

# An Introduction to ECFMG

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A Beginner's Course for  
Training Program Liaisons (TPLs) & Hospital Staff

EVSP Fall Webinar Series  
October 6, 2009

# Learning Objectives

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Develop an understanding of:

- ECFMG's role and services
  - Current ECFMG Certification requirements
- Visa Options for Foreign National Physicians in GME
  - Most common visas
  - ECFMG's Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program (EVSP)
    - ✓ J-1 federal regulations
    - ✓ Responsibilities of training institution / program
    - ✓ Critical issues

# ECFMG

## Private, Nonprofit Organization

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### 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 (NMA)

# ECFMG Certification

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

## **ECFMG Certification is required for:**

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

# International Medical Graduate (IMG)

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An “IMG” is a physician who received his/her basic medical degree 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

# IMGs & Entry into U.S. GME

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- Complete ECFMG Certification
- Apply for U.S. Residency Training Position
  - Apply via 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)*

# ECFMG Certification Requirements

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## ■ Medical Education Credentials

- Completion of a medical school curriculum of at least 4 years
- School and graduation year listed in ***The International Medical Education Directory (IMED)***  
*[www.faimer.org/resources/imed.html](http://www.faimer.org/resources/imed.html)*
- Primary-source verification of medical diploma and transcript(s) by ECFMG

## ■ USMLE Exams

- Step 1 Basic Science
- Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK)
- Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS)

# ECFMG Certification Resources

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

# CVS Online\*

*\*Free for GME Programs*

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- Web-based requests for confirmation of ECFMG Certification status
- Report sent by e-mail
- Establish an account for your program by sending e-mail to [cvsonline@ecfm.org](mailto:cvsonline@ecfm.org)
- <http://www.ecfm.org/cvs>

# ERAS Electronic Residency Application Service

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ECFMG serves as the designated Dean's Office for IMGs applying to US residency training programs via ERAS.

ERAS Support Services at ECFMG collects and transmits applicant supporting documents to the ERAS Post Office:

- Photograph
- Letters of recommendation
- Medical student performance evaluations (MSPEs)
- Medical school transcripts
- ECFMG certification status
- USMLE transcripts (at the request of the applicant)

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

# Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program (EVSP)

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- Visa Sponsor for all J-1 physicians in clinical training  
*22CFR§62.27(b)*
- Cooperates with U.S. Department of State (DOS) and U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in tracking of J-1 physicians in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) database
- Collaborates with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), academic medicine, legal community on IMG research/policy issues
- <http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/index.html>

# Who Needs a Visa?

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

- Foreign national physicians may be U.S. medical school graduates or IMGs\*

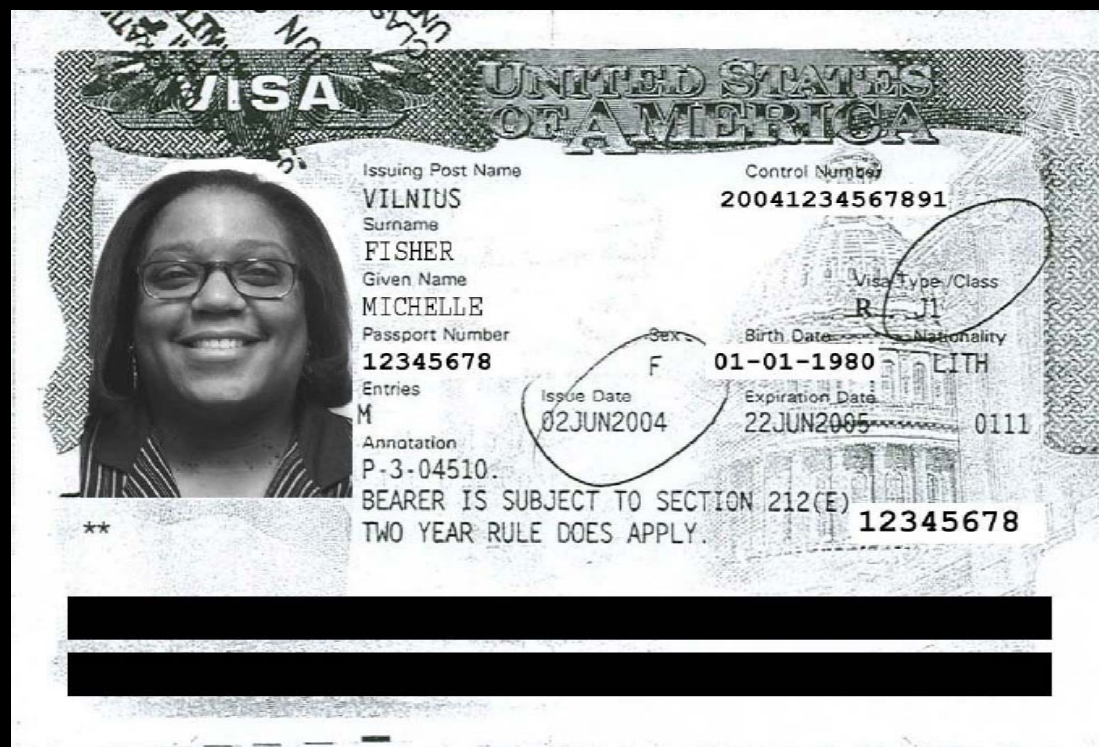
\*All IMGs need ECFMG Certification for U.S. GME

# Immigration Terms

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- **“Visa”** – Issued by U.S. Consulate abroad; serves as an entry permit stamped in passport; expiration date applies to timetable for entry only, can expire once in the United States
- **“Visa Status”** – Issued by U.S. Port-of Entry (DHS/CBP) or Regional Service Center (DHS/USCIS); reflects the immigration classification of the authorized activity and timeframe for U.S. stay (i.e., “J-1 status”, “H-1B status”); authorized stay may be limited to specific date or issued for “duration of stay”

# U.S. Visa





# Visa Options for IMGs in US GME

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## Most Common

- **J-1** “Alien Physician”
- **H-1B** “Specialty Occupation Worker”

## Less Common

- **F-1** “Student”- OPT -EAD
- **J-2** “Dependent”- EAD
  - ✓ J-2 is defined as the spouse or minor child of J-1 visa holder
- **O-1** of “Extraordinary Merit”

# Visa Considerations

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- Hospital policies
  - Does the hospital require a specific visa classification for GME or is it decided by the physician or by the program? Exceptions?
- Physician's long term goals, immigration history, personal/family issues
- Who and when to gather the facts, ask questions?

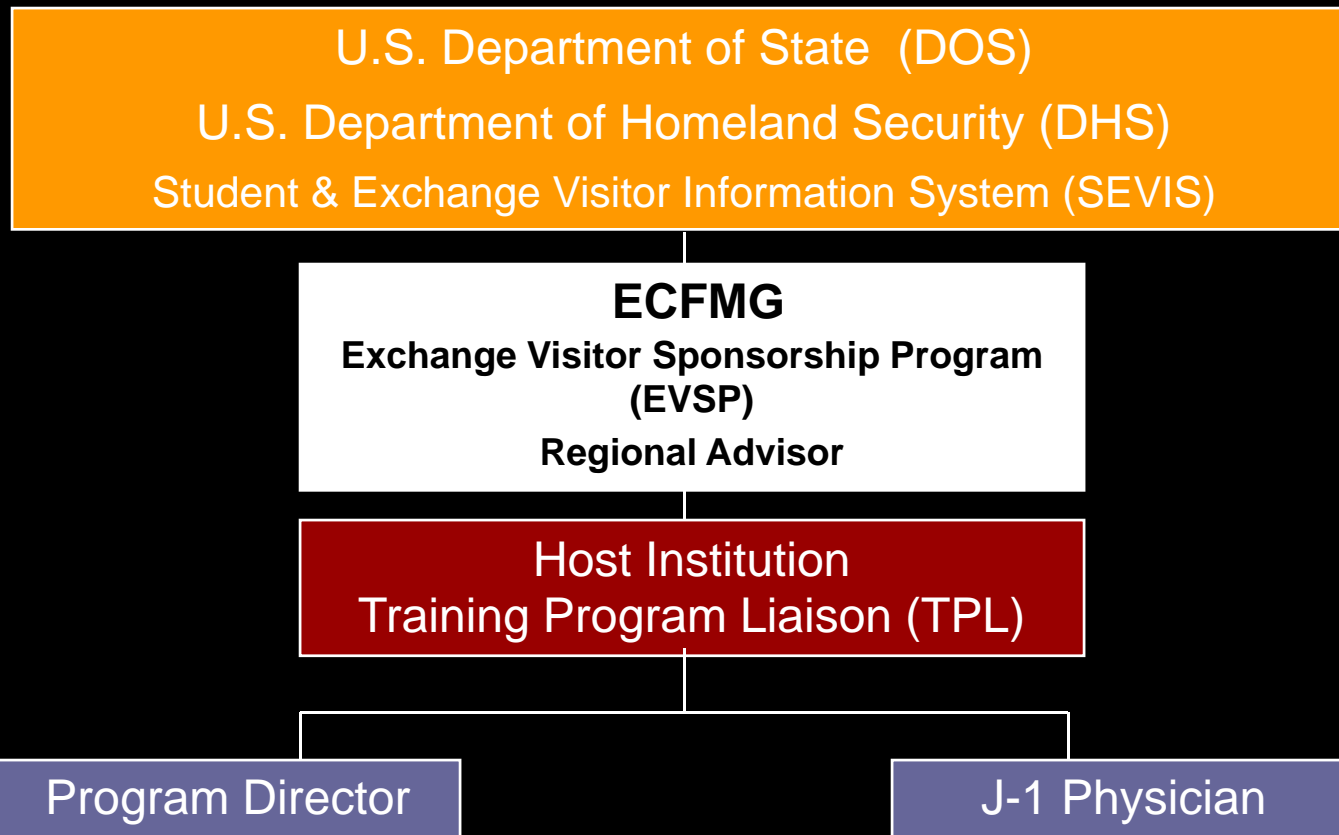
# ECFMG: Visa Sponsor for J-1 Physicians in Clinical Training

*22CFR§62.27(b)*

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- J-1 Visa
  - Temporary, non-immigrant visa
  - Full-time educational training/GME ~ not employment
- Requires evidence of strong ties to the home country
- Imposes 2 year home residency obligation
- Duration = 7 years max for progressive training
- Tracked in SEVIS

# J-1 Visa Sponsorship: Roles and Responsibilities



# ECFMG J-1 Sponsorship

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J-1 Physician + TPL = Complete Application

- Sponsorship Available for Participation in:
  - ACGME-accredited Residency Training
  - ACGME-accredited Subspecialty Training
  - Non-Standard Programs (*advanced fellowships*)
  - Extension for Board Examinations

Sponsorship application materials available @ <http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/index.html>

On-line application payment and status updates through OASIS @ <http://www.ecfm.org>

# J-1 Sponsorship Application Process

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- J-1 Physician + Training Program Liaison = Complete ECFMG Sponsorship Application
- 4 - 6 weeks to review applications
- Regional Advisor evaluates for eligibility
- If approved, SEVIS Record is created
- ECFMG issues Form DS-2019

ECFMG notifies applicant via e-mail, provides instructions for obtaining J-1 visa status

# SEVIS

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System

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- Data exchange between DHS/DOS
  - Immigration tracking of the activities of non-immigrant (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 all J-1 “alien physicians” and J-2 dependents

# Form DS-2019

U.S. Department of State				OMB APPROVAL NO. 1405-0119	
CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR EXCHANGE VISITOR(J-1) STATUS				EXPIRES 02-28-2005	
				ESTIMATED BUREAU TIME: 45 min	
				*See Page 2	
1. Family Name: <b>FISHER</b>		First Name: <b>NICHILLE</b>		Middle Name:	
Date of Birth (mm-dd-yyyy): <b>01-01-1980</b>		City of Birth: <b>VILNIUS</b>		Country of Birth: <b>LITHUANIA</b>	
Legal Permanent Residence Country Code: <b>LI</b>		Legal Permanent Residence Country: <b>LITHUANIA</b>		Exchange Visitor Program Number: <b>P-3-04520</b>	
U.S. Address: <b>3624 MARKET STREET PHILADELPHIA PA 19104</b>		Position: <b>UNIVERSITY POST GRAD MEDICAL TRAINEE</b>		Exchange Visitor Program Number: <b>P-3-04520</b>	
2. Program Sponsor: <b>Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates</b>					
Participating Program Official Description: <b>ALIEN PHYSICIAN; RESEARCH SCHOLAR</b>					
Purpose of this form: <b>Begin new program; accompanied by number (0) of immediate family members.</b>					
3. Form Covers Period:		4. Exchange Visitor Category:			
From (mm-dd-yyyy): <b>06-23-2004</b>		<b>ALIEN PHYSICIAN</b>			
To (mm-dd-yyyy): <b>06-22-2005</b>		Subject Field Code: <b>02.0228</b>			
		Subject Field Code Description: <b>Internal Medicine</b>			
5. During the period covered by this form, the total estimated financial support (U.S. \$) is provided to the exchange visitor by: All other organizations providing support : <b>219,143.00</b> TOTAL : <b>219,143.00</b>					
6. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE DETERMINATION OR CERTIFICATION BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE IS REQUIRED TO OBTAIN A NON-IMMIGRATION VISAS TO ENTER THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE (INCLUDE DATE ADMITTED)		7. Michelle Fisher		Alternate Responsible Officer	
<b>JUN 15 2004</b>		Name of Official Preparing Form: <b>3624 MARKET STREET PHILADELPHIA, PA 19104</b>		Title: <b>215-823-2121</b>	
<b>CLASS</b>		Address of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer: <i>Michelle Fisher</i>		Telephone Number: <b>08-06-2004</b>	
		Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer		Date (mm-dd-yyyy):	
8. Date of Issuance (mm-dd-yyyy): _____ Transfer of this exchange visitor from program number _____ sponsored by _____ to the program specified in item 2 is _____ or highly desirable and is in conformity with the objectives of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1946, as amended.					
Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer:				Date (mm-dd-yyyy) of Signature:	
PRELIMINARY ENDORSEMENT OF CONSULAR OR IMMIGRATION OFFICERS REGARDING SECTION 312(a) OF THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT AND FE 19-48, AS AMENDED (See form I-6 of page 2).				TRAVEL VALIDATION BY RESPONSIBLE OFFICER (Maximum validation period is one year*)	
The Exchange Visitor in the above program:				*EXCEPT: Maximum validation period is up to six months for Short-term Scholars and four months for Camp Counselors and Summer Teaching Assistants.	
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Not subject to the two-year residence requirement.				(1) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at the present time.	
2. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subject to two-year residence requirement based on:				Date (mm-dd-yyyy): <b>02-02-2005</b>	
A. <input type="checkbox"/> Government financing and/or				Date (mm-dd-yyyy): <i>Michelle Fisher</i>	
B. <input type="checkbox"/> The Exchange Visitor Skills List and/or				Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer	
C. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FE 19-48 as amended.				(2) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at the present time.	
Signature of Consular or Immigration Official: _____				Date (mm-dd-yyyy): _____	
THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE FINAL DETERMINATION REGARDING 212(b).				Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer:	
EXCHANGE VISITOR CERTIFICATION: I have read and agree with the statements on item 2 on page 2 of this document.					
Signature of Applicant: <i>Nichille</i>				Date (mm-dd-yyyy): <b>06 02 2004</b>	

# Required Immigration Reporting

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- Arrival / Delays
- 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.

# INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL *IS DISCOURAGED* DURING TRAINING PROGRAMS

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## ■ **Why?**

If the J-1 physician departs the United States with an expired visa stamp in the passport, visa renewal will be required to re-enter the United States. 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/travel](http://www.state.gov/travel)
- Request travel documents from ECFMG
  - ✓ Endorsed SEVIS Form DS-2019
  - ✓ “Letter of Good Standing”

# Maintaining J-1 Visa Status

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

# Critical Issues for Incoming IMGs

## *Timing is Everything ...*

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### Credentials

- Graduation & issuance of medical school diploma
- Receipt of passing exam scores
- Issuance of ECFMG certificate
- Approval for training license

# Critical Issues for Incoming IMGs

## *Timing is Everything ...*

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### Securing “Visa Status”

- Apply for appropriate visa
- Appear for visa interview at consulate abroad
  - Security clearance - consulate abroad
- If in United States, seek Change of Status
- Receive Arrival Record (I-94 card issued at U.S. Port-of-Entry)

# Critical Issues for Incoming IMGs

## *Timing is Everything ...*

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### Pre-training Requirements

- Confirm IMG's arrival to program
  - Report J-1 arrival to ECFMG for validation in SEVIS
- Obtain Social Security Number - 10 day wait after U.S. entry
- Participate in program orientation
- Conduct I-9 verification confirming U.S. work authorization

# Critical Issues for Continuing IMGs

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## Documentation and Compliance

- Maintaining Visa Status
  - Timely renewal of visa sponsorship, etc.
- Training progression evidenced by official contract
- Apply for transfer institution/program/specialty
- Consider duration of remaining visa eligibility

# Questions?

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EVSP

(215) 823-2121

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[ianthony@ecfm.org](mailto:ianthony@ecfm.org)

# Upcoming ECFMG Webinar

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“Institutional Compliance and the  
Foreign National Physician in Training”

October 14, 2009

1:00 EST