



TO: Training Program Liaisons (TPLs) and J-1 Exchange Visitor Physicians
FROM: ECFMG® Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program
RE: Request for a Change of J-1 Visa Category

The Fulbright-Hays Act of the United States prescribes, among others, the following categories of eligible J-1 exchange participants: students, scholars, professors, researchers, and alien physicians. The Act authorizes non-immigrants to enter the United States as "Exchange Visitors" on J-1 visas to participate in programs for temporary training. ECFMG cannot initiate J-1 sponsorship for entry into a clinical program of graduate medical education (GME) for an individual in the United States in a J-1 visa category other than "alien physician" at the time of application. In some cases, ECFMG can petition the U.S. Department of State (DOS) for permission to do so. The DOS has indicated worthy case petitions must document consistency with and relationship to one's original exchange objective. Additionally, the DOS has indicated that applicants who have applied for or received a waiver of a two-year home country physical presence requirement associated with their current or any previous J status are not good candidates for a change in J-1 category.

Receipt of the documentation listed below allows ECFMG to evaluate an individual's eligibility to petition the DOS for a change in category.

- Complete Application for ECFMG Sponsorship.** Please see J-1 Visa Sponsorship Applications at <http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/application-online.html> for additional information on the application process.
- Copies of all current and previous Forms DS-2019.**
- Copy of current Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record.**
- Statement of Educational Objectives (SEO) from Applicant.** Letter from the applicant outlining his/her educational objectives in the United States, correlation between current research activities and proposed clinical activities, and how this objective relates to anticipated activities upon return to the home country.
- Research Mentor Support Letter.** Letter of support from current research program director/mentor clearly explaining how the research activities relate to the proposed clinical training activity.
- Responsible Officer Form.** Signed acknowledgment from the Responsible Officer (RO) or Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) of the current sponsoring J-1 program confirming his/her knowledge that (1) a change in category is being pursued, and (2) program release and transfer will be granted if DOS approves the requested change in category; requested acknowledgement should be confirmed through completion of the "Responsible Officer/Alternate Responsible Officer Change of Category Acknowledgement" form available at <http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/category.pdf>.
- Clinical Program Director Support Letter.** Letter of support from proposed clinical program director clearly explaining how the research activities relate to the proposed clinical training activity.

- **ECFMG Application Fees of \$435.00.** Fees include the \$275.00 regular application fee + \$160.00 for change of category case review and preparation. Preferred method of payment is through ECFMG's online payment system, OASIS.
- **DOS Fee of \$233.00.** This fee is separate from any and all ECFMG fees. If possible, this fee should be paid to ECFMG through OASIS. ECFMG will, in turn, submit payment to DOS on behalf of the applicant.
- **Proof of SEVIS Payment (i.e., receipt).**
 - The \$180.00 SEVIS fee must be paid for every change of category petition, even if paid previously upon original entry to the United States.
 - The fee is payable online at fmjfee.com; a printable receipt will be immediately available.
 - Information from the current (i.e., research) Form DS-2019 must be used to complete payment.

Upon receipt and review of the above items, ECFMG will determine an individual's eligibility to request a change of category from the DOS. As individual circumstances vary, additional documentation may also be requested. The DOS reserves up to 60 days for review of and decision on a change of category request.

It is important to keep in mind that if a change in visa category is approved, ECFMG sponsorship is limited to the specific training/timeframe requested in the original petition. Any deviation from the original training plan, including subspecialty training, must be approved through re-petition to the DOS. It is also imperative to remember that all applicants for a change in category are required to maintain J-1 status throughout the petition process. There is no pending status while a petition is being reviewed by the DOS.

Please do not hesitate to contact Tracy Wallowicz at twallowicz@ecfm.org with questions about the process by which a change of category can be requested.