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DHS Extends Eligibility for Employment Authorization to Certain H-4 Dependent Spouses of H-1B Nonimmigrants

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U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced yesterday that, effective May 26, 2015, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is extending eligibility for employment authorization to certain H-4 dependent spouses of H-1B nonimmigrants who are seeking employment-based lawful permanent resident (LPR) status.

Eligible individuals include certain H-4 dependent spouses of H-1B nonimmigrants who:

- Are the principal beneficiaries of an approved Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker; or
- Have been granted H-1B status under sections 106(a) and (b) of the American Competitiveness in the Twenty-first Century Act of 2000 as amended by the 21st Century Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act. The Act permits H-1B nonimmigrants seeking lawful permanent residence to work and remain in the United States beyond the six-year limit on their H-1B status.

DHS expects this change will reduce the economic burdens and personal stresses H-1B nonimmigrants and their families may experience during the transition from nonimmigrant to lawful permanent resident status, and facilitate their integration into American society. USCIS estimates the number of individuals eligible to apply for employment authorization under this rule could be as high as 179,600 in the first year and 55,000 annually in subsequent years.