money order, processing times may take up to 10-14 business days. Once the payment is processed, it will display on the exchange visitor's record, and the new indicator at the top of the page will display 'Fee Paid.'

Status Changes

Q: **When correcting an exchange visitor record from Invalid to Initial, does it matter how the status of the record changed to Invalid, whether by an official action or by SEVIS?**

A: No, as long as there is no port of entry or approved change of status on the record, the status can be changed from Invalid to Initial, regardless of how the status became Invalid.

Q: **When the status of a record is changed from Invalid to Initial for late arrivals, should we also defer the program begin date?**

A: You should update the program begin date, if you know that current date is not the date the exchange visitor will begin their program.

Date Format

Q: **The dates on the *Exchange Visitor Information* page are spelled out; for example, January 15, 2020 versus 01-15-2020. Should we enter dates in this format?**

A: No, the dates are spelled out on the *Exchange Visitor Information* page to make them easier to read. Data entry will not change.

City of Birth

Q: **Will the additional characters for city of birth also be printed on the Form DS-2019 without overlapping with the date of birth?**

A: No, the additional characters allowed for the City of Birth field will not print on the Form DS-2019. Up to 20 characters will print on the form.