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## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

# SEVP Enhances Systems to Empower Stakeholders



*A message from  
Rachel Canty,  
Director of the  
Student and Exchange  
Visitor Program*

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) strives to continually enhance systems and resources to help our stakeholders more effectively fulfill their reporting requirements. And this year, we have exciting new tools to help improve designated school officials' (DSOs') understanding of federal regulations and enhance student compliance.

First, we are working to replace the existing DSO training modules on [ICE.gov/SEVP](https://www.ice.gov/SEVP) with the SEVP External Training Application (SETA), a new learning management tool for Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) users. SETA is a collaborative effort between professional instructional systems designers, learning management system technical developers and our subject matter experts embedded in the various SEVP units. Developing SETA is one of SEVP's top priorities.

When complete, SETA will provide training courses on a variety of topics related to SEVP and the international student process, including SEVP history, oversight and related federal regulations, and a scenario-based SEVIS training course.

More immediately, we will launch the SEVP Portal on March 23. The portal is a web-based tool that students participating in post-completion practical training opportunities can use to report changes to their home address, telephone number and employer information. We hope the portal will reduce reporting burdens on DSOs by empowering students to be directly responsible for the accuracy of their SEVIS records. This is specifically important when a student may no longer be on campus, which is why at this beginning stage the portal is only for students taking part in post-completion training opportunities. Use of the portal is voluntary but highly encouraged by SEVP.

Because the SEVP Portal is the first tool of its kind, we ran a pilot

program with 11 SEVP-certified schools before rolling it out to everyone. The program ran for approximately three months and 531 international students successfully created accounts. The results and feedback received from the pilot program participants have been instrumental in helping us remediate issues and improve resources for users. To ensure you and your students have everything needed to successfully use the portal, we hosted the SEVP Special Report Webinar: SEVP Portal on March 20 and we created the [SEVP Portal Help section](#) on Study in the States.

We thank you in advance for encouraging eligible students to use the SEVP Portal. Your help in complying with record keeping, retention and reporting requirements ensures that SEVP and our government partners receive the information needed to monitor more than one million international students studying in the United States.

Thanks for your continued support,  
Rachel Canty



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

# Understanding Student Reporting Requirements

Ms. Holly Williams is the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) field representative in Territory 39. In the following section, she shares her understanding of student-related reporting requirements.

When SEVP adjudicates a school's completed, signed Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," the school officially enters a legally binding commitment with the federal government. And as a designated school official (DSO) at an SEVP-certified school, you agree to understand and follow specific student reporting requirements established by federal regulations.

SEVP maintains a summary of the various student-related reporting requirements and applicable deadlines on [ICE.gov](https://ice.dhs.gov); I recommend bookmarking this page and referencing it often. Specifically, DSOs must register student records in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) at the beginning of each session or term, as defined by your school's academic calendar. SEVIS registration deadlines vary according to whether the students are new (Initial status), continuing (Active status) or have transferred from another SEVP-certified school. It is important to proactively and accurately register and report on your student records within the specified regulatory deadline. Do not wait for SEVIS to take automatic action for you. Such automatic actions not only occur outside the required regulatory reporting period, but may also result in incorrect cancellation or termination of your students' SEVIS records.

DSOs must also report certain changes to a student's circumstances in SEVIS within 21 days of a change occurring. [Federal regulations](#) specify the types of changes that DSOs must report within this 21-day period and include events like:

- Change to a student or dependent's name or address.
- Change to a student's academic program and status, including early graduation/completion.
- Change to a student's employment information.
- Disciplinary action taken by the school, as a result of a conviction of a crime.
- Failure to maintain status/complete program.

Many of these changes may (and often do) occur outside of the regular SEVIS registration period. Therefore, DSOs must proactively recognize and identify reportable changes to a student's circumstances and report them in SEVIS within 21 days. Failure to report these events within the 21-day period may result in the school being deemed noncompliant and subject to remedial action or possible withdrawal of its SEVP certification.

To help you and your school remain compliant, take advantage of the many free resources, guidance and regulations available to you on [Study in the States](#) and [ICE.gov/SEVP](https://ice.dhs.gov/SEVP), and, as always, do not hesitate to reach out to your designated field representative with additional questions. We are here to help!



# Q&A: Meet the SEVP Response Center

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Response Center (SRC), one of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's three call centers, is SEVP's first responder; it assists and answers questions from SEVP stakeholders, including F and M students, school officials, government officials, academic associations and the public. In this issue of SEVP Spotlight, SRC sat down to answer a few questions and help stakeholders better understand its role.

In 2009, SEVP launched a help desk specifically for school officials. However, after a year of development, research and recruitment, the help desk became a resource for all stakeholders in 2010.

## HOW MANY EMPLOYEES SUPPORT SRC, AND WHAT IS THE TYPICAL WORKLOAD IN A MONTH?

SRC has more than 50 customer support personnel, assigned to one of two levels:

- **Level 1 Customer Service Representatives (CSRs):** Staff who answer general and case-specific questions from students and school officials.
- **Level 2 Help Desk Specialists:** Staff who resolve more complicated issues escalated from Level 1 and who close out correction requests.

Additional staff specialists and task leads also support SRC. A task lead supervises a team of CSRs or help desk specialists and serves as a resource for difficult questions or situations.

Each month, SRC receives approximately 10,000 phone calls, emails, correction requests and requests for data fixes. In fact, it is not uncommon for a CSR to field more than 50 calls per day.

## WHAT IS THE GENERAL PROCESS WHEN A STAKEHOLDER CALLS SRC?

The Level 1 CSR who answers the phone greets the caller and asks the caller to identify themselves. Next, if a question is case specific, there is an authentication step where the CSR verifies the caller by username, email, telephone number or, in some cases, school code. General, non-case-specific questions may not require this authentication step.

Resolving calls often requires CSRs to simultaneously research guidance, answer questions and type tickets. A ticket is the documentation of the interaction with a stakeholder. Along with the stakeholder information, the ticket contains the issue at hand and any advice, guidance and resolution provided to the stakeholder. Tickets become official records that the federal government can use, and CSRs may type as many as three to four individual tickets during one call.

The goal for this first interaction is that a stakeholder's inquiry be resolved on the initial call. However, if a Level 1 CSR is unable to answer a stakeholder inquiry, it is routed to the Level 1 task leads. If they cannot answer, the question is routed to the appropriate SEVP subject matter experts. For a correction request or a request for a data fix, the Level 1 CSR collects the appropriate information from the stakeholder before routing the request to Level 2 for final resolution.

## HOW ARE CSRS TRAINED AND EVALUATED?

All CSRs receive extensive SEVP policy and visa regulation training, participate in role playing scenarios and shadow colleagues to better understand the types of tickets they may receive. In addition, CSRs take periodic refresher training courses, and task leads within SRC randomly select calls to assess. After listening to these calls, task leads offer guidance, identify areas for improvement and evaluate the call using a score card.

According to stakeholder surveys from October 2016 to September 2017, SRC had an average customer satisfaction rating of 4.5 out of 5.

## WHAT IS SRC DOING TO ENHANCE ITS PROCESSES?

SRC is working on several future enhancements to improve its engagement with stakeholders, including launching a callback assist feature, which will allow stakeholders to call, save their place in a queue and receive a call back from a CSR when available.

Interested in learning more about SRC? [Watch the recording of the SEVP Ask the Experts Webinar: Get to Know the SEVP Response Center.](#) You can find contact information for SRC on the [Contact Us page](#) of [Study in the States](#).

## Check Out the New Guide to Studying in the States

In February, Study in the States re-launched the interactive [Guide to Studying in the States](#) (previously called the Study Guide to the States).

Designed to give students a tailored snapshot of what to expect during the international student life cycle, the revamped tool allows users to select their student type and education level to generate a guide specific to their needs. The guide contains information about the various steps of the international student process, including how to:

- Prepare.
- Study.
- Change status.
- Travel.
- Apply for student benefits.
- Depart.

Users also have the option to print their guide so they can reference the information offline. Access the Guide to Studying in the United States on the [Students page](#) and the [Tools page](#).

### K-12 BEST PRACTICES

## Tips for DSOs in School Systems and Dioceses

The kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) international student population is the fastest growing user group in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. This section of SEVP Spotlight helps K-12 schools understand how to properly comply with federal regulations and navigate the international student life cycle.

In Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified school systems or dioceses, designated school officials (DSOs) may serve in administrative or support roles where they do not have frequent or direct contact with their K-12 international students. In these situations, it is important that DSOs work with those who have direct contact to ensure international students understand and follow regulations.

If you are a DSO at a school system or diocese who does not interact directly with international students:

- Ensure that those who have contact with students understand what information needs to be reported to you (for example, student not attending class,

student left the United States, etc.) and when it must be reported.

- Remember to check students' Forms I-94, "Arrival/Departure Record," to make sure they are in the correct status.
- Establish a clear understanding of your role as a DSO and your authority to form guidance related to international students and policies pertaining to SEVP certification.

Please note that while a principal designated school official or DSO is not required to have an office at every instructional site listed on a school's Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," they should be located within a reasonable distance of the instruction sites.

For more tips for K-12 DSOs, [visit the Kindergarten to Grade 12 Schools page](#) on [Study in the States](#).

## CONTACT US

# SEVP Contacts

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is dedicated to maintaining open communication with international students and academic officials. SEVP has multiple contact options:

Our offices are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, except holidays

**Phone:** 703-603-3400 or 1-800-892-4829

**Email:** [SEVP@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVP@ice.dhs.gov)

**Find us on the web:**

<http://www.ice.gov/sevp>

<http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov>

**Follow** us on Twitter [@StudyinStates](https://twitter.com/StudyinStates)

**Like** Study in the States on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/StudyinStates)

**Follow** SEVP on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/sevp)

If you need assistance with passwords or Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) technical help, email [SEVISHelpDesk@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVISHelpDesk@ice.dhs.gov)

## ICE CONTACTS

To report national vulnerabilities or national security concerns, contact ICE's Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit at [CTCEU@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:CTCEU@ice.dhs.gov)

To report exploitation of student visa programs, contact your local HSI special agent by calling 1-866-DHS-2ICE (1-866-347-2423) or visit [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov).

*Disclaimer: The information presented in SEVP Spotlight is provided for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice.*

