

From: Sevis@ice.dhs.gov <Sevis@ice.dhs.gov>
Date: Monday, March 23, 2026 at 3:45 PM
To: David Elwell <elwell@mit.edu>
Subject: Broadcast Message 2603-02: STEM OPT Employer Fraud

Broadcast Message: STEM OPT Employer Fraud

To: All SEVIS Users

Date: March 23, 2026

BCM Number: 2603-02

General Information

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) remind designated school officials (DSOs) to be vigilant in detecting and preventing fraud associated with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) optional practical training (OPT) employers, especially IT recruitment, consulting firms, and staffing agencies.

DSOs who recommend foreign students for post-completion STEM OPT are advised that SEVP is working with its U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) partners to investigate fraud among IT recruitment, consulting firms, and staffing agencies. As noted in the [2016 STEM OPT final rule](#), these employment arrangements remain a concern for fraud and are generally not an apt fit for STEM OPT opportunities. During recent site visits to such employers, SEVP and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) discovered numerous fraud indicators, including:

- Unoccupied and unused business locations.
- Employers operating from personal residences listed as on-site employment locations, but no employees were present.
- Businesses with "offshore" human resources and payroll personnel.
- Employer officials with little knowledge regarding the operations of the companies they claim to represent.
- Employer officials making inconsistent and contradictory statements about their businesses and the foreign students they employ.
- Numerous foreign students claiming they were hired under STEM OPT who never actually showed up for work.
- Inoperative telephone numbers.

Employers and foreign students engaged in suspected fraud risk referral for administrative or criminal investigations by HSI and the U.S. Department of Justice.

DSOs and foreign students should recognize the red flags for potentially fraudulent employers and understand how to report suspected fraud. As SEVP recently indicated in its [Fraud Hub](#) training for DSOs, red flags that may indicate a potentially fraudulent employer include:

- Employer websites that are vague with no examples of client work, contact information or social media accounts.
- Job activities that do not match the description the employer provided to the school.

- A job's physical location that does not look suitable for the employment and/or does not match the address listed on Form I-983.
- A relatively unknown or unfamiliar employer that hires a large group of F or M students from a school.
- Work that is conducted remotely and/or through apps such as WeChat.

DSOs should remind foreign students to contact them if they have any questions about guidance provided by a recruiter. DSOs or students who believe that an employer is not complying with the employment terms or conditions are encouraged to report the employer's noncompliance to the [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement tip line](#).

Additionally, DSOs and students can notify the [SEVP Response Center](#) (SRC) or their local [Project Campus Sentinel](#) agent about potential fraud concerns. Students can also report concerns about wages and/or employment conditions directly to the [U.S. Department of Labor](#). For questions about this message, please contact the SRC via phone at 703-603-3400 or 1-800-892-4829 or via email at SEVP@ice.dhs.gov. The SRC is open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. EDT, except federal holidays.

Disclaimer

The Broadcast Message is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule or a final action by SEVP. It is not intended to, does not, and may not be relied upon to create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law by any party in any administrative, civil, or criminal matter.

[X](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Facebook](#) |