



Annual Residence Permit

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

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

The following documentation is required for:

Category 1

- a) Immigration Form 1, Section B, completed and notarized with \$4.00 in Bahamian postage stamps affixed thereon.
- b) A covering letter from the supporting applicant stating relationship and accepting financial responsibility for the subject of the application.
- c) Birth, marriage and/or any certificate evidencing dependence of the subject of the application.
- d) The applicant's birth certificate.
- e) Medical certificate dated not more than 30 days prior to submission.
- f) Police certificate issued less than six months from date of submission.
- g) Two passport size photographs.
- h) A processing fee of \$25.00

For an annual residence permit, a head of household pays \$1,000 and each dependent \$25.00. However, if an applicant is married to a Bahamian citizen, 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 maximum period of five years. A one-time fee of \$250.00 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.

Category 2

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

Category 3

- a) Items (a) through (h) of Category 1, except for item (c).
- b) Financial reference from a reputable bank verifying economic worth, i.e., citing a figure range.
- c) Two written character references.



Category 4

Under this category non-Bahamians who own second homes in The Bahamas may apply to the Director of Immigration for an annual 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 traveling with the owner, to enter and remain in The Bahamas for the validity of the card. The fee is \$500.00 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 maintenance ability upon entering the country.
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 the existence of a home (house) on property.
6. Processing fee of \$25.00.

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

Permanent Residence

Applicants for this status 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 residency in any of the following categories provided they satisfy statutory requirements of the Bahamas:

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

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

To initiate an application in either of the above categories, the requisite application forms should be completed in duplicate, notarized and submitted along with the following documents to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Training:



Category 1 (Application Form IV A)

- a) Two passport photographs.
- b) A police certificate of not more than six months issue, covering five years of residence immediately prior to the date of the 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.
- g) Processing fee of \$25.00.

Spouses of Bahamians may be issued a certificate of permanent residence with the right to engage in gainful employment. In the case of a male, such application may only be made 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) A financial reference from a reputable bank verifying financial worth.
- c) Two written character references.
- d) A medical certificate dated not more than 30 days prior to submission of the application.
- 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 within the household, may have them endorsed on the certificate at the time of the original application or at a subsequent date, subject to such conditions as might be laid down by the Immigration Board.

Cost of permanent residence certificate varies according to status. A person who 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 resided in the country at least 20 years and who holds a work permit may pay anything from \$500.00 - \$2,500. The spouse of a Bahamian citizen pays \$250.00. A person without a work permit in one of the top 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 August 1, 1976, should have also applied for permanent residence. Belongers who failed to make such application prior to August 1, 1976, ceased to have immigration status. Persons in this category, on acquiring a permanent residence certificate, would continue to enjoy the same rights and privileges that 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 of The Bahamas continuously for a 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 not in the public interest that he should continue to enjoy the privileges conferred by the certificate.
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.

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 documentation will then need to be submitted:

1. Application Form 1, Section A, completed and notarized with \$4.00 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 Dept of Labour (Employment Exchange) indicating that a Bahamian is not available to fill the position.
10. A processing fee of \$25.00.

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 which 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 his 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 frame.

Bone fide and genuine investors usually have little difficulty 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 such indicate their renewal would be subject to their 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 regulations.



An employer must inform the Department of Immigration within 30 days that a non-Bahamian is no longer employed or liable to a fine not exceeding \$150.00.

A non-Bahamian who ceases to be employed must take his permit to the Department of Immigration for cancellation within seven days of ceasing to be employed. The permit will be deemed to be 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 \$100.00

This material is based upon information that we consider to be reliable, but we cannot represent that it is accurate and complete, and it should not be relied upon as such. When buying, selling or listing property for sale in The Bahamas one should first consult with the relevant local authorities or request an attorney to do so on your behalf.

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