

CHICAGO SUMMER J1 VISA GUIDE 2024



IRISH
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INTRODUCTION

Traveling to live and work in Chicago for a summer is the experience of a lifetime! For many J1 participants, this will be their first time living and working abroad. Navigating a new city, complying with visa regulations, starting a new job, and finding suitable housing can be daunting tasks. This informational packet is designed to provide guidance and tips for J1 summer visitors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 CHICAGO
- 2 HOUSING
- 3-4 EMPLOYMENT
- 5 VISA REGULATIONS
- 6 LOCAL LAWS
- 7 SAFETY
- 8 DEPARTURE INFORMATION
- 9 DO'S AND DON'TS



CHICAGO

Explore Chicago

Chicago is a great city to spend the summer. In downtown Chicago, or the “Loop”, you’ll find great restaurants, bars, beaches, museums, and other attractions. And, Chicago’s ethnically and culturally diverse neighborhoods boast an array of local shops, restaurants, and cultural institutions.

Getting Around

Although Chicago is large, its public transport system is well connected. The best value option if you will be using public transport regularly is the \$75 Ventra card 30-day pass, with unlimited rides.

CTA
Ventra

Enjoy Festivals

Plenty of festivals such as Lollapalooza, The Chicago Blues Festival, and other outdoor events take place in Chicago every summer.

Summer Festivals

Stay Safe

Chicago, like any other major city, has issues with crime. Be aware of your surroundings. This map which tracks crime data is a good resource of information.



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Irish Community Services
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Chicago, IL 60630

info@irishchicago.org ● 773-282-8445 ● irishchicago.org

For J1 updates follow
us on social media



@ICSMidwest

HOUSING

Where to Look

- See housing in-person and meet the landlord, if possible! This means it might be easier to find housing once you are in Chicago.
- Student housing sublets are a helpful short-term option. Here are a few:
UIC, DePaul, University of Chicago.
- Use legitimate websites and search for short-term sublets. Try the following: J1 Accom, domu.com, apartments.com, zillow.com and sublet.com.



Avoid Scams

Below are some quick tips, but see [this article](#) for an in-depth guide to avoid scams.

1. **INSIST** on seeing the unit, in-person or via a video call.
2. You should have the opportunity to read and sign the lease before making a deposit.
3. The landlord or agent asking for a digital payment, ie Venmo or Zelle, is a red flag. A personal check or direct deposit are more secure options.



Good to Know

- Consider a hostel or Airbnb for your first week, so you can see sublets in-person. (L)
- Overcrowding is a safety hazard and can result in eviction.
- The average cost of rent is \$1,000-1,500 for a 1 bedroom or \$1,600-2,000 for a 2 bedroom apartment.
- It is common for housing to come unfurnished.



EMPLOYMENT

Where to Look



- The employment you receive must be seasonal or temporary. Click the link for more information:
 - [J1 Job Requirements](#)
- ICS is not affiliated with the below employers and cannot vouch for any job they offer.

These are employers that might be hiring:

- [Vaughan Hospitality Group](#)
- [Theater on the Lake](#)
- [Navy pier](#)
- [Fulton Market](#)

My Rights as an Employee

- Minimum wage is \$14.50 - \$15.40 in Chicago and \$13.35 in Cook County, unless you are an employee who receives tips.
- Harassment or discrimination in the workplace are illegal. If you experience this, contact your sponsor and the [US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#).



Do Your Paperwork!

- A social security number is required when working on the J1 visa. Employers can hire you before you have been issued your social security number as long as you have evidence you have applied for one and have a legal right to work in the US.
 - Once you have accommodation in Chicago, you must go to your local Social Security Office to apply. A list of offices can be found [here](#).
- Remember to fill out a US tax return form between JANUARY and APRIL 15th, 2024.

EMPLOYMENT

Problems with Employers

You **MUST** contact your sponsoring agency if you want to change employment.

Read below for details.

What if I'm fired?

Inform your sponsor immediately, and ask them for support with finding a new employer. Do NOT work at a new employer without your sponsor's approval, which would be "Engaging in Unauthorized Employment" and be grounds for terminating your Visa.



What if I can't reach my employer?

Inform your sponsor immediately, and ask them for support with finding a new employer. You cannot work at any other place, i.e. your friend's job, even if they're a fellow J1 visitor. Each individual visitor is approved for their individual job, meaning you **NEED** your sponsor's involvement for any change in job status.

What if I don't like my job?

It is possible to change jobs, but as noted above, you have little time to do so. Again, involve your sponsor in the entire process! [Click here](#) for tips.

What if I'm here on an ESTA/Visa Waiver?

Traveling to the US under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) means you are permitted to be here less than 90 days for tourism or business. Business can include attending conferences or short-term training, but NOT employment. Learn more [here](#).

Unauthorized Employment is illegal in the US, and it carries severe consequences. [Learn more here.](#)

VISA REGULATIONS



Before You Leave

- Apply for an Irish Passport Card [here](#).
 - You can carry it with as an identification rather than your actual passport, so your passport stays safe at home.
- Take photos of all your identification:
 - Passport
 - Visa
 - DS-2019

A wide-angle photograph of the Chicago skyline at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and blue, with the city's skyscrapers silhouetted against it. The water of Lake Michigan is visible in the foreground.

Once You're Here

- Communicate with Your Sponsor!!!
 - Notify them of your arrival in the US. You MUST check-in every 30 days thereafter.
 - Tell them if you have a change of address.
 - Get approval if you want to travel outside of the US during your stay.
- Consider getting a [City Key card](#), an ID card that can be used for specific services and transactions.
- If your passport is lost or stolen, contact the [Irish Consulate](#) immediately.

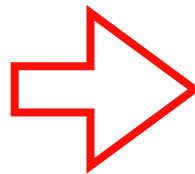
DO NOT OVERSTAY YOUR VISA

LOCAL LAWS

Law Enforcement Interactions

- Law enforcement in the US rarely gives a warning for offenses. They act swiftly, so be aware of your actions and ensure that you are compliant with US laws.
- Keep in mind the disposition of law enforcement personnel may be different in the US than in Ireland. Speak to police officers calmly and follow directions.

Click here to learn more about your rights when interacting with police in the US.



Drug & Alcohol Laws

- While Marijuana use is legal in the state of Illinois, it is still considered a Schedule I Drug under federal law. As a J1 visa participant you are subject to federal law and use of federally illegal substances can invalidate your Visa.
- Do not drink alcohol (even if you are 21) in public spaces as that is illegal in Chicago.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

Beach Guidelines

Patrons are asked to observe the following beach rules:

- ✓ No glass, alcohol or smoking on the beach.
- ✓ Properly dispose of food, diapers and other refuse.
- ✓ Do not feed birds.
- ✓ Dogs **ONLY** allowed in designated dog areas.
- ✓ Small children should use swim diapers.
- ✓ Keep beach walks clear & accessible.



Additional Laws

- Do not damage or disrespect your housing or neighbours. Damaging your housing is a crime which can lead to arrest and jeopardize future travel to the US.
- Do not tamper with your or someone else's passport in order to buy alcohol or gain entry to over 21 bars and clubs. Falsifying passports is a federal offence, which can lead to a fine, imprisonment, and being barred from entry to the US.

SAFETY

Street Safety Tips

- Stick to areas that are well-lit and populated, especially at night.
- Avoid shortcuts you are not familiar with.
- Always carry enough cash for emergency situations (i.e. enough to get a taxi).
- Avoid ATMs in dark isolated areas.
- Continuously communicate your whereabouts with trusted friends and roommates. Ensure your phone is charged so they can reach you.

“Going Out” Safety Tips

The tips below are from this [NPR article](#).

- Plan ahead, considering: Who do I feel comfortable with? How can I safely get home? What is my alcohol limit?
- Communicate alertness and confidence with your body language, i.e. actively look around you, walk “with purpose”.
- Learn how to say “no” effectively and honor your boundaries.

Emergency Contacts

- Call [911](#) for emergencies: serious medical issues, in-progress criminal activity, threats to your life or wellbeing.
- Call [311](#) for non-emergencies: non-emergency police services, city services.
- Give Family Contact Info to a close friend in case of an emergency.



DEPARTURE INFORMATION

Finishing Employment

- Leave your Irish address with your employer they can send your taxes (W2) in 2024.
- Between JANUARY and APRIL 15th, 2024, you must fill out a US tax form! Companies like taxback.com and sprintax.com can help you see if you're eligible for a refund.
 - See Sprintax's [guide](#) on taxes for J1 visitors.
- Stay connected with your employer and colleagues; you might get a job reference or support if you return to the US.



Wrapping Up Housing

- Cleaning and leaving your housing in good condition is important; it ensures a positive impression of Irish J1 visitors.
 - See this [to-do list](#) on moving out.
- Conduct a walk through with the landlord and take photos before returning the keys.
- Take responsibility! If something is broken, replace it or offer to pay the damages.
- If your neighbors or landlord have been unhappy, it is never too late to make it right - leave a note or apologize in person.

Do Your Paperwork!

- Book flights that are flexible, as plans often change.
- Be sure to close your bank account and utilities before you leave the US, if the account remains open it will collect dormancy fees.
- Keep your Social Security Card extremely safe- it is yours forever!
- DO NOT overstay your J1 Visa by even one day!
- If you have been arrested or received a ticket or violation, be sure to take care of it BEFORE you leave for Ireland. Consult an attorney if necessary. These records DO NOT go away and can impact future travel to the US. Be sure to obtain a CERTIFIED copy of any court report. This proves that any infraction has been taken care of correctly. You will need this for future travel to the US or for a J1 Graduate visa application.

DO'S



- **Keep in touch with your Sponsor and notify them of your arrival in the US.**
- **Respect the local laws and police officers.**
- **Apply for your Social Security number as soon as possible.**
- **Leave a positive lasting impression of Irish J1 participants.**
- **Reach out to Irish Community Services if you are having difficulty adjusting to life away from home.**

DON'TS



- **Do not get in trouble with the law.**
- **Do not overstay your Visa.**
- **Do not engage in any unauthorized work.**
 - **If you are in the US on the Visa Waiver Program you are NOT authorized to work in the US.**
- **Think about how much money you need to bring.**
 - **Keep in mind your living costs, including food and rent. Remember that you may not receive your first pay check immediately.**
- **Do not damage or disrespect your housing.**

USEFUL CONTACTS

- **Irish Community Services**
 - Website: www.irishchicago.org
 - Facebook: [@ICSMidwest](https://www.facebook.com/ICSMidwest)
 - Twitter: [@ICSMidwest](https://twitter.com/ICSMidwest)
 - Telephone: +1 773-282-8445
 - Email: info@irishchicago.org
 - Address: 4626 N. Knox Avenue, Ste. 301, Chicago, IL 60630, USA
- **Consulate General of Ireland-Chicago**
 - Website: www.dfa.ie/chicago/
 - Facebook: [@Consulate General of Ireland, Chicago](https://www.facebook.com/ConsulateGeneralofIrelandChicago)
 - Telephone: +1 312-337-2700
 - Email: ChicagoCGExternalMail@dfa.ie
 - Address: 1 East Wacker Drive, Suite 1820, Chicago, IL 60661
- **USIT**
 - Website: www.usit.ie
 - Email: info@usit.ie
 - Telephone: +353 01 436 2420
- **SAYIT**
 - Website: www.j1.ie
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- **J1 Ireland**
 - Website: www.j1ireland.com
 - Email: info@j1ireland.com
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- **CIEE**
 - Website: www.ciee.org
 - Email: contact@ciee.org
 - Telephone: 1-800-407-8839
- **Interexchange**
 - Website: www.interexchange.org
 - Email: info@interexchange.org
 - Telephone: (212) 924-0446
- **Police and Fire**
 - Website: www.chicagopolice.org
 - Email: CLEARPATH@chicagopolice.org
 - Telephone: 911 (Emergency)
 - Telephone: (312) 746-6000 (Non Emergency)
- **Websites:**
 - **Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, J1 Advice**
 - There are two large Facebook groups about Irish J1 students in Chicago. Neither of these are administered by or affiliated with **Irish Community Services**.
 - **J1 Chicago 2023**
 - **J1 Chicago 2023 & J1Accom.Com**