

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 100 BIOMETRICS BACKGROUND AND FINGERPRINTING PROCEDURES

*(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)
(Office of Origin: CA/VO/L/R)*

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 101 WHAT IS BIOMETRIC TECHNOLOGY?

(CT:VISA-922; 01-10-2008)

Biometric technology measures an individual's unique physical or behavioral characteristics, such as fingerprints or facial characteristics, and uses the data for identification (one-to-many searches) or for identity verification (one-to-one matches) to recognize and confirm identity. Facial Recognition technology measures the features of the human face, such as the distance between the pupils, and creates a record of that information for each individual face registered in the program. Much in the same manner, fingerprint technology records key points of a human fingerprint and stores them in a database.

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 102 WHAT IS BIOMETRIC VISA (BIOVISA)?

(CT:VISA-922; 01-10-2008)

The Biometric Visa (BioVisa) Program uses biometric identifiers to prevent persons with visa ineligibilities from getting visas, to prevent identity fraud, and also to verify that a person presenting a visa at a port of entry (POE) is the person to whom the visa was issued. The biometric identifiers that were chosen for use with BioVisa are digital fingerscans as well as a photograph of the applicant. BioVisa began operating as a pilot program in September 2003 and was fully operational by October 2004.

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 103 WHAT LAW CREATED THE BIOVISA?

(CT:VISA-922; 01-10-2008)

BioVisa was created to comply with Section 303 of the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act (Public Law 107-173) (8 U.S.C. 1732). The act requires that all aliens be issued machine readable visas (MRV) that use biometric identifiers.

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 104 HOW DO THE AUTOMATED BIOMETRIC IDENTIFICATION (IDENT) SYSTEM AND FACIAL RECOGNITION WORK AS PART OF BIOVISA?

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

The Automated Biometric Identification (IDENT) System works by checking visa applicant fingerprints against a database containing principally Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and State Department fingerprint data, with some other fingerprints from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Defense (DoD). Facial Recognition works in the same manner, by checking photos of visa applicants against a photo database containing visa applicant photos from the Consular Consolidated Database (CCD) and also a watchlist of photos from various sources.

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 105 HOW DOES BIOVISA WORK AS A PARTNER PROGRAM WITH U.S. VISITOR AND IMMIGRANT STATUS INDICATOR TECHNOLOGY (US-VISIT)?

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

BioVisa coordinates with the DHS U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) Program. The joint program begins with BioVisa. The BioVisa phase begins at posts abroad with visa applicants, whose fingerscans and photographs are submitted at the interview to the DHS IDENT fingerprint system, where they are checked against a watchlist with fingerprints of terrorists, wanted persons, immigration law violators, other persons with criminal records, and previous Category 1 visa refusals. Visa applicant fingerprints are also enrolled in and checked against a database of persons previously issued visas and previously refused visas as Category 2 visa refusals to prevent identity fraud. When a person presents a visa at a POE, the person's fingerprints are compared with those in IDENT to ensure the person presenting the visa is the person to whom it was issued.

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 106 WHAT IS US-VISIT ENTRY?

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

The US-VISIT phase begins with US-VISIT Entry, when the visa holder arrives at the POE. Here, the visa holder will again be fingerprinted and will have a photograph taken. The Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer will then compare the visa holder's prints with prints stored in the IDENT database to ensure that the visa holder is indeed the same person to whom the visa was issued at post. The prints are also checked against the IDENT Watchlist to ensure that, since the visa issuance, there has not been any derogatory information received that would have promoted the prints to the Watchlist and could render the person inadmissible to the United States.

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 107 WHAT IS US-VISIT EXIT?

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

US-VISIT has operated a pilot program with new exit procedures for visa holders. Under the pilot, US-VISIT Exit required that aliens register their departure from the United States by having a live photograph taken and again submitting their fingerprints. The US-VISIT Exit pilot was implemented temporarily at a handful of ports across the United States and currently is not operational. However, the goal is to make US-VISIT Exit procedures mandatory at all ports in the future.

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 108 WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE FINGERPRINT CLEARANCE THROUGH THE FBI INTERGRATED AUTOMATED FINGERPRINT INFORMATION SYSTEM (IAFIS)

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

Since 2002 the FBI Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division has provided Consular Affairs (CA) with names of wanted persons and persons with criminal history records for inclusion in the Consular Lookout and Support System (CLASS). However, persons with criminal records could avoid detection by CLASS screening by obtaining passports in different identities. IAFIS contains over 50 million criminal history records. The

screening of fingerprints against IAFIS prevents criminals from being able to conceal their criminal records when applying for visas.

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 109 WHO IS FINGERPRINTED?

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

Apart from the exemptions listed below, all nonimmigrant visa (NIV) applicants ages 14 to 79 must be fingerprinted, and all immigrant visa (IV) applicants ages 14 and above must be fingerprinted. In addition, any child age 7 or over who is applying for a NIV at a post in Mexico, Mexican national or otherwise, must be fingerprinted.

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 110 FINGERPRINTING EXEMPTIONS

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

- a. Some visa classes are exempt from fingerprinting. Classes that are exempt include: A-1, A-2, G-1, G-2, G-3, G-4, and NATO-1, NATO-2, NATO-3, NATO-4, NATO-5, and NATO-6, and C-3 (except for servants, attendants, and personal employees of accredited officials). Applicants in the A-3, G-5, and NATO-7 domestic servant categories, and C-3 applicants who are servants, attendants, or personal employees of accredited officials must be fingerprinted.
- b. The NIV and IV systems automatically exempt individuals based on age and visa class. If an applicant meets the exemption standards, the fingertips in the hand diagram on the Biometrics window will appear as orange, and the system will automatically specify the reason for exemption in the Fingerprint Waiver/Exempted Remark window.

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 111 FINGERPRINTING WAIVERS

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

Consular officers may only waive fingerprinting for applicants in very limited cases. To waive the fingerprint requirement, choose the **Waive Finger** button next to the hand diagram on the Biometrics window to annotate the fingerprint. This will change the color of the fingertips in the diagram to blue, indicating that fingerprinting has been waived. Once the **Waive Finger** option has been selected, the Fingerprint Waiver/Exempted Remark

window will prompt you to select a reason as to why fingerprinting was waived. In addition, a note must be made in same window to further explain why the applicant was not fingerprinted. The consular chief is required to check the waived fingerprint report on a daily basis to ensure proper procedures are being followed. The following paragraphs explain the current policy for waiving an applicant's fingerprinting requirement.

9 FAM Appendix L, 111.1 Medical Reasons

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

Applicants traveling to the United States for emergency medical treatment who, due to a medical condition, are incapable of appearing for fingerprinting may be waived. A doctor treating the applicant must verify in writing that the applicant has a medical condition that precludes travel to the Embassy in order to have fingerprinting waived for medical reasons.

9 FAM Appendix L, 111.2 Missing/Damaged Fingers or Paralyzed Hands

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

Applicants missing all fingers should be waived from the fingerprint requirement. At least two fingerprints must be submitted to IDENT. If fingerprints of two different fingers (or thumbs) cannot be captured, then all fingerprints must be waived. In addition, if fingerprinting has been made impossible because a person is severely paralyzed or has been severely burned on the hands, that person may also be waived. Applicants with arthritis so severe that it makes fingerprinting impossible may be considered as paralyzed and have fingerprinting waived as well.

9 FAM Appendix L, 111.3 Officials Representing Unrecognized Governments and United Nations (UN) Missions

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

Government applicants from Taiwan (Tegro-E applicants), from the special administrative region of Hong Kong, from the Palestinian Authority, and from Northern Cyprus (TRNC) who, under circumstances of a normal bilateral governmental relationship, would be eligible for diplomatic or official visa categories A or G should also have fingerprinting waived. You may also waive fingerprinting for individuals who are members of a permanent observer mission or office of the United Nations (UN) who are granted B visas by virtue of their status with the UN, and to their family members who are granted B visas for the purpose of accompanying the members.

9 FAM Appendix L, 111.4 Temporary Injuries to Fingers

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

If an applicant has a temporary condition on the index finger that would affect the ability to capture a print, such as a cut, blister, or burn, the applicant should be refused under INA 221(g) and should reapply once his or her finger heals. This requirement was established when posts were collecting only two fingerprints, but it remains in effect because many records in IDENT are still based on two index fingerprints. Aside from the index fingers, posts may exercise discretion with regard to temporary conditions affecting the collection of prints of other fingers or of thumbs. In other words, if other fingers or the thumbs are bandaged and there is no reason to believe that the applicant is deliberately attempting to avoid complete fingerprinting, post may mark the bandaged (or otherwise unprintable) fingers as unprintable. If post has any reason to believe the applicant has bandaged fingers or thumbs specifically in order to avoid submitting a full ten-print clearance, post should refuse the case under section 221(g) until the applicant can return without the bandages.

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 112 FINGERPRINT QUALITY -- CAPTURE PROCEDURES

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

Fingerprint systems are not perfect. In rare cases fingerprint systems search a set of fingerprints and do not find a matching set, even though it is contained in the system. Key to making fingerprint systems perform at an optimal level is collection of high quality fingerprints. The steps to take when capturing, annotating, and submitting fingerprints vary depending on the type of scanners in use at your post. For guidance on taking fingerprints, posts should access the Consular Applications Training Center under the Systems tab of the CA Intranet site.

9 FAM Appendix L, 112.1 Retake Requirements Based on Fingerprint Quality Scores

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

The scores displayed for fingerprint collection are based on the fingerprint image quality standards developed by the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST). Under these standards, fingerprints are given NIST fingerprint image quality (NFIQ) scores from 1 to 5 as follows: 1 = excellent; 2 = very good; 3 = good; 4 = fair; 5 = poor. These are the scores that

posts will see when capturing ten prints. As explained above, index fingers are key fingers for matching purposes. Therefore, when capturing fingerprints, posts should do one retake of any index fingerprints that score NFIQ 3, 4, or 5. If one retake does not improve the NFIQ score, post is not required to do additional retakes. Posts are not required to do any retakes of any fingerprints other than the index fingerprints. Nevertheless, posts should use the instructions in the following sections to collect the best qualify fingerprints possible.

9 FAM Appendix L, 112.2 Correct Fingerprint Segmentation

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

- a. After capturing the fingers on each hand or both thumbs, the ten-print livescan (TPLS) software segments the fingerprints into individual segmentation boxes. TPLS may segment incorrectly if the applicant's fingers are not properly placed during capture. There must be a segmentation box for each finger.

NOTE: The only exception to this rule is when one or more of the applicant's fingerprints are annotated as missing or unprintable.

- b. Persons capturing fingerprints should ensure that:
 - (1) the correct number of segmentation boxes appear;
 - (2) the individual fingerprint of each finger is captured within a segmentation box; and
 - (3) none of the segmentation boxes overlaps a second digit (overlapping of white space in another segmentation box is ok).

9 FAM Appendix L, 112.3 Finger Placement

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

- a. The person capturing fingerprints must ensure that during placement, all of the fingers and the entirety of all prints are centered and lie flat on the platen.
- b. If fingers are placed too high, during segmentation the images collected will be truncated, or the middle segment of a finger may be selected. If fingers are placed too low, during segmentation no fingerprint images will appear.
- c. If fingers are not placed vertically on the platen, incorrect segmentation may occur. Fingerprints should be basically straight up and down (within 10 percent of vertical). Angling them to left or right (even if the fingerprint image itself is clear) risks rejection by IAFIS.

- d. Be sure to capture the fingerprint, not the finger-tip. This can be done by ensuring the fingers lie flat on the platen. Pattern areas on the full flat print need to be visible or the print will be rejected by IAFIS.
- e. If an individual is missing a finger or thumb, it must be annotated as missing or unprintable.

9 FAM Appendix L, 112.4 Thumb Placement

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

The applicant's thumbs must be placed as high on the glass platen as possible. Ergonomically, thumb placement presents the greatest challenge for most applicants. While placing the thumbs low, toward the bottom of the platen, may be the most comfortable position for the applicant, it frequently results in partial prints that IAFIS will reject. Users must ensure that the entire thumb print — from the crease of the knuckle to the tip of the thumb — is captured, straight up and down, and properly segmented. There have been cases of thumbs incorrectly captured at posts at 45 to 90 degrees off from the vertical (which IAFIS rejected). Many posts have found that mounting their scanners lower and at a tilt significantly improves fingerprint quality and eases the process for the applicant. (Tips on tilting scanners are on the Ten Print Resource Center Web site.) To help the applicants with proper thumb capture, ask the applicants to step back from the scanner, extend their arms straight, and extend their thumbs.

9 FAM Appendix L, 112.5 Correct Fingerprint Capture Order

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

A common mistake is capturing the hands in the wrong order. The TPLS system is designed to analyze the relative position of each fingerprint to prevent this mistake and will give a warning message to alert that the hands are being taken in the wrong order. Another mistake is to take the same hand twice. If the person capturing fingerprints does so in the wrong order or captures the same hand twice, IAFIS will send an error message requiring a retake of the fingerprints.

9 FAM Appendix L, 112.6 Ghosting

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

The fingerprints of a previous applicant sometimes appear superimposed on the fingerprints of the current applicant being fingerprinted. This is called "ghosting." IAFIS will reject prints that are ghosted. Ensure the scanner platen is clean and silicon pads are replaced as necessary. If you feel

ghosting is occurring, you can select the Reinitialize option within TPLS. If ghosting is still present, shut down NIV and/or Immigrant Visa Overseas (IVO) disconnect the fingerprint scanner from the workstation firewire port, and then reconnect it and follow the reinstallation prompts. If the ghosting problem persists at a specific machine, take notes on its frequency (in terms of days or cases) and notify the support desk, as it may be an unusual software or hardware problem.

9 FAM Appendix L, 112.7 Digitized Appearance

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Sometimes all or part of the fingerprint patterns of some fingers appear after capture as a digitized area, looking like what one sees when one looks at a highly magnified newspaper photo, with uniform rows of dots, in which any meaningful image is reduced to a hazy blur. Often this is seen in only some fingerprints or parts of fingerprints. Digitized appearance can be mitigated by making sure applicants do not push down too hard on the platen.

9 FAM Appendix L, 112.8 Monitoring Quality of Fingerprints Enrolled at Posts

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

Consular managers should use the IAFIS Fingerprint Score Statistics report in the CCD (under the IDENT/US-VISIT/IAFIS tab) to monitor the performance of persons collecting fingerprints at post. This report shows for each person collecting fingerprints at post the number of persons fingerprinted and the average score. If one person at post consistently has average fingerprint scores 0.5 or more points higher than the others, that person probably needs additional training on how to collect good fingerprints.

9 FAM APPENDIX L, 113 WHEN SHOULD FINGERPRINTS BE TAKEN?

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

Post has three options in implementing the ten-print collection. Each is outlined below.

9 FAM Appendix L, 113.1 Foreign Service National (FSN) Collection, Officer Verification

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

- a. This is the method of collection preferred by the Department. The Foreign Service National (FSN) collects the prints, and the officer will verify them at the window by checking one of the applicant's fingers. The system will randomly choose which fingerprint will be verified.
- b. This method allows officers to see the IDENT and IAFIS results at the window. This way, applicants may be questioned about any hits at the time of the interview, so that they do not have to return later. Additionally, if the fingerprint clearance in IAFIS results in an error message, posts can retake the prints at that time.
- c. Another advantage to this method is that it allows for cross-training of staff so that if the designated FSN is absent, a backup can perform the job without changing the process.

9 FAM Appendix L, 113.2 Eligible Family Member (EFM) Collection

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

When an eligible family member (EFM) collects the prints, there is no need for officer verification. While this method also facilitates having the print results available at the time of interview, at many posts there is only one EFM. If that person is absent, the process will have to be reconfigured, which may result in slow processing and mistakes.

9 FAM Appendix L, 113.3 Officer Collection

(CT:VISA-1015; 09-12-2008)

This method will increase officer time at the window, and IDENT and IAFIS results will not be available during the interview.