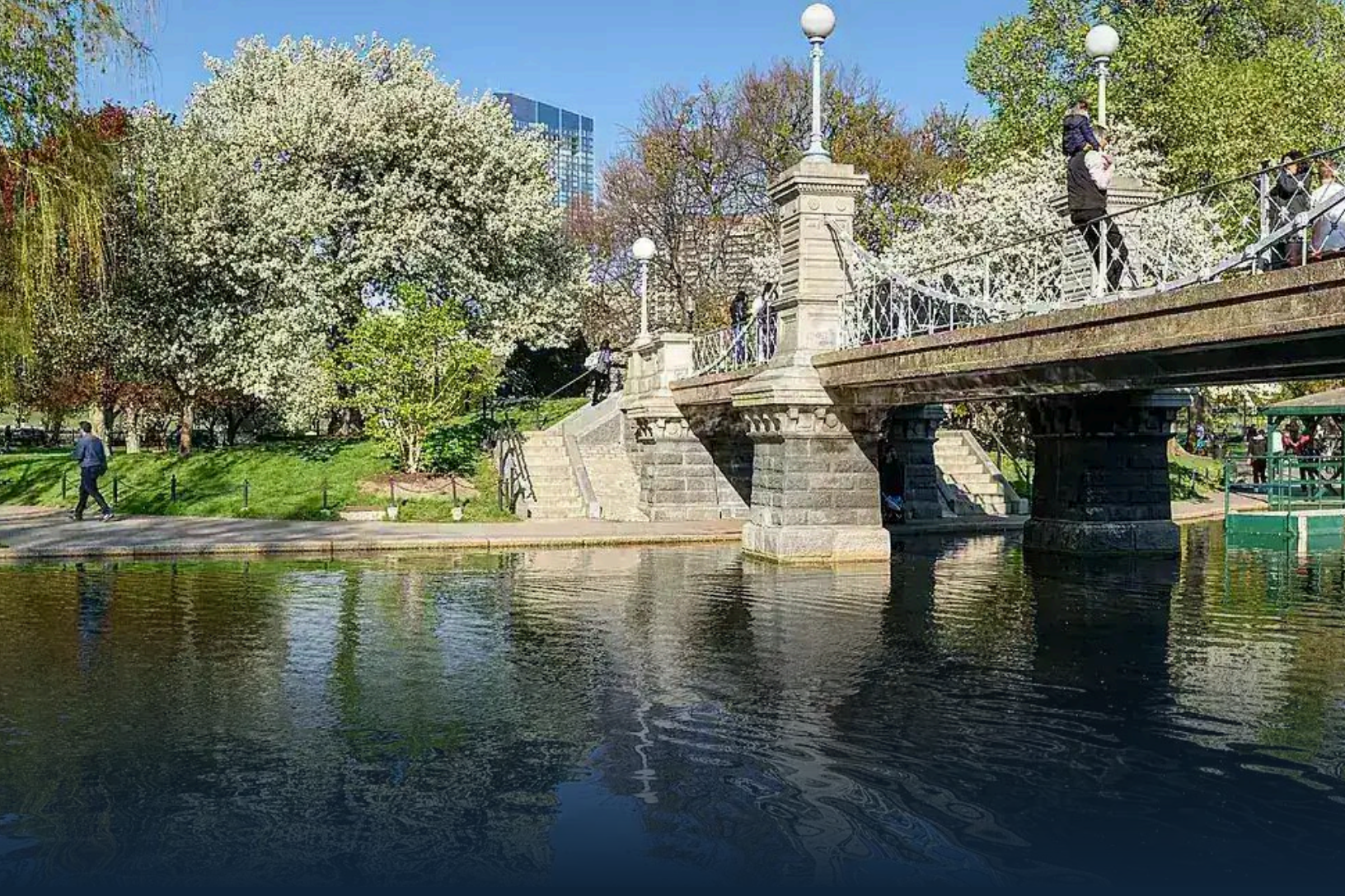


A FREE RESOURCE FOR SCHOOLS

International Programs Document Guide

What students, staff and schools need before going abroad: consent letters, apostilles, embassy legalization and certified translations, explained in plain language.

Also online: boston-mobile-notary.com/international-programs-document-guide

Study abroad offices
Semester and year programs, student visas

K–12 schools
Group trips, exchanges and year-abroad programs

Program directors
Faculty, staff and partner agreements

Three steps behind almost every document

Most international document requests come down to the same three steps, in this order. Not every document needs all three, so confirm requirements with the destination country's consulate and the host institution abroad.

1
Notarization

A notary verifies the identity of the person signing, such as a parent's consent letter or a school official's letter.

2
Apostille or legalization

An apostille for Hague Convention countries, or embassy legalization for others, confirms the document is genuine abroad.

3
Certified translation

When the destination requires the document in its own language, with the translator's signed statement of accuracy.

Minors on school trips

Every student under 18 traveling with a school group, without a parent, should carry a consent letter signed by both parents or legal guardians.

- **Consent letter.** USA.gov advises that when a child travels with a guardian, both parents should sign a letter stating the child is traveling with a named adult with their permission.
- **Notarization.** Widely recommended and easier for border and airline officials to rely on. Schedule early: both parents must sign before a notary.
- **Supporting documents.** Passport, a copy of the birth certificate, and any custody or guardianship order.
- **Destination rules vary.** Canada recommends a signed consent letter for children traveling without one or both parents, and airlines may ask to see it. Some countries require an apostille or translation on the letter.



Back Bay, Boston

> **Tip:** For non-English-speaking destinations, a certified translation of each consent letter can prevent delays at the border.

Students on semester and year programs

Long-term programs usually require a student visa, and visa files often include apostilled and translated U.S. documents with strict date limits.

Example: Spain. The Spanish consulate in Boston requires a medical certificate for stays over 90 days, translated into Spanish if written in English. For stays over 180 days, students 18 and older also need an FBI background check dated within six months of arrival, with an FBI apostille and a Spanish translation by a sworn or certified translator. For minors, parents' notarized authorizations must carry a Hague apostille.

Faculty and staff abroad

- **FBI background checks** are federal documents, so the apostille comes from the U.S. Department of State Office of Authentications, not a state office.
- **Translations can be specific.** Spain's Boston consulate requires the FBI record to carry the apostille and a Spanish translation by a sworn or certified translator. The translation itself does not need an apostille.
- **Credentials.** Staff teaching or practicing abroad may need apostilled degrees, teaching licenses or license verifications.

Documents the school signs

- Enrollment and good-standing letters for student visas
- Program and acceptance letters confirming dates, housing and supervision
- Partnership and exchange agreements with institutions abroad
- Authorizations for a staff member to act on the school's behalf
- Registrar-certified transcripts and diplomas

Massachusetts documents are apostilled by the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Commissions Section.

Apostille or embassy legalization?

The destination country decides which process applies.

	Apostille	Embassy legalization
Used for	Hague Convention countries, such as Spain, Italy, France, Mexico and Japan	Countries outside the Convention, such as the United Arab Emirates and Egypt
Steps	One certificate from the issuing authority	Authentication, often by the U.S. Department of State, then the destination's embassy or consulate
Massachusetts documents	Secretary of the Commonwealth	Secretary of the Commonwealth, then further steps
FBI background checks	U.S. Department of State	U.S. Department of State, then the embassy
Typical timing	Days to a few weeks	Several weeks; varies by embassy

Planning timeline

3–4 months out
Confirm requirements with each consulate and host institution; list every document per traveler.

3 months out
Order FBI checks and vital records. Watch six-month date limits.

8–10 weeks out
Collect and notarize school letters and parental consent letters.

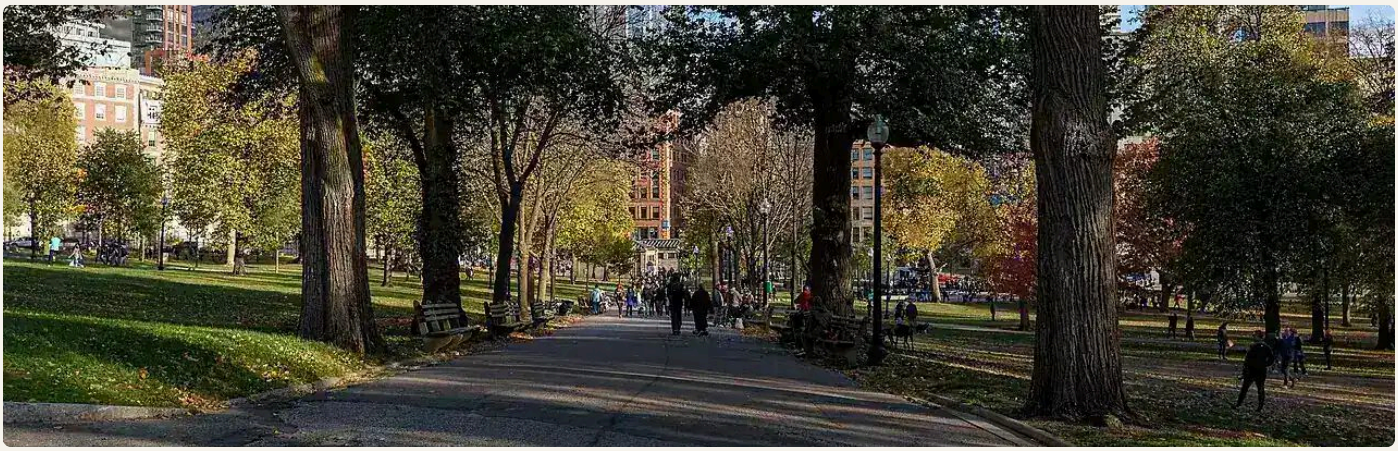
6–8 weeks out
Submit for apostille or embassy legalization.

4–6 weeks out
Order certified translations of apostilled documents.

Before departure
Give each traveler originals and copies; keep scans on file.



Beacon Hill, Boston



Boston Common

High school semester, year-abroad and exchange programs

Minors on long stays abroad face stricter rules than on a one-week trip, and the parents' documents usually need an apostille and a translation.

Parental authorization

Expect a notarized authorization signed by both parents or guardians, often naming the adult responsible for the student abroad. Spain's consulate in Boston requires a notarial act from the parents authorizing the travel and identifying the person who will take charge of the student in Spain.

Proof of relationship

The same consulate asks for the original and a notarized copy of the student's birth certificate, issued no more than 90 days before the application. U.S. documents must carry a Hague apostille and, where required, a Spanish translation.

Traveling without a parent

A notarized power of attorney signed by both parents, with an apostille, may be required when the student travels alone or with another adult.

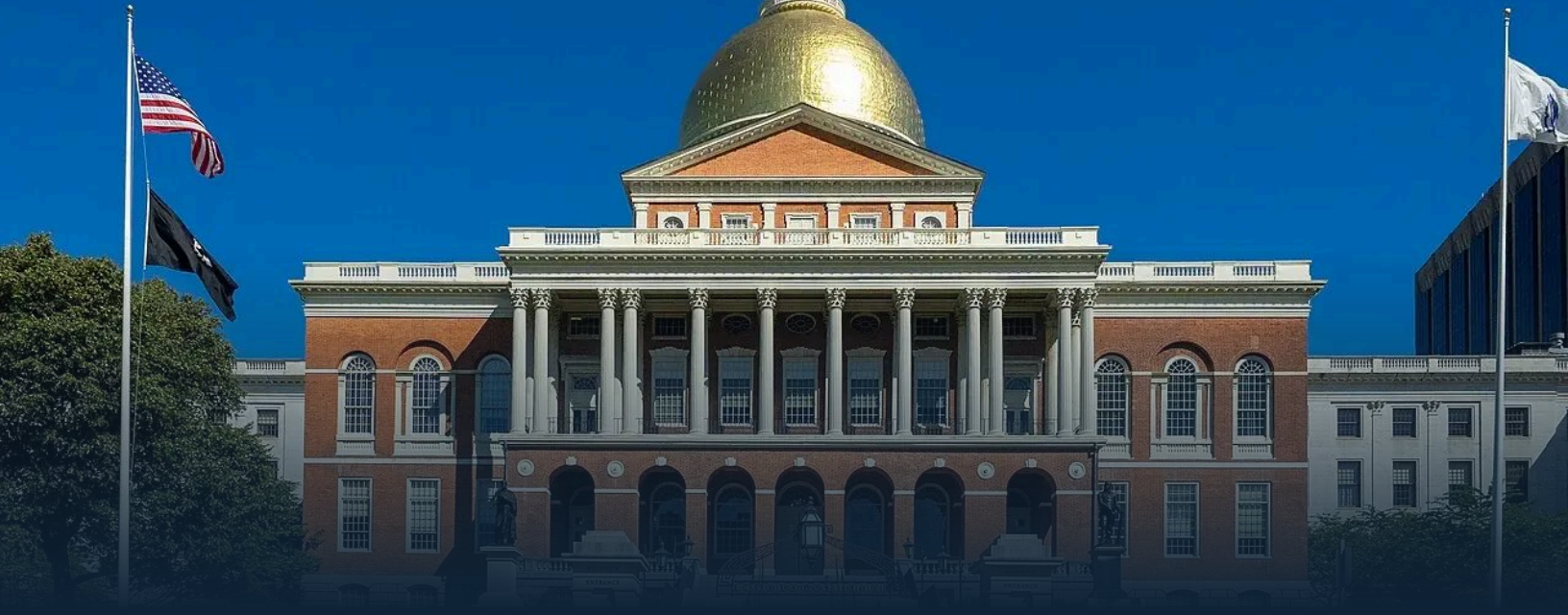
Plan early

New birth certificates, two parents' signatures, apostilles and translations add weeks, and visa appointments for minors often need every document at once.

Families moving abroad with school-age children

Families relocating abroad often need K–12 transcripts, report cards and enrollment letters apostilled for the new school, and some countries, such as Spain, also require official recognition of U.S. records before enrollment.

For school offices: when a family asks for records "with an apostille," the school typically certifies or notarizes the record first, and the apostille is then issued by the Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth. Families can find a step-by-step guide at boston-mobile-notary.com/school-records-apostille-families-moving-abroad.



One team for every step

Boston Mobile Notary & Apostille Service helps schools, students, families and staff prepare documents for programs abroad, from the first signature to the final apostille or embassy stamp.

On-site notarization
At your school for consent letters, school letters and staff documents

Massachusetts & federal apostilles
Including FBI background check apostilles through our DC Satellite Office

Embassy legalization
For countries outside the Hague Apostille Convention

Certified translation
Academic and official documents in 65+ languages

Group & cohort support
Document planning for trips, semesters and exchange programs

Documents from any U.S. state
Worldwide return shipping

Read and share the full guide online: boston-mobile-notary.com/international-programs-document-guide

Request a quote

617-203-8755 · info@boston-mobile-notary.com
www.boston-mobile-notary.com

Sources: USA.gov, International travel documents for children; Government of Canada, Consent letter for children travelling outside Canada; Consulate General of Spain in Boston, Study visa and Researcher visa; U.S. Department of State, Criminal records checks; Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth, Apostilles and certification of documents. Requirements change; confirm with the destination's consulate before acting. Schools are welcome to share this guide.