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Association for Residency Coordinators in Surgery

IMGs: Academic and Immigration Requirements

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Entry into U.S. GME

Foreign National Physicians and IMGs

- Complete ECFMG Certification (*if IMG*)
 - Take appropriate examinations
 - Meet credentialing requirements
- Apply for U.S. Residency Training Position
 - Apply to ERAS
 - Interview with programs
 - Enroll in the NRMP Match
 - Secure a contract/letter of offer
- Seek Appropriate U.S. Training Visa / Status (*if foreign national physician*)

Pre-Screening IMGs

1. Medical Credentials
2. Immigration History
3. Professional Goals
4. Personal Considerations

1. Medical Credentials

- Valid ECFMG Certificate
- Valid Medical Examinations
 - For GME and Licensure
- Prerequisite Training

ECFMG Certification

1. Verified Medical Education Credentials
 - Transcripts and Diploma
2. Passing Examinations
 - USMLE (or other previously accepted exams)

Official Source

ECFMG® Certification Status Report - ERAS, CVS

Valid Medical Examinations

- Exam Type (USMLE, FLEX, FMGEMS)
- Dates Administered
- Number of Attempts
- Exam Scores
- Licensure Requirement for Position

Official Source

USMLE Transcript, State Medical License

ECFMG Certification/Exam Requirements

<i>Prior Requirements*</i>	Current Requirements
USMLE Step 1 Basic Science	USMLE Step 1 Basic Science
USMLE Step 2 Clinical Science	USMLE Step 2 CK Clinical Knowledge
ECFMG Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA)	USMLE Step 2 CS Clinical Skills
English language proficiency test (TOEFL)	Spoken English Proficiency (SEP) is part of the USMLE Step 2 CS

***A valid ECFMG Certificate may be based on previously-administered examinations.**

Prerequisite Training

- Residency Training U.S. or Abroad
- Preliminary or Categorical
- Board Credit
- Change in Specialty
- Research
- Observership

Best Sources

Institution, Specialty Board, ECFMG, Physician

2. Immigration History

- Visa Status – Current and Previous
- Type/s of Activity
- Length/s of Stay
- Consistent Birth, Citizenship, LPR countries
- Subject to the Return Home Obligation INA §212(e)
- Restrictions in current status
- Portability (*if transferring*)
- Dependents

Best Sources

ERAS Applicant Profile, US sponsoring Institution, employer, Form DS-2019, Form I 717, Form I-20, I-94 Record, Passport, CV

Immigration Terms

- **“Visa”** - A permit granted for entry into the U.S., stamp in the passport; expiration date applies to timetable for entry only, can expire once in the U.S.
- **“Visa Status”** – Immigration classification which reflects the authorized activity and timeframe for U.S. stay (i.e. “B-1 status” for tourist/visitor, “J-1 status” for exchange visitor physician, “H-1B status” for specialty worker/physician). Authorized stay may be limited to specific date or issued for “duration of stay” while participating in the approved activity.

3. Professional Goals

- Recent Graduate and First-time Resident
- Retraining in U.S.
- Desire to Live/Work in Primary Care in the U.S.
- Changing Specialty to Obtain a GME Contract
- Expects Credit for Previous International Training
- Plans Career in Research
- Intends to Return Home after U.S. Training

Best Sources

CV, Training History, ERAS Applications, Communicate with the Physician

4. Personal Considerations

- Dependents/Family in the U.S. or Abroad
- Family's Immigration Status
- Spouse's Profession
- Special needs/requests
- Personal/outside Funding

Best Source

Communicate with Physician

Effective Pre-screening of IMGs

- Who should ask what, when, why?

Best Practices

- Standardize institutional/program policies
- Ensure accuracy in gathering/evaluating facts
- Develop effective communication

Most Common Visa Types for Clinical Training

	H-1	J-1
Regulatory Oversight	Departments of Labor & Homeland Security	Departments of State & Homeland Security, ECFMG
Examinations	USMLE Steps 1, 2CK, 2CS,3	USMLE Steps 1, 2CK, 2CS
Time Limit	6 years maximum	7 years maximum
Funding	U.S. employer salary only	Multiple sources acceptable
212(e)& 214(b)	No	Yes
EAD for Spouse	No, no work permit for H-4	Yes, J-2 can apply for work authorization
Processing Time/Fees	\$ 1,500 - \$6,000+ (attorneys, family etc.) Service Ctr./Consulate	\$300 (ECFMG+SEVIS) 4-6 weeks at ECFMG + Service Ctr/Consulate

Common Visa Types for Clinical Training

	J-2 in GME	F-1
Regulatory Oversight	Departments of State & Homeland Security, ECFMG	Departments of State & Homeland Security, U.S. Medical School
Examinations	<i>USMLE Steps 1, 2CK, 2CS</i>	<i>USMLE Steps 1, 2CK, 2CS</i>
Time Limit	Tied to J-1 principle	1 year maximum on OPT
Funding	U.S. employer salary only	Multiple sources acceptable
212(e)& 214(b)	Yes	No
U.S.C.I.S.	Employment Authorization Document	Employment Authorization Document
Processing Time/Fees	2-5 months \$180, with possible increase	2-5 months \$180, with possible increase

IMGs and Required Reporting

- Arrival / Delays / No show
- Any Change in the Approved Training
 - Remediation
 - Leave of absence/maternity leave
 - Licensure delays
 - Proposed off-site rotations
 - Proposed early advancements
 - Resignation
 - Contract termination
 - Legal Allegations
 - Grievance Process

IMGs and International Travel

- Consider the Time and the *Risk*:

If the IMG resident departs the U.S. with an expired visa stamp in the passport, visa renewal will be required to re-enter. The visa application process may involve lengthy security clearances, etc. and visa issuance/renewal cannot be guaranteed.

- If the IMG resident **MUST** Travel:

- Discuss contract conditions - delay, failure to return, etc.
- Refer to www.state.gov/travel
- J-1s should contact ECFMG and refer to:
<http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/travel.html>

J-1 Visa Sponsorship Process

1. TPL and Physician Complete Application, Submit to ECFMG
2. ECFMG Regional Advisor Evaluates Application
 - TPL is notified of application deficiencies
 - If all requirements are met, application is approved
 - Electronic SEVIS record is created
 - SEVIS Form DS-2019 is issued
3. SEVIS Form DS-2019 is mailed to TPL
 - TPL makes copy for hospital records
 - TPL forwards SEVIS Form DS-2019 to the physician

J-1 Visa Sponsorship Process

(continued)

4. Physician Applies for J-1 Visa Status

- U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad, or USCIS Regional Service Center in the U.S.
- Requires electronic SEVIS Record and Form DS-2019

For detailed instructions see:

Option 1: Apply at U.S. Embassy or Consulate Abroad

<http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/obtainingvisa/index.html>

Option 2: Apply for Change of Visa Status in the U.S.

<http://www.uscis.gov>

J-1 Visa Sponsorship Process

(continued)

5. 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. Documentation includes:
 - J-1 Visa Stamp in Passport
 - J-1 D/S (Duration of Status) on I-94 Arrival/Departure Record

6. TPL Must Report Arrival / Delay to ECFMG within Thirty Days of the Training Start Date

- Failure to report *inactivates* the SEVIS record

Continuation of J-1 Visa Sponsorship

1. ECFMG continued sponsorship is tied to progression in a full-time GME program as evidenced by a contract (usually offered on an annual basis)
2. ECFMG requires four to six week processing time
3. Sponsorship renewal must be **approved** prior to expiration of current training date on SEVIS Form DS-2019
4. Renewal of an expired J-1 visa stamp in the passport is NOT required to remain the U.S.

Special Case Types

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

Department of State Petitions

Changes in J-1 category, extensions beyond seven years, reinstatements, miscellaneous special petitions/advisories

Extensions to Sit for an ABMS-member Board Examination

Program Completion

30 Day Grace Period

- USCIS grants a 30 day grace period of lawful status from the expiration of the Form DS-2019 or leaving the program
...whichever comes first
- There is no training or employment authorization during the grace period

Considerations Specific to IMGs in General Surgery

Preliminary Years	Research Before/During Training	Subspecialty Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give IMGs competitive edge• Requires advance to categorical• Extends overall duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prior to residency requires change of category• During residency extends overall duration; visa timeframe considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires careful planning• Must change visa status or petition for an exceptional extension if not completed within allowed visa status maximum

EVSP Resources Review

- EVSP Homepage @ <http://www.ecfmg.org/evsp/index.html> for access to:
 - EVSP *Reference Guide*
 - EVSP *Fact Sheet*
 - Updates and Memoranda
 - Application Materials
- U.S. Department of State Exchange Visitor Program @ <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges>
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services @ www.uscis.gov
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security @ www.dhs.gov/dhspublic

Questions?

Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program

Tel: (215) 823-2121

Fax: (215) 386-9766

www.ecfmq.org

(EVSP - J-1 Visa Sponsorship)