

# Household Workers Visa

In the last months, Tocumen International Airport has made us experience rigorous immigration control by applying the administrative measure of rejection to the country. This measure is contemplated in Article No. 50 of Decree-Law No. 3 of February 22, 2008, establishing that the National Migration Service can deny any foreigner entry to Panama or transit through the country.

According to statistics published on January 4, 2023, on the website of the National Migration Service, during the twelve months of 2022, returns were applied to 6373 citizens. Of these, 5601 were Colombians, 3579 Brazilians, 1878 Peruvians, and 1284 Dominicans. The main reasons for these returns were inconsistency in the interview, wanting to enter the country without economic solvency, and reflecting impediments to entry into the system. Other nationalities that usually face this type of impediment to entry into the country are Salvadorans and Nicaraguans.

This data relates to household workers because:

1. Household Worker Visa applications come mainly from individuals who are nationals of these countries: Colombia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, among others.
2. Returns to their country of origin occur because they cannot verify that they have the minimum liquidity required (cash in the sum of US\$500.00) and/or because they do not successfully answer the questions of the immigration control officer.

For the household employee to enter as a tourist, the following documents will be helpful:

1. Valid passport, in good condition and with pages available.
2. Return ticket to their home country.
3. Verified Economic solvency in cash in the amount of US\$500.00.
4. Copy of receipt of proof of address in Panama.
5. Letter of invitation where the person in charge (Panamanian or resident) must declare the reasons and purposes of the visit, showing economic solvency, duly authorized by the Director of the National Migration Service as established in Resolution No. 22068 of September 1, 2021. This procedure is handled individually at the headquarters of the National Migration Service, takes approximately 90 working days, and may or may not be approved.

Once the person enters Panama, the employer must formalize their immigration and employment status. This process begins by requesting your registration to the Social Security Fund. In parallel, it is advisable to start collecting the following documents for the immigration process as soon as possible:

Requirements for the worker:

1. Six (6) passport-size photographs.
2. Copy of the identity document of the country of origin (identification card or license, that is, a document other than the passport).
3. Criminal Record Certificate from your country of origin, apostilled.
4. Health certificate by a Panamanian doctor (with the doctor's and clinic's stamp).
5. Copy of all passport pages, including those that are blank.
6. Copy of card of the Social Security Fund of Panama.



Requirements from the employer:

1. Employment contract.
2. Identification document (passport or ID).
3. Water, electricity, or telephone bill.
4. The economic solvency of the person in charge is verified through the presentation of one of the following options:
  - a. Letter of employment with your social security card or proof of payment.
  - b. Income statement with the corresponding good standing.
  - c. Bank reference letter from a local bank..
5. Comply with the payment of fees for applying for an immigration category and deposit.

Once the National Migration Service has approved the household worker visa application, the person will be entitled to a valid card for six months and then be granted temporary residence for one year, renewable.

A viable alternative is to carry out the legalization process based on Resolution No. 2579 of 22 February 2022. Through this, a judicial representative is authorized to initiate the process of visas for Household Workers before they enter the country. However, in practice, it is advisable to comply with all the tourist requirements above since the Visa would be pending and would receive different benefits than that with an approved residence.

Our recommendation for employers with household workers who have yet to start their application for residence and are irregularly in the country is to begin this regularization procedure as soon as possible. The process is quick and straightforward when legally advised by skilled experts.