

## CGE- international Student Scholar Services Handout

# Bringing Your Dependents

Are you considering bringing your spouse and/or child(ren) with you while you are studying at JMU?

We know that moving to the United States can be stressful: a new city, new food, new language, new rules you may not understand, on top of your studies- there is so much to learn and to adjust to!

Being away from your loved ones can make this process even more challenging for you.

Having your loved ones (called dependents- defined as your spouse and/or your children) with you, can be a support to you and provide them a great new opportunity to

- A better self-esteem
- New life skills
- New perspective on life
- Better communication skills

It is also important to understand how your loved ones may be challenged by this life change. For them, this is not only stressful, but it can also be a lonely time due to different factors.

### Here are a few considerations to keep in mind:

#### Immigration considerations

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##### Option #1: Visitor visa or B-2 visa

If your dependent(s) plan to only remain in the US for a short visit, you will generally need these documents (unless stated otherwise on your country's embassy's webpage):

- Valid passport
- Photographs
- Visa fee receipt
- Visa application form/s

Additionally, documentation that makes clear the visit is temporary will help strengthen the visa application. This documentation should show proof of ties to the home country. Examples of this documentation include proof of employment, proof of property ownership, proof of finances, and proof of contact with family members in their home country. Look for the [Invitation Letter webpage](#) found in our Resources section of our website.

##### Option #2: Dependent visa F-2 visa

If your spouse & children under 21 plan to accompany you to the US for a much longer stay, you will need to provide the following documents to your Designated School Official (Thomas Lavenir or to [jss@jmu.edu](mailto:jss@jmu.edu)):

- A scanned copy of your family member's biographies and photo passport page
- A scanned copy of financial documentation that indicates you are able to support your spouse and/or child(ren) while they are in the US. If you have a bank statement in your name that shows the minimum and estimated required amount of US \$6,000 for your spouse and an additional US \$3,000 for each child.
- Note: You/your dependents will need to show an official document that verifies that your union/marriage is "recognized in the place of celebration" and/or a birth certificate to the consular officer and possibly immigration officer at the port of entry

Spouses in F-2 status are only permitted to study in:

- less than a full course of study that may lead to a degree, and/or
- recreational or hobby courses.

If the F-2 dependent wishes to pursue full-time study in a degree-granting program, they must first apply for and obtain a change of status to F-1. F-2 children may engage in full-time study at the K-12 level.

Spouses in F-2 status may not accept employment under any circumstances.

If you as the F-1 student plan to be outside the US for an extended period of time (for example, doing research for 30 days or longer), your F-2 dependent cannot remain in the US for this time as an F-2. Their status is dependent on your status in the US.

## Financial Considerations

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In addition, to needing additional funding for immigration purposes, living Expenses may increase by 50% or more, since you will likely pay higher rent than single students, purchase more food, pay for child care, etc. (Source: [Cost of Living Calculator](#) - search conducted in January 2023)

- Housing costs: Monthly rent for a 3-bedroom apartment - \$1,500-2,000
- Utilities costs: Energy - \$170-190 | Phone - \$175-190 | Trash - \$20-25
- Transportation-related costs: Gas (as of 02/2024) - \$3.35-3.75 per gallon
- Health-related costs: Doctor's visit - \$151 | Dentist - \$100 | Optometrist- \$121
- Childcare costs: estimated to be \$1,100 per child
- School fees: estimated to be \$16,562 per child
- Entertainment/services costs: Movie ticket-\$15 | Haircut-\$20-30 for men, \$30-60 for women

## Social & Cultural considerations

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Spouse transitions are difficult because you will likely spend far more time on campus with your classes, homework, research and work than you will at home. This can leave a spouse feeling lonely and neglected. It is often a difficult transition for a spouse who has been working professionally since most dependents are not allowed to work in the U.S. It may be difficult to help your spouse feel connected.