



TO: Training Program Liaisons (TPLs) and J-1 Exchange Visitor Physicians

FROM: ECFMG® Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program (EVSP)

RE: Request for a Change of J-1 Visa Category

The information provided in this memorandum outlines the process and requirements to file a change of category request with the U.S. Department of State (DOS) through ECFMG. Please read all of the information below very carefully before submitting an application requesting a change of category from J-1 “research scholar” to J-1 “alien physician.”

Individuals in the United States as J-1 “research scholars” at the time of application to ECFMG who wish to request sponsorship in the “alien physician” category must file a formal change of category request with the DOS through ECFMG/EVSP. The DOS has indicated that worthy change of category requests 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* eligible to apply for a change of J-1 category.

Receipt of the documentation listed below allows ECFMG to evaluate an individual's eligibility to seek a change of 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 and all general application requirements.
- **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 of category is being pursued, (2) the Exchange Visitor will maintain J-1 status while the change of category request is pending and (3) program release and SEVIS transfer will be granted if DOS approves the requested change in category; the requested acknowledgement must 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 \$525.00.** Fees include the \$325.00 regular application fee + \$200.00 for change of category case review and preparation. Preferred method of payment is through ECFMG's on-line payment system, OASIS.
- **DOS Fee of \$367.00.** 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 request, even if paid previously upon original entry to the United States.
 - The fee is payable on-line at www.fmjfee.com; a printable receipt will be immediately available upon payment.
 - Information from the *current* (i.e., research) Form DS-2019 must be used to complete payment.

All required documentation should be uploaded by the TPL and/or applicant through EVNet or OASIS at the time of application to ECFMG. Upon receipt and review of all above-listed documentation and fees, 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.

Please note the following with respect to the change of category process and requirements:

- Applicants must maintain J-1 "research scholar" status while a change of category request is pending with the DOS; there is no provisional status while a case is pending.
- The DOS reserves up to 60 days for review of and decision of all change of category requests.
- ECFMG is unlikely to receive status updates while a case is pending with the DOS; generally, ECFMG will be notified only when a decision has been reached. Therefore, it is unnecessary to call/e-mail for status updates. Applicants and TPLs will be informed immediately once the DOS provides ECFMG with notification of a case decision.
- The start date of an ECFMG-issued Form DS-2019 following DOS change of category approval is determined by the date ECFMG is authorized to print the form, even if that date falls after the originally proposed start date. Forms cannot be backdated by ECFMG.
- If a change of visa category is approved, ECFMG sponsorship is limited to the specific training/timeframe requested in the original request. Any deviation from the original training plan, including subspecialty training, must be approved through formal request to and review by the DOS.

Please do not hesitate to contact Michelle Fisher at mfisher@ecfm.org with questions about the change of category process.