

**The Bahamas High Commission
London**

Fact Sheet # 14



THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS

RESIDENCE

Annual

Procedure for obtaining an annual residence permit

Persons wishing to reside in The Bahamas on an annual basis may qualify under one of four categories:

1. Spouse or dependant of a citizen of The Bahamas
2. Spouse or dependant of a permit holder
3. Independent economic resident
4. Resident home owner, including seasonal resident homeowner.

The following are required:

Category 1

- a. Immigration Form 1, Section B, completed and notarized with \$4 in Bahamian postage stamps affixed thereon;
- b. A covering letter from the supporting applicant stating relationship and accepting financial relationship for the subject of the application;
- c. Birth, marriage and/or any certificate evidencing dependence of the subject of the application;
- d. Applicant's birth certificate;
- e. Medical certificate dated not more than 30 days prior to submission;
- f. Police certificate issued less than six months earlier;
- g. Two passport-size photographs and
- h. A processing fee of \$25.

If an applicant is married to a Bahamian citizen, a resident a resident spouse permit may be issued, provided the marriage has existed for less than five years. The

resident spouse permit is issued for a max period of five years. A one time fee of \$250 is charged to cover the permit, regardless of the amount of time remaining in the five year period. An application is made for permanent residence or citizenship after five years or more of marriage. See this section.

Category 2

- a. items (a) through (h) of category (1) and
- b. a copy of the sponsor's work permit, permit to reside, certificate of permanent residence or other lawful authority to reside in The Bahamas.

Category 3

- a. items (a) through (h) of category (1), except item (c);
- b. financial reference from a reputable bank verifying economic worth, i.e. citing a figure range and
- c. two written character references.

For an annual residence permit, a head-of-household pays \$1,000 and each dependent, \$25.

Category 4

Under this category, non-Bahamians who own second homes in The Bahamas may apply to the Director of Immigration for a homeowner's residence card. This card is renewable annually and entitles the owner, spouse and any minor child/children, endorsed on the owner's card when travelling with the owner, to enter and remain in The Bahamas for the validity of the card. The fee is \$500 per year and is intended to facilitate entry into The Bahamas with minimal formalities by:

1. obviating the need for return tickets;
2. obviating provision of proof of main-tenance ability upon entering the country and
3. entitling the holder to visit for a stay of up to one year.

Requirements for qualifying under this category are:

1. letter of request;
2. two passport-size photographs of applicant;
3. application form;
4. proof of property ownership in The Bahamas;
5. proof of existence of a home (house) on property and
6. processing fee of \$25.

Successful applicants in any of these categories are not permitted to engage in employment.

Procedures for obtaining a work permit

An inflexible principle of The Bahamas government is that no expatriate may be offered a position that a suitably qualified Bahamian is available to fill.

Employers with vacant posts are required to advertise locally and consult The Bahamas Employment Exchange. If unsuccessful in fulfilling their requirements by these methods, they may apply to the Dept of Immigration for permission to recruit outside The Bahamas.

The following will then need to be submitted:

1. Application Form 1, Section A, completed and notarized with \$4 in Bahamian postage stamps affixed;
2. a covering letter from the prospective employer stating reasons for the application, the position, and the period of time needed;
3. two passport-size photographs with signature on reverse of prints;
4. police certificate covering a period of five years' residence immediately preceding the application or a sworn affidavit in lieu of same;
5. medical certificate dated not more than 30 days prior to submission;
6. written references from previous employer(s);
7. copies of exam certificates referred to in the application;
8. copies of local newspaper advertisements with replies thereto and results of interviews, if held;
9. certificate from the Department of labour (Employment exchange) indicating that a Bahamian is not available to fill the position and
10. a processing fee of \$25.

Normally, an application will not be processed if the prospective employee is already in The Bahamas, having entered as a visitor.

Work permit fees range from \$350 to \$10,000 per year depending on the category. The Bahamas Immigration Bahamianization Policy, which is critical to the granting of work permits, provides that:

1. Whenever there is a position that a Bahamian is qualified to fill, he should be given the position in preference to anyone else.
2. The Bahamian must be given that job on the same terms and conditions as his expatriate counterpart.
3. Where the company has a career structure, whether here or abroad, the Bahamian employee must be given the same opportunities for advancement as would be afforded other employees.
4. The Bahamian must be helped whenever possible to broaden his skills in the individual's chosen field of endeavour by constant exposure to further training at home and abroad.

Where work permits have been granted, each employer will be required to identify a suitable Bahamian to understudy the expatriate so that the Bahamian trainee will fill the expatriate's position within a reasonable time.

Genuine investors usually have little difficulty in complying with these requirements.

Employers may obtain permits for longer periods than the standard one year period in respect to certain key personnel on contract. Such contracts should indicate their renewal would be subject to obtaining the necessary immigration permission, and they may be endorsed to the effect that the employee is expected to train or be replaced by a suitable Bahamian within a stipulated period.

Each permit issued by the Immigration Board relates to a specific post. Permits are not altered by the director of immigration to reflect change of employment or residence. However, a person holding a work permit may make application for a new one (his new employer having been unsuccessful in recruiting a qualified Bahamian to fill the post) without having to leave the islands.

The renewal of a permit on expiration is not automatic. Generally, no expatriate may be continually employed in the country in any capacity for more than five years. However, there are likely to be cases where hardship will be caused by rigid implementation of this policy. According to government, this factor will be kept in mind in applying the regulations.

An employer must inform the Dept of Immigration within 30 days that a non-Bahamian employee is no longer employed or be liable to a fine not exceeding \$150.

A non-Bahamian who ceases to be employed must take his permit to the Dept of Immigration for cancellation within seven days of ceasing to be employed. The permit shall be deemed cancelled with effect from expiration of that seven-day period. An employee failing to comply with this regulation is liable to prosecution and may, if convicted, be liable to a fine not exceeding \$100.

Bonding

A bond is required for each person granted a work permit, if necessary, to repatriate the employee and his dependents and to pay any public charges, including medical expenses, incurred by the employee.

Travelling salesman's permit

Travelling salesman planning to do business in The Bahamas must obtain work permits from the Dept of immigration, and a licence from the Licensing Authority. The requirements for such a permit are:

1. completed Immigration Dept Form 1 (notarized, with \$4 in stamps) with two passport-size photographs signed on the reverse, and a police certificate;
2. two letters of character reference;
3. passport or other travel document;
4. a letter from salesman's company stating he is travelling to The Bahamas to sell on its behalf (address letter to: Director of Immigration, P. O. Box N-831, Nassau);
5. two letters sponsoring him as a salesman from two sponsors in The Bahamas in the type of business on which he plans to call;
6. a complete list of accounts on which he will call and
7. payment of an annual fee of \$4,000. (A permit may be obtained for any period up to six months at a prorated fee.) The licence is issued when

the approved work permit is presented at the Licensing Authority office.

Permanent residence

Applicants for this status of residency must be of good character and prepared to show evidence of financial support. Such an applicant must also state that he intends to reside permanently in The Bahamas.

Persons may apply for permanent residence in any of the following categories provided they satisfy statutory requirements of The Bahamas:

1. As the spouse of a citizen of The Bahamas, and in the case of a male, he must have been married for not less than five years.
2. As an economic applicant; that is, one who seeks to permanently reside in the Bahamas because of
 - a. investment – business or home or
 - b. established roots through family ties.

Persons who held valid certificates of permanent residence prior to the Immigration Act, 1975, continue to hold such status automatically.

To initiate an application in either of the above categories, the requisite application form should be completed in duplicate, notarized and submitted along with the following to the Dept of Immigration:

Category 1

(Application Form IV A)

- a. two passport photographs;
- b. a police certificate of not more than six months' issue, covering five years' residence immediately prior to the date of application, or where these are not issued, a sworn affidavit in lieu of same;
- c. birth certificate;
- d. spouse's birth certificate;
- e. marriage certificate;
- f. proof of immigration status in The Bahamas and
- g. processing fee of \$25.

Spouses of Bahamians may be issued certificate of permanent residence with the right to engage in gainful employment. In the case of a male, such application may be made only after five years of marriage to the Bahamian wife. Women married to Bahamians may apply at any time after marriage.

Category 2

(Application Form IV)

- a. items (a) through (g) in category (1);

- b. financial reference from a reputable bank verifying economic worth;
- c. two written character references;
- d. a medical certificate dated not more than 30 days prior to submission of the application and
- e. proof of ownership of property and/or investment in The Bahamas in the form of copies of conveyances, deeds or mortgage contracts, etc.

A person holding a certificate of permanent residence who wishes to include his wife, or dependent child under the age of 18 and ordinarily resident in his household, may have them endorsed on the certificate at the time of his original application or at a subsequent date, subject to such conditions as might be laid down by the Immigration Board.

Cost of a permanent residence certificate varies according to status. A person who has resided in The Bahamas at least 10 years and less than 20 years and who holds a work permit may pay anything from \$1,000-\$5,000.

A person who has resided in the country at least 20 years and who holds a work permit may pay anything from \$500-\$2,500. the spouse of a Bahamian citizen pays \$250. A person without a work permit, or holding a work permit in one of the top professional categories, and who has resided in The Bahamas for less than 10 years, not married to a Bahamian citizen, pays up to \$10,000.

Persons who held valid certificates of permanent residence prior to the Immigration Act, 1975, continue to hold such status automatically.

Persons who formerly possessed Bahamian status (belongers) whose applications for citizenship were not determined by Aug 1, 1976, should have also applied for permanent residence. Belongers who failed to apply prior to Aug 1, 1976, lost their immigration status. Persons in this category, on acquiring a permanent residence certificate, would continue to enjoy the same rights and privileges they had known under the old Bahamian status, with the exception of the right to vote in a parliamentary election.

Permanent residents who were formerly belongers enjoy the new status for life. The certificate is free and contains no restriction regarding the right of the holder to engage in gainful employment.

A certificate of permanent residence may be revoked if the person holding the certificate:

- 1. has been ordinarily resident outside The Bahamas continuously period of three years;
- 2. is or was imprisoned for a criminal offence for one year or more;
- 3. has so conducted himself that in the opinion of the Immigration board it is in the public interest that he should continue to enjoy the privileges conferred by the certificate or
- 4. being the wife of a holder of a permanent residence certificate, she becomes legally separated from her husband or the marriage is dissolved or annulled.

Temporary annual residence permit

A person attending an institution of higher education in The Bahamas on a full-time basis or as a trainee pays \$25 a year.

Business investors

A business-sensitive legal framework and investor-friendly climate encourages non-Bahamian investments, supported by the Bahamas Investment Authority (BIA), Office of the Prime Minister, P. O. Box CB-10980, Nassau, Bahamas tel (242)327-5826/7, fax (242) 3275990, e-mail info@investbahamas.org.

Although an investor is granted a licence by the Licensing Authority, he must still apply for a work permit if he is to be resident and an employee of/or operating the business himself.

Contact the director of immigration, Ministry of Labour and Immigration, Post Office Bldg, East Hill Street, P. O. Box N-831, Nassau, tel (242) 322-7530.

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