

J-1 Visa Helpful Hints for Program Administrators

Getting Started

- When submitting a J-1 application, please complete the appropriate checklist and place it on top of all required application materials, in the order that they are listed on the checklist. This helps us process requests more efficiently!
- Please submit original forms with original signatures. It is important that we have original signatures on file for **all** visa application materials.

Let Us Help!

- If you are unsure of how to complete a form, please email Katy Cich at krcich@buffalo.edu with your question so that both parties have a written record of the question and answer. We use emails to keep track of the timeline of each application, and to periodically generate helpful hints and FAQ's so that everyone can benefit from each other's questions.

General Requirements (to be completed before application for J-1 visa sponsorship through ECFMG):

- graduate from allopathic medical school
- hold a standard ECFMG certificate without expired examination dates, if applicable
- pass USMLE Step 1 and Step 2 Clinical Knowledge.

Application

- Donna Cummiskey is the Training Program Liaison (TPL) for **all** visa applications. Please leave areas designated for the TPL signature and information blank.
- Health and Accident Insurance: New residents will not know what insurance they will have and should write "covered under contract" in this area on the form. Continuing residents should complete this section naming their current carrier.

Contract

- All contracts must be fully executed before they can be sent to ECFMG as part of a completed J-1 application.
- Please allow **at least two weeks** for VA contracts to be returned to the GME office with signatures if they are not yet signed when submitted to the GME office for processing.
- We are happy to send contracts to the VA for signatures. If you prefer to get the signature yourself (or have an "in" we don't) you may certainly do so!

Statement of Need

- When submitting a contract to GME for use in obtaining a Statement of Need, please include a letter stating this purpose with the contract. This will help us to know what you need and process the contract right away!
- The dates specified on the Statement of Need from the applicant's home country must **match or encompass** the dates specified on the application and contract.
- The program name must **exactly** match the program name specified on the application and contract.
- J-1 applications are not complete without the required Statement of Need from the applicant's home country and therefore can not be sent to ECFMG until this document is received in GME. If the applicant is notified that the home country has sent the Statement of Need directly to ECFMG, please notify us immediately so we can forward the rest of the application.

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Fellowship Program Description

- Please include **only** the required information according to ECFMG guidelines. While extra information can sometimes be helpful, it can often be detrimental in visa applications, and can delay visa approval by requiring the reviewer to spend extra time reading.
- Programs are encouraged to provide us with a fellowship description that meets ECFMG guidelines that we will attach to all applications for that program. This may save you time and effort!

Statement of Educational Objectives

- Residents can not be sponsored for a residency position in J status if they have previously been sponsored for a fellowship position. All applicants should be aware of this and should avoid indicating a desire to complete residency training following fellowship training
- J sponsorship is dependent upon the promise to return to the home country following the completion of training. Applicants should therefore avoid statements indicating the intent to remain in the U.S..

Mailing and Payment

- Whenever possible, applicants should pay their \$200 SEVIS fee online, through the ECFMG website. If an applicant needs to pay with a check, please allow **at least two to three weeks** of additional processing time once the application has been sent to ECFMG.
- If a resident chooses to pay their SEVIS fee online, please include proof of their payment with their application. This will help us to avoid deficiency notices for non-payment of fees.
- It has been our experience that the fastest way to receive a DS-2019 is for the GME office to fax the completed application, and for ECFMG to send the DS-2019 to our office through US mail.
- If you prefer to use an overnight delivery service rather than the fax/USPS method mentioned above, please include two **FedEx** envelopes and airbills, complete with your department's account information. USPS overnight service does **not** get delivered to GME -- it is delivered to the North Campus and then goes into campus mail. This service should be avoided.

DS-2019

- Please allow **AT LEAST** one week for delivery of the DS-2019 to GME after the applicant receives online notification that his/her DS-2019 has been issued. This time allows for ECFMG to process and mail the paperwork, and for it to be received in the GME office via the UB campus mail delivery system.

Resident Leave or Other Extension of PGY

- Please notify the GME office **as soon as you know that a resident plans to go out on leave**. We are required to notify ECFMG of any planned leave prior to the start of the leave.
- Advance notice also allows us to address any effect the leave will have on the resident's visa status, as well as their eligibility for program completion.
- Our notice to ECFMG regarding medical leave which may result in an extension of the PGY must include a letter from the Program Director stating dates and reason(s) for the leave, a letter from the resident confirming that he/she will not participate in any other training program or employment during the leave, and a letter from the employer confirming that the resident will maintain medical insurance for the duration of the leave and how (i.e., fully paid, COBRA, through spouse).
- Our notice to ECFMG regarding an extension of the PGY for another reason (i.e., probation) must include the same three elements revised to reflect the actual circumstance