

UNCLASSIFIED 16 STATE 106142

SEPT 23, 2016

SUBJECT: No Eyeglasses Policy for Visa and Passport Photographs

1. SUMMARY: The "No Eyeglasses Policy" will go into effect November 1, 2016. Under this policy, Consular Affairs (CA) will no longer accept photographs of visa and passport applicants wearing eyeglasses, except in rare, medically-documented circumstances. CA will implement this policy with a soft one-month enforcement period from November 1 to November 30, 2016, after which we will not accept photographs with eyeglasses. Photographs with eyeglasses that passport and visa applicants submit during this one-month grace period, which are not processed until a later date, should be accepted. END SUMMARY.

2. CA decided to prohibit photographs of applicants wearing eyeglasses to enhance the performance of CA's facial recognition (FR). This prohibition increases the overall accuracy of the FR software and decreases the likelihood of misidentifying an applicant.

3. Under the No Eyeglasses Policy, an applicant may wear eyeglasses in a visa or passport application photograph in rare circumstances of medical necessity, for example, when an applicant has had recent ocular surgery and eyeglasses are necessary to protect his/her eyes during urgent travel. Applicants must provide a medical statement signed by a medical professional/health practitioner in these cases. Posts must issue a limited one-year validity passport (using endorsement code 46 or endorsement code 109 for EPDPs) when the medical condition is temporary and travel is imminent.

4. The Department published [7 FAM 1300 Appendix E](#) "Passport Photographs" September 20, 2016, Change Transmittal (CT)-CON-679. CA revised 7 FAM 1340 Appendix E paragraph e to add the prohibition on wearing of eyeglasses in passport photographs, except in rare, urgent medical circumstances, effective November 1, 2016. The key revisions are as follows:

- (1) Eyeglasses are unacceptable unless they cannot be removed for medical reasons, e.g., the applicant has recently had ocular surgery and the eyeglasses are necessary to protect the applicant's eyes. A medical statement signed by a medical professional/health practitioner must be requested in these cases. If the eyeglasses are accepted for medical reasons:
  - (a) The frames of the eyeglasses must not cover the eye(s) (ICAO 9303, Section IV, Appendix 11, 1.8);
  - (b) There must not be glare on eyeglasses that obscures the eye(s);
  - (c) There must not be shadows or refraction from the eyeglasses that obscures the eye (s)."

UNCLASSIFIED 16 STATE 106142

Page 1 of 2

5. The Department published 9 FAM 303.6-2(A)(1) "Photo Standards" on September 20, 2016, Change Transmittal (CT)-VISA-178. CA revised [9 FAM 303.6-2 \(A\)\(1\) paragraph \(a\)\(7\)](#) to prohibit the wearing of eyeglasses in visa photographs except in rare, urgent medical circumstances. The key revisions are as follows:

- *(7) (U) Eyeglasses: Effective for applications filed on or after November 1, 2016, eyeglasses must not be worn in a photo provided for a visa application, except in rare circumstances when eyeglasses cannot be removed for medical reasons; e.g., the applicant has recently had ocular surgery and the eyeglasses are necessary to protect the applicant's eyes. A medical statement signed by a medical professional/health practitioner must be provided in these cases. If the eyeglasses are accepted for medical reasons:*
  - (a) (U) The frames of the eyeglasses must not cover the eye(s) (ICAO 9303, Section IV, Appendix 11, 1.8).
  - (b) (U) There must not be glare on eyeglasses that obscures the eye(s).
  - (c) (U) There must not be shadows or refraction from the eyeglasses that obscures the eye(s).

6. During the November 1 – November 30, 2016 implementation phase of this new policy, posts should not refuse a photograph of a passport or visa applicant wearing eyeglasses. Starting December 1, 2016, applicants must submit photographs without eyeglasses for all new visa and passport applications, or provide a medical statement. Posts should continue to interview visa applicants who submit photographs with glasses, and applicants who overcome 214(b) should receive a 221(g) temporary refusal letter instructing them to provide an updated photograph.

7. Posts may continue to process and approve all visa and passport applications submitted prior to November 30, 2016, even if the photograph submitted contains eyeglasses.