



Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates:

**A Tutorial for Training Program Liaisons (TPLs)
and Program Coordinators**

The following tutorial is designed to provide a basic introduction to ECFMG Certification and other important requirements for International Medical Graduates (IMGs) to participate in U.S. programs of graduate medical education.

ECFMG

Private, Non-profit Organization

Organizational Members

- American Board of Medical Specialties® (ABMS)
- American Medical Association (AMA)
- Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)
- Association for Hospital Medical Education (AHME)
- Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States, Inc (FSMB)
- National Medical Association

ECFMG Services

- ECFMG Certification
- Certification Verification Service (CVS)
- Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS[®])
- Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program (EVSP)

“IMG” Definition

An **International Medical Graduate** (IMG) is any physician who received his/her basic medical degree or qualification from a medical school outside of the U.S. and Canada, regardless of citizenship

- This includes any U.S. citizen who received a medical degree from a school outside of the U.S. and Canada

ECFMG Certification

ECFMG Certification

ECFMG Certification assures residency program directors and the U.S. public that the international medical graduate (IMG) has met minimum standards to enter U.S. residency programs

ECFMG Certification is required for:

- IMG entry into ACGME-accredited GME
- Taking USMLE Step 3
- State licensure
- J-1 visa sponsorship / ECFMG

Medical Education Credential Requirements for ECFMG Certification

Effective February 1, 2004

- Completion of a medical school curriculum of at least **four academic years**
- Medical school and graduation year listed in the International Medical Education Directory (IMED) *See <http://IMED.ecfm.org>*
- Documented completion of all requirements for, and receipt of, **final medical diploma**
- **Primary source verification** of medical diploma *and* **final medical school transcript** by ECFMG

Examination Requirements for ECFMG Certification

Prior Requirements*	Current Requirements
USMLE™ Step 1 Basic Science	USMLE Step 1
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®)	USMLE Step 2 CS has a distinct, separately scored spoken English proficiency subcomponent

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

ECFMG Certification Resources

- General Certification Information @ <http://www.ecfm.org/cert/index.html>
- ECFMG Certification Fact Sheet @ <http://www.ecfm.org/cert/certfact.html>
- Requirements for Certification @ <http://www.ecfm.org/2007ib/>
- E-Newsletter: *The ECFMG Reporter*
 - ✓ latest information delivered via e-mail
 - ✓ subscribe on the ECFMG website

Section Review

1. What is the role of ECFMG?

<http://www.ecfm.org/about.html>

2. What are the current requirements for ECFMG Certification?

<http://www.ecfm.org/cert/certfact.html>

3. How does one subscribe to the *ECFMG Reporter*?

<http://www.ecfm.org/reporter/subscribe.html>

Certification Verification Service (CVS)

Certification Verification Service (CVS)

ECFMG's Certification Verification Service (CVS) provides prompt, primary source confirmation of an IMG's ECFMG certification status. This information is provided to residency programs, state medical boards and other organizations, such as hospitals and HMOs.

- Satisfies JCAHO requirement for primary-source verification of IMG's medical school completion
- No charge for GME programs

CVS ON-LINE

- Web-based requests for confirmation of ECFMG Certification status
- Confirmations sent via postal mail
- Establish an account for your program by sending e-mail to cvsonline@ecfm.org
- <https://cvsonline2.ecfm.org>

Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS)

ERAS Overview

- Most residency and fellowship programs require IMGs to apply through ERAS
- Developed by the AAMC and administered by ECFMG for IMGs, ERAS transmits the following to program directors through the Internet:
 - residency applications
 - letters of recommendation
 - deans' letters/MSPEs
 - transcripts
 - other support documentation

Section Review

4. How does a program verify ECFMG Certification for licensure, JCAHO audits, etc?

<http://www.ecfm.org/cvs/index.html>

5. What is ERAS?

<http://www.ecfm.org/eras/index.html>

6. What information is transmitted to program directors through ERAS?

<http://www.ecfm.org/eras/index.html>

Immigration and the J-1 Visa

Who Needs a Visa?

All **foreign national*** physicians need appropriate visas to participate in U.S. graduate medical education (GME)

- Foreign national physicians may be U.S. medical school graduates or IMGs; all foreign national physicians need visas to train in U.S. GME
- IMGs** , regardless of citizenship, need ECFMG Certification for U.S. GME, not all IMGs need visas

*Foreign national = non-U.S. citizen or permanent resident

** Individuals who have successfully completed a Fifth Pathway program are not required to be ECFMG-certified before entering U.S. GME.

Entry into U.S. GME

Foreign National Physicians and IMGs

- Complete ECFMG Certification (IMGs, excluding Fifth Pathways)
 - pass appropriate examinations
 - meet credentialing requirements
- Apply for U.S. Residency Training Position
 - apply through ERAS
 - interview with GME programs
 - register with the NRMP Match
 - secure a contract/letter of offer
- Seek Appropriate U.S. Training Visa/Status
(if foreign national physician)

Most Common Visa Types for Foreign National Physicians in U.S. GME

- F-1 "Student"
- H1-B "Specialty Occupation Worker"
- J-1 "Alien Physician"
- J-2 "Dependent"
 - ✓ J-2 is defined as the spouse or minor child of J-1 visa holder
- O-1 of "Extraordinary Merit"

J-1 Exchange Visitor Program

- Established by Congress in 1948
- Administered by the U.S. Department of State
- Regulatory Purpose: *“ . . . to provide foreign nationals with opportunities to participate in educational and cultural programs in the United States and return home to share their experiences and to encourage Americans to participate in educational and cultural programs in other countries.”* 22 CFR 62
- Many colleges and universities serve as sponsor for other “J” categories of participation; ECFMG is the only sponsor for clinical training in the “alien physician” category

ECFMG: Program Sponsor for All J-1 Physicians in Clinical Training

22CFR§62.27(b)

- ECFMG sponsored J-1 = “alien physician” category
- Temporary, non-immigrant visa
- Full-time educational training (GME program)
 - not employment
- Two-year home residency obligation, *INA §212(e)*
- Seven-year maximum for progressive training

Section Review

7. All IMGs, regardless of citizenship, must be ECFMG Certified. True or False?

<http://www.ecfm.org/cert/index.html>

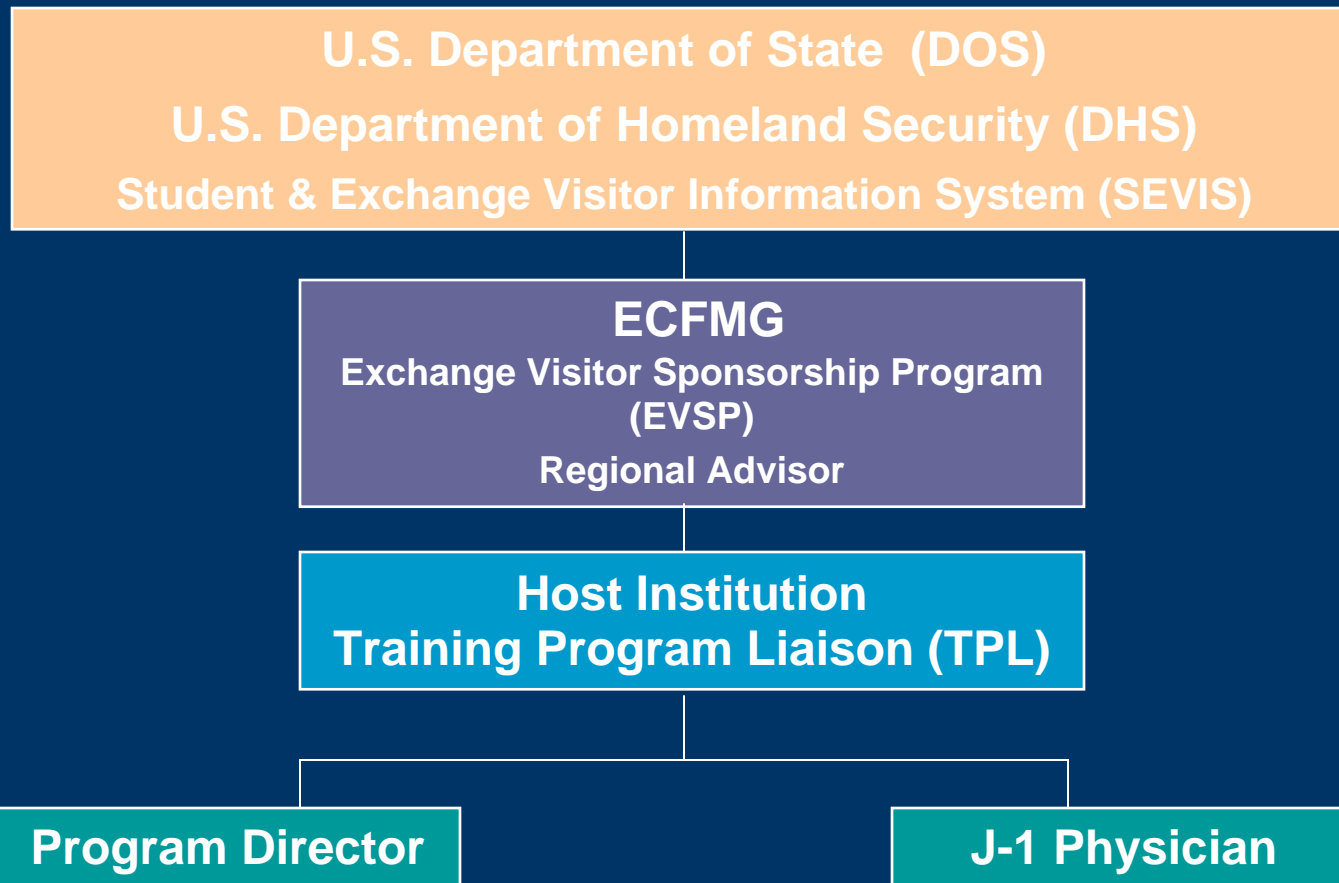
8. Various visa options are available to the foreign national IMG pursuing graduate medical education. True or False?

<http://www.ecfm.org/conference/presentations/RAronson.pdf>

9. ECFMG is designated by the U.S. Department of State as the sole sponsor of J-1 physicians in clinical training. True or False?

<http://www.exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges/private/physician.htm>

J-1 Visa Sponsorship: An Integrated Process



Roles and Responsibilities in the J-1 Visa Sponsorship Process

- **DOS and DHS** oversee J-1 program and visa processes
 - ✓ Track J, F, M visa holders in the **SEVIS** database
- ECFMG, through its EVSP **Regional Advisors**, evaluates applications and approves visa sponsorship
 - ✓ Interfaces with **DOS** and **DHS** in **SEVIS** tracking
- Host Institution/ **TPL** cooperate with ECFMG in providing on-site monitoring of J-1 physicians
- **J-1 physician** and J-2 dependents must comply with all pertinent immigration laws and regulations

What is "SEVIS"

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System

- Data exchange with DHS/DOS
- Tracks immigration activities of all non-immigrant students and exchange visitors (J, F, M visa holders and dependents)
- Accessed by Consulates, Embassies, ports-of-entry and other DHS agencies
- ECFMG creates and updates SEVIS records for J-1 "alien physicians"

EVSP Regional Advisors

- Ensure full compliance J-1 regulations as mandated by DOS and DHS
- Serve as authorized officials to interface with the SEVIS system and issue SEVIS Forms DS-2019 confirming ECFMG sponsorship
- Familiar with GME requirements and programs offered at specific institutions
- First line of communication with TPLs regarding J-1 trainees

Training Program Liaison (TPL)

- Designee of the host institution
 - ✓ academic medical center or residency program
- Familiar with J-1 regulations
- Serves as official link between ECFMG, host institution, and J-1 physician
- Provides on-site assistance to and monitoring of J-1 physicians

J-1 Physician: Terms and Obligations of J-1 Sponsorship

- J-1 physician must have a pre-defined educational plan and objective for coming to the U.S. as evidenced by a full-time contract for training in an approved program of graduate medical education
- J-1 physicians and J-2 dependents must comply with all U.S. laws and regulations pertaining to foreign nationals

J-1 Physician: Terms and Obligations of J-1 Sponsorship

(continued)

- J-1 physician must demonstrate sufficient ties to the home country and intention to return home upon completion of training
- All J-1 physicians and accompanying J-2 dependents must return to the country of most recent legal permanent residence for a minimum of two years upon completion of training
 - ✓ Two-year obligation must be fulfilled or waived before J-1 is eligible for a change in U.S. visa status per §212(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended

Section Review

10. What is SEVIS?

<http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/index.htm>

11. Where can I find additional information about ECFMG's Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program and the requirements for J-1 visa sponsorship?

Fact Sheet

<http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/j1fact.html>

Reference Guide

<http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/evsprfgd.pdf>

General J-1 Visa Sponsorship Eligibility and Requirements

(per U.S. Code of Federal Regulations)

- Adequate Prior Education
- ECFMG Certificate (without expired exam dates, if applicable)
 - passing scores on appropriate examinations
 - English competency
- Signed GME Contract or Letter of Offer from U.S. Host Institution
- “Statement of Need” from Home Country Ministry of Health

J-1 Sponsorship Application Process

J-1 Physician + TPL = Complete Application

Sponsorship Available for Participation in:

- ACGME Accredited Residency Training
- ACGME Accredited Subspecialty Training
- Non-Standard Programs (*advanced cutting edge fellowships*)
- Extension for Board Examinations

Sponsorship Application Materials Available @

<http://www.ecfmg.org/evsp/index.html>

Online Application Payment and Status updates through **OASIS**

<http://www.ecfmg.org>

6 Steps of the 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

6 Steps of the 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 US
- 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://uscis.gov/graphics/index.htm>

6 Steps of the 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

Section Review

12. Where can I find current information on the J-1 visa sponsorship process?

See Reference Guide

<http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/index.html>

13. The TPL is required to report the initial arrival of the J-1 physician to ECFMG. True or False?

<http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/index.html>

Continuation of J-1 Visa Sponsorship

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

Required J-1 Reporting by Host Institutions & TPLs

- Arrival / Delays – Within 30 days
- Any Change in the Approved Training Plan
 - Remediation
 - Leave of absence
 - Licensure delay
 - Proposed off-site rotations
 - Proposed early advancements
 - Resignation
 - Contract termination
- Legal Concerns /Allegations, Internal Hearings, etc.

Maintaining J-1 Visa Status

- Strict Adherence to J-1 Regulations *(22CFR§62)*
<http://www.exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges>
- Compliance With All U.S Immigration Laws
<http://uscis.gov/graphics/index.htm>
- Reporting of U.S. Address
<http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov>
- Valid Documentation
 - ✓ Uninterrupted ECFMG Sponsorship / Valid SEVIS Form DS-2019
 - ✓ Valid Form I-94
<http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/index.html>

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL *IS DISCOURAGED* DURING TRAINING PROGRAMS

■ Why?

If the J-1 physician 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 J-1 renewal cannot be guaranteed.

■ If the J-1 Physician **MUST** Travel:

- Discuss contract conditions - delay, failure to return, etc.
- Refer to www.state.gov/travelandbusiness
- Request travel documents from ECFMG
 - ✓ Endorsed SEVIS Form DS-2019
 - ✓ "Letter of Good Standing"

Section Review

14. The Host Institution must pre-notify ECFMG of any proposed change in the J-1 physician's approved training plan (maternity leave, probation, termination etc.) True or False?

<http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/index.html>

15. Where can J-1 physicians find updated information on immigration requirements for travel from and returning to the U.S.?

www.state.gov/travelandbusiness

EVSP Resources Review

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