

7 FAM 1300 APPENDIX E PASSPORT PHOTOGRAPHS

(CT:CON-288; 03-18-2009)
(Office of Origin: CA/OCS/PRI)

7 FAM APPENDIX E 1310 INTRODUCTION TO PASSPORT PHOTOGRAPHS

(CT:CON-288; 03-18-2009)

- a. This Appendix *provides* guidance for consular officers at U.S. embassies and consulates abroad, and passport specialists at domestic passport agencies and centers, regarding policy and specifications for passport photographs. It also provides guidance regarding commercial photographers.
- b. Passport issuing officers at domestic passport agencies and U.S. embassies and consulates abroad must determine whether the photographs submitted meet passport requirements.
- c. Complaints about any particular photographer's prices, services or treatment of clients must be handled in accordance with routine complaint procedures.
- d. Photograph Standards:
 - (1) *22 CFR 51.26 contains the regulatory requirements for photographs for use in U.S. passports.*
 - (2) The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has set international specifications for machine-readable passports, including the placement and size of the passport photograph.
 - (3) The requirements are intended to ensure that the photograph adequately identifies the passport bearer and thereby prevents difficulties or delays to the bearer during his or her foreign travels.
 - (4) While the Intelligence Reform and Terrorist Prevention Act of 2004, Public Law 108-458 and the Real ID Act of 2005, Division B of Public Law 109-13, HR1268 do not deal with U.S. passport photos, the Department of State digitizes photos, consistent with the REAL ID standards.
 - (5) You are referred to the following links for valuable information on passport photographs.

U.S. Department of State Passport Services:

- Guidelines For Producing High Quality Photographs For U.S. Travel Documents
- U.S. Passport Photography
- Frequently Asked Questions About Passport Photographs
- ICAO Machine Readable Travel Documents

- e. Vending machine photographs are not acceptable, as they generally do not meet the requirement that they be identical. Newspaper and magazine prints are not acceptable, nor are certain self-developing prints (typically of the plastic-laminate type characterized by paper borders and a black backing). Photographs printed on canvas type paper also are not acceptable.
- f. Note about Infants: Infants pose a particular challenge. Image size and clarity of focus work against each other, eyes are not always wide open and often the infant's head must be discreetly supported. The goal is the best likeness of the child that can reasonably be obtained. A photograph that includes a parent's attire as the infant's background is acceptable if the infant's facial image is a clear, full frontal view. A parent's face cannot be in the photograph of the infant. For U.S. embassies and consulates abroad, if you encounter a substandard image size or background, please annotate the passport application indicating that the photograph represents the best image achievable.

7 FAM APPENDIX E 1320 PASSPORT PHOTOGRAPH REQUIREMENTS

(CT:CON-288; 03-18-2009)

Each applicant for a passport must provide two identical color photographs that meet the following requirements:

- (1) **Good Likeness:** The photographs must be recent (normally taken within the past 6 months), be a good likeness of and readily identify the applicant at the time of the application (see [22 CFR 51.26](#)). Photographs retouched to the point where the applicant's appearance is changed are not acceptable. Photographs showing a change in facial hair or hair color are acceptable if they still are a good likeness of the applicant.
- (2) **Size:** The photographs must be 2" x 2" (about 5 cm. x 5 cm.) in overall size.
- (3) **Image:** The image must be clear. The image size must be no less

than 1" (about 2.54 cm.) and no more than 1 3/8" (about 3.5 cm.), measured from the top of the head (including hair) to the bottom of the chin. A smaller image size will make identification of the bearer difficult in addition to revealing staples and borderline requirements from the passport application. A larger image size may make it impossible to crop the photograph to the correct size (45 mm. x 35 mm. as per ICAO specifications) for placement in the passport.

- (4) Head Position: The photographs must be clear with a centered, full frontal view of the applicant's facial image. The ears do not have to be visible.

7 FAM APPENDIX E 1330 TYPE AND QUALITY OF PHOTOGRAPHS

(CT:CON-139; 05-24-2006)

- a. Brightness, Contrast, & Color: Brightness and contrast should accurately reproduce subject's natural skin tones. Photographs without proper contrast and color may obscure unique facial features. Color photographs, are preferred. However, if an applicant submits black and white photographs that conform to the requirements listed in this subchapter, they may be accepted.
- b. Exposure: Over-exposed or under-exposed photographs are not acceptable.
- c. Digitized Photographs: Computer-generated photographs are acceptable as long as the image is sharp and pristine. Images composed of grain-like particles are not acceptable. Photographs with visible pixels are not acceptable.
- d. Background: Photographs should have a plain white or off-white background. Prints retouched to remove shadows and lines are acceptable and helpful as very light backgrounds enhance the contrast with facial features and make identification easier.

7 FAM APPENDIX E 1340 ATTIRE

(CT:CON-288; 03-18-2009)

- a. Uniforms and Religious Attire: Photographs in a U.S. Armed Forces uniform are not acceptable unless the applicant is applying for a diplomatic, official or no-fee passport. Uniforms of other types, except for religious attire that is worn daily, are generally not acceptable in passport photographs. Reasonable exceptions may be made for photographs taken in the uniform of a civilian organization when it will aid

in identification (e.g., a commercial airline pilot who will be traveling abroad in uniform).

- b. **Hats or Other Headgear, Bandages:** Hats or other headgear, such as wide headbands or scarves, which completely obscure the hairline, should not be worn in passport photographs, unless the headgear is part of religious attire which is worn daily. Headgear worn as religious attire is acceptable as long as the face is not obscured. A signed statement from the applicant regarding the religious nature and the daily use of the headgear may be required in questionable cases. Photographs, in which applicants are wearing a thin headband, or sunglasses on the top of the applicant's head, are acceptable.

If bandages obscure the head or face, a medical statement must be requested.

- c. **Dark Glasses:** Tinted or dark glasses are not acceptable unless required for medical reasons. A medical certificate may be requested in questionable cases. Glare on eyeglasses that obscures the eye(s) is unacceptable.
- d. **Accessories (Hearing Aids, Wigs, etc.):** If prescription glasses, a hearing device, wig, or similar article is normally and consistently worn, it should be worn when the photograph is taken.

7 FAM APPENDIX E 1350 FACIAL EXPRESSION

(CT:CON-139; 05-24-2006)

- a. The applicant's expression should be natural, with both eyes open. Normal, unexaggerated smiles are acceptable, but unusual expressions and squinting are not.
- b. The applicant's eyes must be visible and open in the photograph. If this is not possible, a medical statement must be requested.

7 FAM APPENDIX E 1360 RELIGIOUS OBJECTIONS TO PHOTOGRAPH REQUIREMENTS

(CT:CON-288; 03-18-2009)

- a. **Objections to Being Photographed:** ICAO standards for passports, with which the United States has agreed to comply, require that every passport contain a full-face photograph to identify the bearer. This

requirement cannot be waived.

b. Objections to Full Face Photographs:

- (1) *You may* have received requests from Muslim women to have passports issued with photographs that show their faces completely or partially (only eye area visible) veiled. Such requests are based on a religious tradition that a woman may not show her face to males who are unrelated to her.
- (2) However, *22 CFR 51.26* requires that the photograph be a good likeness of the applicant, and a photograph with a veiled face does not meet this requirement.
- (3) An applicant may have no objection to being photographed, but may observe the requirement only to show her face to male relatives and to women. If an applicant requests that only female staff process her application, treat her request as any other request for special handling. If you are able to comply with such a request, it may be undertaken. You should tell the applicant only that you will try to do the utmost to comply with the stricture.
- (4) The Department of State (CA) will not write a letter stating that male officials may not view the passport. Domestic passport agencies/centers should refer questions on such requests to Passport Services' *Legal Affairs Division (CA/PPT/L/LA)* at *CA-PPT-AdjQ@state.gov*. U.S. embassies and consulates abroad may direct questions to *the Office of Policy Review and Interagency Liaison (CA/OCS/PRI)* at *ASKPRI@state.gov*.

7 FAM APPENDIX E 1370 COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHERS

(CT:CON-288; 03-18-2009)

It is the policy of the Department of State (CA) not to recommend the services of a specific commercial photographer. *Passport agencies and posts abroad must avoid giving the impression that certain photographers are preferred or certified in some way to provide acceptable photographs. You may, however, maintain lists of conveniently located commercial photographers to provide to applicants when needed in an emergency.* Refer routine inquiries to the telephone directory *or on line directory* listings of commercial photographers. To assist commercial photographers concerning the acceptability of photographs, agencies may mail out a copy of U.S. Passport Photography or inform photographers of the requirements.

7 FAM APPENDIX E 1380 PROCEDURES

(CT:CON-288; 03-18-2009)

- a. Mail opening personnel should refer applications without photographs to their supervisor.
- b. Passport issuing officers must examine photographs to make sure they meet the requirements listed in this appendix.
- c. Routine Cases: Suspend applications with photographs that do not meet the requirements. Domestic passport agencies/centers will send the applicant *the appropriate* Information Request Letter (IRL) *that* informs the applicant of the specific problem and give the applicant 90 days to rectify the photograph issue. If the applicant does not take any action within that timeframe, the application will be *denied* without further action. Neither the passport execution fee nor passport application fee will be refunded. U.S. embassies and consulates abroad should take similar action.
- d. Emergency Cases: In an emergency, *you* may accept photographs that do not meet all of the requirements outlined in this appendix. However, such photographs must still be a clear and current representation of the applicant's image.
 - (1) *Domestic Passport Agencies and Centers*: Limit the passport to be valid for one year, using endorsement number 46, which reads as follows:

Endorsement Code 46:

THIS PASSPORT EXPIRES ON (mon day, year). IT CANNOT BE REPLACED WITHOUT THE EXPRESS AUTHORIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

- (2) *Overseas Posts*: Limit the passport to be valid for one year, using endorsement number 109, which reads as follows:

Endorsement Code 109:

THIS PASSPORT EXPIRES ON (mon day, year). IT CANNOT BE REPLACED WITHOUT THE EXPRESS AUTHORIZATION OF THE DEPARMTNET OF STATE.

- e. Annotate the application to indicate why the photograph was accepted and the passport was limited in validity. Advise the applicant that the passport may be replaced with a fully valid passport without charge if acceptable photographs are presented within a year from the issuance date of the passport.

- f. **Passports Issued By U.S. Embassies and Consulates During a Crisis Abroad:** During a crisis abroad, when posts are issuing emergency passports to assist citizens in getting out of harm's way, it is not unusual to find that you must accept photographs that do not meet all of the other criteria outlined in this Appendix. This is acceptable due to the emergency. As noted above, the passport should be limited in validity.

CRISIS CONTINGENCY PLANS:

Consular Sections are advised to make contingency plans where feasible to have equipment, camera, photograph paper, printer, etc. for use during a crisis. The U.S. embassies in Bangkok and Colombo found this very useful in the wake of the 2005 South Asia Tsunami. (See 7 FAM 1800 Consular Crisis Management).