



SEVP Ask the Experts Webinar: PDSO and DSO Updates Way Ahead

Feb. 18, 2016

Transcript

Slide 1: Title Slide

MODERATOR:

- Good afternoon, everyone! My name is Lauren Caricato and I want to welcome you to SEVP's first Ask the Experts webinar. Over the next hour, we'll discuss what I am sure is a hot topic for all of our stakeholders — PDSO and DSO updates.
- I will be moderating today's webinar, and am joined by Zobaida Karim and Penny Sgardelis from the SEVP School Certification Unit here at SEVP.
- So, Zobaida and Penny, could you briefly introduce yourselves to our viewers?

Slide 2: Webinar Presenters

- *Zobaida and Penny briefly introduce themselves to viewers, giving their title at SEVP and a brief background of their work history with SEVP.*

Slide 3: Presentation Overview

MODERATOR:

- Thanks guys! I'm sure that this will be a very informative webinar for all of our viewers.
- First, I want to say thank you to everyone who took a moment to complete our poll. This information will help us know how many of you are watching today and make sure that this is worthwhile for you all.
- I also have a few brief notes and reminders for those in the audience:
 - You can view a copy of today's **webinar agenda** on the right-hand side of your screen. As you can see, we'll spend about 20 minutes talking about the PDSO and DSO updates project before we take your questions.
 - If you want to submit a question for our upcoming question and answer session, you can type that question into the **Q&A box** located on the right-hand side of your screen.



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- We'll try our best to answer as many questions as we can during today's webinar.
 - Remember, for some questions we might need more details about your school's specific case — for those questions, you'll need to contact the SEVP Response Center (SRC).
 - Also, we will only answer questions related to today's topic: the way ahead for the PDSO and DSO updates process. If you have a question about upcoming policy guidance or regulation, you'll also need to contact the SRC.
 - We've also included some **resources** on the right-hand side of the screen that explain the PDSO and DSO updates process. We'll explain these in detail later in the presentation.
 - And, finally, about one week from today, a **recording and transcript** of today's presentation will be available on Study in the States, the same place you went to access this webinar. We'll notify you when everything is available through a Study in the States blog post and social media messages, so if any of your colleagues weren't able to make it today, let them know they can watch it next week!
 - Now that we have those housekeeping notes out of the way, let's get to it!



Slide 4: The Way Ahead — Background

MODERATOR:

- At this point, I'm sure that y'all have heard about the new process that SEVP implemented to improve processing times for PDSO and DSO updates through Study in the States, SEVIS Broadcast Messages, and a variety of other communications. But let's take a few minutes to find out a little bit more.
- Zobaida, can you give us a little background on the project, and why SEVP decided to focus on PDSO and DSO updates?

PRESENTER 1:

- *SEVP leadership analyzed feedback from conferences and other events to determine top stakeholder concerns.*
 - *The program identified processing times for Form I-17 updates as the number one stakeholder concern; particularly the processing times for updating or adding PDSO and DSOs.*
- *As of November 1st, 2015, we are in the process of developing short, medium, and long-term goals to improve processing for all Form I-17 updates. We also prioritize the three different types of PDSO/DSO updates we receive: the locked petition requests, the unlocked petition requests, and the combined PDSO/DSO requests. Our fact sheet goes over what each of these things mean. While our current focus is on decreasing the backlog for PDSO and DSO updates, SEVP hopes to address other elements of the Form I-17 updates project in the future.*

MODERATOR:

- Well, I'm sure I speak for most of the folks out there when I say it's exciting to hear that SEVP is planning to improve other parts of the updates process in the future as well.
- So, going back to PDSO and DSO updates, what are some things that SEVP hopes to accomplish with this project?



Slide 5: PDSO and DSO Updates — Goals

PRESENTER 1:

- **Goal**

- *SEVP's primary goal is to eliminate the PDSO and DSO updates backlog for all standalone and combined updates by the end of March 2016.*
 - *Remember, a standalone update is one submitted without any additional Form I-17 updates, while a combined update is submitted with other requested changes to the Form I-17.*
- *We are confident that decisions will be rendered on or before this date.*

- **Strategy**

- *To accomplish this goal, the SEVP School Certification Unit is:*
 - *Offered overtime to the adjudicators to clear the queue,*
 - *Bringing in SEVP field representatives to assist with the adjudication of PDSO and DSO updates, and*
 - *Processing an established number of PDSO and DSO updates per week.*
- *These actions will ensure that the backlog is eliminated in a timely manner and that there are minimal impacts to our other adjudications.*

MODERATOR:

- That's good to hear. I know that the School Certification Unit is busy processing more than just PDSO and DSO updates!
- Are there any other goals that SEVP hopes to accomplish with this project?



Slide 6: PDSO and DSO Updates – Goals

PRESENTER 1:

- **Goal**

- *Our second goal is to provide an adjudication decision within 10 business days of receipt for any new standalone or combined PDSO or DSO update by close of business on March 31, 2016.*
 - *We are pleased to announce that as of Dec. 21, 2015, the program has already implemented a 10-business day turnaround time for standalone PDSO and DSO update requests received with complete and accurate supporting documentation.*
 - *However, it is important to note that this turnaround time will only apply to PDSO and DSO update requests received with complete and accurate supporting documentation.*
 - *Any updates that require a request for evidence (RFE) may take longer.*

- **Strategy**

- *To meet the 10 business day adjudication goal, SEVP adjudicators will be more timely and firm about the issuance of cancellation or denial decisions for incorrect petition submissions or unresponsiveness from PDSOs and DSOs.*

MODERATOR:

- It sounds like SEVP is doing a lot to improve the PDSO and DSO update process for our stakeholders. I'm sure many of those watching want to hear about the progress that y'all have made with decreasing the actual backlog.
- Zobaida, without going too much detail, could you give us a brief overview of the number of PDSO and DSO update requests in the current backlog?



Slide 7: Tracking Our Progress – Reducing the Backlog

PRESENTER 1:

- *At the start of the project, SEVP had an average backlog of 783 PDSO and DSO update requests. This number includes locked petition requests, as well as unlocked standalone and combined PDSO and DSO updates.*
- *As of late January 2016, the average number of backlog cases in the queue is 228. SEVP has made progress with reducing backlogs across the board for locked petition requests, as well as standalone and combined PDSO and DSO updates.*
 - *The numbers on this slide provide an exact overview of the number of backlog cases originally had and currently have in the queue.*
- *Additionally, as of December 2015, SEVP had cleared the existing backlog for standalone PDSO update requests for schools without a PDSO. Any future updates should take 10 business days.*

MODERATOR:

- So, just quickly doing the math, it sounds like SEVP has already decreased the PDSO and DSO updates backlog by over 70 percent! That's pretty impressive for the first few months of this project.
- Apart from decreasing the actual backlog, has SEVP done anything else to improve the PDSO and DSO updates process?



Slide 8: Tracking Our Progress – Reducing the Backlog

PRESENTER 1:

- *In addition to adjudicating the backlogged PDSO and DSO updates, SEVP made internal adjustments and developed detailed stakeholder resources to ease the PDSO and DSO update process.*
- *Since autumn 2015, SEVP has:*
 - *Developed and deployed SEVIS functionality that allows adjudicators to identify pending PDSO and DSO updates;*
 - *Streamlined the adjudicators role and internal SEVP processes; and*
 - *Updated the DSO Fact Sheet on ICE.gov and Study in the States, and developed SEVIS job aids that go into detailed cases to assist with the PDSO/DSO update process.*

MODERATOR:

- Sounds like everyone at SEVP has been busy with this project! I'm sure everyone's eager to hear more about those resources you just mentioned — so I just want to note that we'll be going into more detail about these resources at the end of the presentation.
- Ok so, we've covered quite a bit of information so far— from the background of this project to some of the progress SEVP has made with decreasing the backlog.
- I think we're ready to hear about some of the key takeaways from this project. Is there anything important that our viewers should remember?



Slide 9: What School Officials Need to Know – Submit Complete Petition Requests

PRESENTER 2:

- *To ensure timely and efficient processing for PDSO and DSO updates, school officials should submit a PDSO or DSO update request that includes all supporting documentation, including:*
 - *A signed copy of the Form I-17, and*
 - *Any additional supporting evidence.*
- *We are finding situations with missing signatures, so we are being more firm with denying incomplete petitions.*
- *One tip we would like to suggest is that school officials should also remember to gather and prepare all signatures and supporting evidence ahead of time, **before** submitting a PDSO or DSO update request to SEVP. This action reduces the need for SEVP to send an RFE about your update request and help speed up the processing time, and we will not have to RFE for any missing documentation.*

MODERATOR:

- That's definitely a good tip—gathering all of the relevant information. So, for all of you DSOs and PDSOs out there, make sure you note how important it is to submit a complete and accurate PDSO or DSO update package for timely adjudication.
- Any other tips, Penny?



Slide 10: What School Officials Need to Know – Respond to SEVP in a Timely Manner

PRESENTER 2:

- *School officials should remember to respond to SEVP as soon as possible, especially when concerning an RFE for a PDSO or DSO update.*
 - *Failure to respond to an RFE will result in SEVP's denial of that request. Make sure you are paying attention to any requests for evidence you get from SEVIS.*
 - *A lot of times, school officials submit everything all over again. Remember: only respond to SEVP with the information or documents requested in the RFE.*

MODERATOR:

- So, remember folks, if you receive an RFE from SEVP, make sure responding is one of your office's top priorities. The longer we have to wait to hear back from you, the longer it might take to process your update.
- Any final tips, Penny?



Slide 11: What School Officials Need to Know – Submit PDSO and DSO Updates Alone

PRESENTER 2:

- *School officials should also remember to submit PDSO and DSO updates alone-- **separately** from other Form I-17 updates in SEVIS. This will help us process the updates faster.*
 - *Even though SEVP deployed SEVIS functionality allowing adjudicators to identify PDSO and DSO update requests in the Form I-17 workflow, submitting PDSO and DSO updates separately allows SEVP to identify and process these updates more quickly.*
 - ***All petitions must be adjudicated all at once, so standalone petitions will be processed more quickly.***
- *Additionally, SEVP encourages school officials to submit PDSO and DSO updates **before** submitting any additional Form I-17 updates.*

MODERATOR:

- Just to summarize for everyone watching, remember that it is very important that school officials understand and prioritize PDSO and DSO updates alone, if possible. Submitting a complete and accurate PDSO and DSO update alone will allow SEVP adjudicators to process your request in a timely and efficient manner.
- Well, I hope everyone watching made a note of that information, which I am sure will help the folks here at SEVP as much as it will your offices.
- What are some of the next steps for this project? Any changes we can see coming down the road?



Slide 12: The Way Ahead – Next Steps

PRESENTER 2:

- *SEVP's ultimate goal is to hire additional federal adjudicators to assist with all elements of the updates process, including PDSO and DSO updates.*
 - *Since the adjudication process requires decision-making on behalf of the U.S. government, only a federal employee can adjudicate Form I-17 updates.*
- *As mentioned earlier in this presentation, SEVP hopes to focus on other elements of the Form I-17 update process in the long term. The program is committed to providing timely and efficient adjudications and updates to all stakeholders. We encourage stakeholders to key an eye on Study in the States and other communications for information about upcoming SEVP initiatives.*

MODERATOR:

- That's really exciting to hear — so folks, be on the lookout for more updates from SEVP, especially as we get closer to that March 25th goal date.
- We mentioned earlier that SEVP developed several resources for stakeholders to assist with the PDSO and DSO updates process, and I promised we'd come back to them.
- Penny, would you mind telling our viewers a little about these resources and where they can find them?



Slide 13: PDSO and DSO Updates – Resources

PRESENTER 2:

- *To assist stakeholders with the PDSO and DSO updates process, SEVP enhanced the following resources available on our website at ICE.gov/SEVP. Here, you will find:*
 - *The [DSO Update Process Fact Sheet](#), which walks SEVIS users through how to update or add a PDSO or DSO in SEVIS, which is also on Study in the States website; and*
 - *An updated **SEVIS User Guide**, which provides a comprehensive overview of SEVIS functions for users.*
- *Additionally, we developed several resources for DSOs on Study in the States. You can find the following resources in the SEVIS Help Hub:*
 - *[SEVIS Job Aid: Update School Officials](#), which outlines the various scenarios for updating PDSO or DSO information on the Form I-17;*
 - *[SEVIS Job Aid: Update School Officials Process Flow Sketches](#), which provide a visual overview of scenarios for updating the Form I-17; and*
 - *[Dec. 11, 2015 DSO Updates Webinar](#), which discusses the Form I-17 update processes and takes questions on process updates from the audience.*

MODERATOR:

- And, just a reminder to those watching, you can find those resources on the right-hand side of your screen.
- I really want to emphasize just how great that resources are — especially for those DSOs that want to learn each step in the PDSO or DSO update process. If you have any questions about that process, I highly recommend checking those resources first.
- I also want to give a quick plug for the Study in the States blog — we have regular posts designed to help school officials with those important reporting responsibilities, such as Form I-17 updates. If you haven't checked out our blog, I strongly encourage you to look at it after this presentation.
- **PRESENTER 2:**
- I also wanted to mention one more thing before we get into the questions portion. Just a reminder for those of you that have completed the DSO user verification. We thank you very much for that. For those of you who have not, the deadline is March 2nd. Please log



into SEVIS and take care of the user verification as quickly as you can. Thank you in advance.

MODERATOR:

Very true, very important. If you don't verify your school officials in SEVIS before the deadline, you'll lose all SEVIS access. So, it's very important to get out there and do that quick verification.

Slide 14: Question and Answer

MODERATOR:

- Ok let's go ahead and move onto the portion of today's webinar that I'm sure everyone has been waiting for — the question and answer session.
- As we mentioned at the beginning, we want you to submit your questions! You can submit questions using the "Q&A" box on the right side of the screen – we will do our best to get to as many questions as we can in the time that remains.
- Let's kick it off with a question someone submitted ahead of time:

[Presenters read and respond to pre-submitted questions.]

MODERATOR:

- Thanks for those that did submit questions ahead of time – it really helps up prepare for today's session. And, just as a reminder, we'll post a copy of those questions we received ahead of time, as well as answers, on Study in the States after this webinar.
- Now, onto another question.

[Presenters read and responded to questions submitted during the live webinar.]



Slide 15: SEVP Values Your Feedback

MODERATOR:

- Once again, a big thanks for all of that information, Zobaida and Penny! I hope that question and answer session was informative to everyone watching. And, once again, a copy of those questions submitted ahead of time, as well as answers, will be posted on Study in the States along with a recording of today's webinar.
- Before we wrap up, I want to remind everyone watching to please take our Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey. Your feedback is extremely important as we continue to develop and host these SEVP InFocus and Ask the Experts webinars. The survey takes only a few minutes to complete — so please visit StudyintheStates.dhs.gov/Survey as soon as this presentation is over.

Slide 16: SEVP Contact Information

MODERATOR:

- We'll leave you with this contact information for the SEVP Response Center. If we didn't have time to answer your question during the webinar, or if your question required a bit more background information, we strongly encourage you to contact the folks here using the numbers or emails on your screen.
- Once again, thank you for joining us today — we look forward to receiving your feedback through the Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey, and seeing you at future webinars, including our next SEVP InFocus webinar.