ECFMG J-1 Visa Sponsorship Process Overview

For GME Program Coordinators at UTHSC-H
Spring 2012

Maria C. Arevalo-Sanchez, Director International Affairs
Monica Piñón, International Visitor Advisor
Contents

- Vocabulary Overview
- Visa Options accepted at UTHSC-H for Foreign National Physicians
- The ECFMG Sponsored J-1 Visa
  - The Alien Physician Category
  - Parties Involved
  - The Process
  - The Application
  - Links
  - Contacts
- Questions
Vocabulary Overview

AGENCIES

- **DHS**  US Department of Homeland Security
- **DOS**  US Department of State
- **ECFMG** Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates
- **USCIS** US Citizenship and Immigration Services
## General Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EVSP</td>
<td>Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>The ECFMG-EVSP contact person assigned to each geographical region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>The ECFMG-EVSP contact person assigned to each geographical region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEVIS</td>
<td>Student and Exchange Visitor Information System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPL</td>
<td>Training Program Liaison - official representative of the host training institution to communicate with ECFMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>Allows foreign nationals to apply for entry to the US for a specific purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa Status</td>
<td>Determines the length of authorized stay and associated privileges with visa type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IMG International Medical Graduate

ANY physician who received his/her basic medical degree from a medical school outside of the U.S. and Canada, regardless of citizenship (Includes U.S. citizens)

All IMG’s, regardless of citizenship, must be ECFMG certified in order to receive graduate medical training in the U.S.

Alien Physician

FOREIGN NATIONAL who received a medical degree from a medical school outside of the U.S. and Canada.

All Foreign National physicians will require a visa in order to enter the U.S. to receive graduate medical training.
Accepted Options

✓ J-1 Alien Physician sponsored by ECFMG
✓ F-1 Student with Optional Practical Training – acceptable on a case by case basis
✓ EAD holders – pending immigrants
✓ U.S. Permanent Residents

Not-Accepted Options

❖ J-2 Dependents on EAD – continuity of status and employment authorization depend on circumstances beyond control of trainee
❖ H-1B Specialty Worker – difficulties meeting prevailing wage (2005)
❖ O-1 Extraordinary Ability – residency and Fellowship positions are training level positions, not senior level
❖ TN – (Treaty NAFTA) option for Canadians and Mexicans who will engage in teaching and/or research only.
J-1 Visa Alien Physician category

- Temporary, non-immigrant visa
- Full time educational / training visa
- Two-year home residency requirement {INA & 212(e)}
- Seven year maximum for progressive training
- The J-1 Alien Physician category can ONLY be sponsored by the J Exchange Visitor program of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG).
An Integrated Effort

U.S. Department of State – Responsible for oversight of Exchange Visitor Program, a public diplomacy initiative

ECFMG – Designated by DOS as the sole sponsor of J-1 physicians in clinical training

Training Program Liaison (TPL) – Representative at institution who coordinates communication among ECFMG, program, and trainee.

J-1 Exchange Visitor – Trains in the sponsored program, maintains visa status.
Role of ECFMG

- Evaluates the qualifications of international medical graduates who seek entry into postgraduate medical education positions in the US
- Administering the EVSP — verify eligibility for program participation
- Monitoring J-1 physicians — SEVIS reporting of changes in activity and U.S. residential address
- Assuring compliance with Federal regulations
Qualifications for J-1 Sponsorship

- Foreign national
- International Medical Graduate
- Pass the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1 and Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK)
- Hold a valid ECFMG Certificate without expired examination dates
- Have a contract for a position in an ACGME-accredited program or directly associated fellowship affiliated with a medical school
- Provide a statement of need from the Ministry of Health of the country of nationality or most recent legal permanent residence. This statement must provide written assurance that the country needs specialists in the area in which the Alien Physician will receive GME training and that s/he will return to the country upon completion.
- Pay appropriate ECFMG administrative fee of $275 through the ECFMG website OASIS.
ECFMG Classification of Clinical Training Programs

**Standard Programs**
A clinical training program which is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME).
A program leading towards certification offered by a member board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS).

**Non-Standard Programs**
Advanced clinical subspecialty disciplines for which neither ACGME-accreditation nor ABMS-Certification is available.
Independent subspecialty fellowship program operating in direct association with an ACGME-accredited parent program.
ECFMG J Visa Sponsorship Application Types

**STANDARD Programs**

- ✓ **INITIAL Sponsorship:**
  - ACGME Accredited
- ✓ **CONTINUATION of Sponsorship:**
  - ACGME Accredited
  - Chief Residency
  - ABMS Member Board Exam

**NON-STANDARD Programs**

- ✓ **INITIAL Sponsorship**
- ✓ **CONTINUATION of Sponsorship**
Role of Host Institution

- Assumes responsibility for providing the J-1 Alien Physician with the GME training for which s/he is coming to the U.S.

- Cooperates with ECFMG in providing administrative oversight via the TPL. The Office of International Affairs relies on GME office and program coordinators to provide relevant information regarding J-1 Alien Physician.
Role of J-1 Alien Physician

Complies with all J-1 Alien Physician regulations including the following:

- Reports new address within 10 days of move via OASIS and AR-11
- Accepts obligations of J-1 sponsorship
- Two-year home country physical presence requirement
- Seven year max
- Maintains full time program participation
- Maintains required health insurance – *Repatriation of remains and medical evacuation is provided by ECFMG, Major medical coverage is generally provided by host institution*
- Maintains valid immigration documents (*passport, I-94, DS-2019*)
- Restrains from any unauthorized employment and/or compensation for services provided outside of GME program parameters.
- Files J-1 Sponsorship applications timely.
Initial Sponsorship Application Procedure

1. **Alien Physician/Program provides OIA with all the required documents**

2. **OIA creates on-line appointment profile with ECFMG**
   ✓ Alien Physician will receive e-mail notification from ECFMG to accept appointment, complete their portion of the electronic application, and pay $275 administrative/application fee.
   ✓ When the online process is complete OIA sends supporting documentation to ECFMG for review.

3. **ECFMG Regional Advisor Evaluates Application**
   TPL is notified of application deficiencies. If all requirements are met, application is approved and SEVIS Form DS-2019 is issued

4. **SEVIS Form DS-2019 is mailed to TPL**
   TPL forwards SEVIS Form DS-2019 to the physician
Initial Sponsorship Application Procedure

5. Physician Applies for J-1 Visa Status
   U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad, or USCIS Service Center in the U.S.

6. J-1 Physician Reports for Training
   The foreign national physician must present the TPL with evidence of approved J-1 visa status in order to begin the GME program.

7. TPL Must Report Arrival / Delay to ECFMG within Thirty Days of the Training Start Date
   Failure to report inactivates the SEVIS record

http://www.ecfmg.org/evsp/processing.html
Initial Sponsorship Application Documents

- **CONTRACT OR OFFER LETTER** specifying start and end dates of training year, specialty and subspecialty, training level, and stipend. Must be signed by application and hospital official.
- **STATEMENT OF NEED** from Ministry of Heath
- **FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM DESCRIPTION** if entering subspecialty training
- **CURRENT CURRICULUM VITAE (C.V.)**
- **COPY OF PASSPORT NAME PAGE(S)**

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION (if applicable)**

- Copies of Forms DS-2019 if the applicant has previously held J-1 visa status.
- Proof of country of most recent legal permanent residence if this differs from country of citizenship.
- Official documentation of funding source if source of funding is other than or in addition to the salary provided by teaching hospital.
- Return Airbill for expedited delivery to the TPL (optional)
- Change of category and program transfer request documentation
- Copy of Medical School Diploma and full-face passport-sized photograph (for LCME-Accredited or Canadian Medical School programs graduates)
NON-STANDARD PROGRAM DOCUMENTATION

- FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM DESCRIPTION must follow the guidelines in the EVSP Reference Guide
- AMERICAN BOARD OF MEDICAL SPECIALTIES (ABMS) MEMBER BOARD RECOGNITION
- GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE (GMEC) ENDORSEMENT & PROGRAM VERIFICATION FORM
- APPLICANT STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

J-1 Visa application checklists can be found through the ECFMG website

Initial Sponsorship in an ACGME-Accredited Clinical Training program

Initial Sponsorship in a Non-Standard Clinical Training program
Continuation Sponsorship
Application Procedure

1. **Alien Physician/Program provides OIA with all the required documents**

2. **OIA creates on-line appointment profile with ECFMG**
   - Alien Physician will receive e-mail notification from ECFMG to accept appointment, complete their portion of the electronic application, and pay $275 administrative/application fee.
   - When the online process is complete OIA sends supporting documentation to ECFMG for review.

3. **ECFMG Regional Advisor Evaluates Application**
   TPL is notified of application deficiencies. If all requirements are met, application is approved and SEVIS Form DS-2019 is issued

4. **SEVIS Form DS-2019 is mailed to TPL**
   TPL forwards SEVIS Form DS-2019 to the physician

5. **TPL contacts Alien Physician** set up appointment for clearance
**Continuation Sponsorship Application Documents**

- **CONTRACT OR OFFER LETTER** specifying start and end dates of training year, specialty and subspecialty, training level, and stipend. Must be signed by application and hospital official.
- **FORM I-644** Supplementary Statement for Graduate Medical Trainees
- **FORM I-94** Arrival/Departure Record
- **FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM DESCRIPTION** if entering subspecialty training

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION (if applicable)**

- Statement of Need: a new one is required if the application proposes to enter a new specialty, if the letter on file will expire, or if the letter on file is institution-specific and a change of host institution is proposed.
- Official documentation of funding source if source of funding is other than or in addition to the salary provided by teaching hospital
- Return Airbill for expedited delivery to the TPL (optional)
- Exception Extension Beyond the Maximum Duration Request Documentation
NON-STANDARD PROGRAM DOCUMENTATION

- FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM DESCRIPTION must follow the guidelines in the EVSP Reference Guide
- AMERICAN BOARD OF MEDICAL SPECIALTIES (ABMS) MEMBER BOARD RECOGNITION
- GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE (GMEC) ENDORSEMENT & PROGRAM VERIFICATION FORM
- APPLICANT STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

J-1 Visa application checklists can be found through the ECFMG website

Continuation Sponsorship in an ACGME-Accredited Clinical Training program

Continuation Sponsorship in a Non-Standard Clinical Training program
J-1 Physicians in Graduate Medical Education

One of the most common activities in which foreign national physicians engage while in the U.S. is graduate medical education (GME). Graduate medical education is commonly referred to as ‘residency’ or as a ‘fellowship’ to refer to more advanced specialized levels of medical training. This is a didactic activity in a medical specialty following completion of a recognized undergraduate medical school. Such training is required in preparation for independent medical practice.

International Medical Graduates are required to:

- Complete ECFMG certification by meeting examination and credentialing requirements
- Apply for US Residency Training Position through an Electronic Residency Application System (ERAS), administered by AAMC, interview with teaching hospital programs, and enroll in the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP)
- Secure a contract / letter of offer
- Seek appropriate US training visa / status. The University of Texas Medical School at Houston recognizes the J-1 exchange visitor visa as the appropriate mechanism to cover foreign medical graduates interested in the exchange of medical knowledge and skills in education. The UTMSH does not sponsor H-1B visas for purposes of medical training and therefore it is not an acceptable visa option for UTHSC-H residents and fellows in its graduate medical education training programs. The J-1 exchange visitor visa must be obtained through sponsorship from the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG). Application for J-1 visa sponsorship form ECFMG requires a coordinated effort of the International Medical Graduate applicant (IMG), ECFMG Regional Advisor, and Training Program Liaison (TPL) from The UTHSC-H Office of International Affairs, and the Training Program Coordinator from the teaching hospital /school.
Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program (EVSP)


About EVSP

Foreign national physicians who seek entry into U.S. programs of graduate medical education or training must obtain an appropriate visa that permits clinical training activities. One visa commonly used by foreign national physicians is the J-1, a temporary nonimmigrant visa reserved for participants in the Exchange Visitor Program. As a public diplomacy initiative of the U.S. Department of State, the Exchange Visitor Program was established to enhance international exchange and mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other nations.

ECFMG is authorized by the U.S. Department of State to sponsor J-1 Exchange Visitor physicians enrolled in accredited programs of graduate medical education or training or advanced research programs (involving primarily observation, consultation, teaching or research). Although many universities and research institutions in the United States are authorized to sponsor Exchange Visitors in the categories of student or research scholar, ECFMG is the sole sponsor of J-1 physicians in clinical training programs.

ECFMG administers its sponsorship program in accordance with federal regulation (22 CFR §52) and is responsible to ensure that all Exchange Visitors and host institutions meet the federal requirements for participation. As part of its program, ECFMG also provides instruction and guidance to teaching hospitals, medical specialty organizations, universities, and foreign national physicians on the credential and immigration requirements for J-1 visa sponsorship.

http://www.ecfmg.org/evsp/index.html
Time is Critical - Plan Ahead!

- Processing time for gathering and reviewing documents, creating online profile, and submitting paperwork to ECFMG: 10 to 20 business days

- Processing time for ECFMG to review, process, and issue DS-2019: 4 to 6 weeks
  *For Non-Standard programs 6 to 8 weeks*
Completing the Training Program

- Complete OIA check-out form at least 30 days prior completion day.
- OIA notifies ECFMG once an Alien Physician has completed the program.
Office of International Affairs Staff

For the 2012 training program:

- Monica Piñón  A-F
- Kristina Brown  G-Lin
- Mario Sanchez  Lio-R
- Karen Oandasan  S-Y
- Maria C. Arevalo  Z

Staff Members Contact Information
Questions?

Office of International Affairs
713-500-3176
www.uth.tmc.edu/intlaffairs

General E-mail
utoiahouston@uth.tmc.edu