

**Ask the U.S. Embassy
January 16, 2018**

My brother lives in the US and he filed some papers for me to join him there 5 years ago. We have not heard or received any information. From which agency can I receive an update?

Your issue is a very common one and we are happy to provide insight into the process. Due to close family ties, many Jamaicans are now legal permanent residents and citizens of the United States as a result of family members who filed immigration petitions on their behalf. The immigrant visa process is designed to reunite families in the United States.

In most cases obtaining an immigrant visa starts with the filing of a petition on behalf of the applicant by a family member in the United States. In your case the family relationship makes you initially eligible to receive an immigrant visa.

After approval of the petition by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), it is forwarded to the National Visa Center (NVC) which does all processing and accepts fees before sending it to the embassy or consulate. However, most petitions do not move directly to this stage. There are annual numerical limits on most immigrant visa categories, so it can take several more years until it is time for the visa application. Each petition has a “priority date” based on when USCIS approved the petition. As the priority date approaches, the NVC will begin processing. The NVC will provide information packets to the beneficiary at various stages in the preparation process to request additional supporting documents. Current priority dates are shown in the Visa Bulletin at travel.state.gov. For instance, it shows that the priority date for Jamaica for the brother or sister of a U.S. citizen is currently June 22, 2004. When the priority date becomes current, NVC will schedule your interview and transfer your file to the U.S. Embassy in Kingston.

In preparation for your interview at the Embassy, you and each qualified family member immigrating with you must complete a visa application with current information. Original documents to demonstrate your relationship to the petitioner will also be requested so please ensure that your documents are updated and complete. At the interview, a Consular Officer must also review your case for any potential ineligibility which may include legal, medical and financial matters.

Please ensure that U.S. address and contact information changes are noted and reported to NVC to ensure that information packets and instructions are received in a timely manner. Updates can be provided by phone at 1(603) 334-0700. You can also check the status of your application online by entering the receipt number at www.ceac.state.gov/ceacstatracker/status.aspx

Prepare for the eventual immigrant visa interview while waiting by keeping your documents such as passports, birth certificates, marriage certificates, divorce decrees and immunization records current and in a safe place.

You can find more information about how to travel to the U.S. at www.travel.state.gov and on our website, www.jm.usembassy.gov Keep on top of Embassy news on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/USEmbassyJamaica/ and by following @USEmbassyJA on Twitter. We also answer general visa questions on our Facebook and Twitter pages.