Driver's License

As a nonimmigrant visa holder (F, J student, J scholar or H-1B), you have two options to drive legally in Pennsylvania, depending upon the duration of your I-20, DS-2019, or I-797 – apply for a Pennsylvania driver’s license or use an International Driving Permit.

Those who do not plan to drive, but want a state-issued identification document, may be eligible to apply for a Pennsylvania photo identification card.

Pennsylvania Driver’s License
If you are a nonimmigrant visa holder (F, J student, J scholar or H-1B), and your I-20, DS-2019, or I-797 is valid for one year from the date you are applying, you are eligible to apply for a Pennsylvania Driver’s License.

Please review instructions about obtaining a Pennsylvania Driver’s License.

International Driving Permit
If you will be in the US for less than one year (i.e., the expiration date on your Form I-20, Form DS-2019, or Form I-797A Approval Notice is less than one year away), you are not eligible for a driver’s license. However, you may drive with a valid home country license and International Driving Permit (IDP).

An IDP translates information contained on your driver’s license into 10 languages so that officials in foreign countries are able to interpret your license. An IDP supplements a valid government-issued license; it does not serve as a replacement for a license. If you are stopped by law enforcement, you will most likely be asked to produce both your IDP and your official driver’s license. You cannot apply for an International Driving Permit in the United States, so you will need to obtain this document before traveling to the U.S.

Pennsylvania honors a valid foreign driver’s license with an international driving permit for a period of up to one year. If the foreign license and/or international permit expire(s) before one year, the individual must apply for a Pennsylvania Learner’s Permit to continue to drive in this state.

Pennsylvania Photo Identification Card
If you are a nonimmigrant visa holder (F, J student, J scholar or H-1B) who does not plan on driving, and your I-20, DS-2019, or I-797 is valid for more than one year from the date you are applying, you are eligible to apply for a Pennsylvania Photo Identification Card.

Please review instructions about obtaining a Pennsylvania Photo Identification Card.