

Immigration Permits: Requirements and Stages of the Process

In an increasingly globalized world, immigration and work permits are becoming more and more important for companies. Knowing their requirements and the stages of the process becomes vital.

Thousands of people every year find themselves needing to look for a residence that suits their work needs or professional aspirations. Depending on each of those particularities, applicants - professionals or investors - must adapt to the regulations of each [new country of residence](#).

For a growing company, foreign investors or professionals recently appointed to a position in Panama of foreign nationality, the work permit and the temporary and/or permanent residence, becomes an indispensable requirement.

Identify your migratory category

The first thing a company that hires a foreigner or, in the case of a foreigner coming to Panama with the intention of investing, must do is to evaluate the category that best suits its needs and those of the company.

Panama grants residences in different categories, well defined by the National Immigration Service, according to its creation by means of [Decree Law No.3](#) of February 22, 2008 and all its modifications. According to Article 6 of said decree, it is the responsibility of the National Immigration Service to "organize, direct, register, supervise and provide immigration services to foreigners and ensure the effective control of their stay in the country, within the limits established by this Decree Law".



According to the same decree there are the following immigration categories in Panama:

- Non-resident
- Temporary resident
- Permanent Resident

Residences are granted for different reasons:

- For Labor reasons.
- For special policies (International Company Executive, Headquarters of Multinational Companies).
- For educational reasons.
- For Religious reasons.
- For Humanitarian reasons
- For economic reasons (opening of fixed term deposits, investment in real estate).
- For Retirement
- For Family Regrouping.
- Married with National.

Mandatory requirements

There are common requirements for all immigration categories:

1. Valid passport, in good condition and with available pages.
2. Criminal record certificate from the country of origin, which must comply with the following:
 - Be issued by the competent authority at the national or federal level.
 - Legalized or apostilled by the Panamanian Consulate in your country of origin.
 (This document applies to those over 18 years of age, and it must not contain any criminal record or history.)
3. Certificate of good health issued by a Panamanian doctor.
4. Payment for the right to apply for residency.
5. Completion of the forms of affidavit and affiliation to the migratory system.

If the interested party wishes to request the migratory residence with his family, he must demonstrate the kinship, through the following documents:

1. Birth certificate of the children legalized or apostilled by the Panamanian Consulate in their country of origin.
 - If the children are over 18 years of age, additional requirements apply.
2. Marriage certificate, issued on a date recent to the residency application and legalized or apostilled by the Panamanian Consulate in your country of origin.

Stages of the procedure

Within the residency application process, the interested party will go through a series of stages that are part of the immigration process, which are illustrated below:

1. The first step is to enter your personal data into the internal system of the National Immigration Service; this process is known as the Registration of Affiliation.
2. Next, your lawyer will apply for the residence permit on your behalf.
3. As soon as the previous point has been completed, it is necessary to go to the Migration office to obtain the migration card and QR code on the back of the card with the phrase: valid for travel.
 - The QR code currently replaces the multiple visa stamp.

IMPORTANT: If you leave Panama without completing item #3, and your residency application is active in the immigration system, you will face a fine of 2K per person.

4. At any time, the authority may request the updating of documents, the replacement of any of them, or request something different from the previously established requirements.

IMPORTANT: In those categories, the condition for obtaining the Provisional or Permanent Permit is the approval of the Work Permit.

Once the file is evaluated and everything is to satisfaction, the National Immigration Service will grant a Resolution approving the provisional or permanent immigration permit.

With the proper advice on immigration issues, the application for residency in Panama becomes a manageable, agile, and worry-free process, which will bring enormous benefits.

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