IMG/Visa Workshop

Tuesday, October 12, 2010
Presenter: Erica King
International Medical Graduate (IMG)

- 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.
ECFMG Certification

• 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
H-1B Visa Applications

• GME policy allows for H-1B visas
  – Programs must decide if they want to sponsor
• Programs must request permission from GME for interested applicants
  – Form found on GME website
• Renewal process coordinated with ISSS, not GME office
H-1B Visa: $$$$$

• Program responsible for all costs:
  – Application fees
  – Attorney fees
  – If trainee terminates from program for any reason, program responsible for travel costs back to home country

• Trainee cannot pay for visa processing, etc.
H-1B Visa Reminders

• Submit “H-1B Visa Request Form” to GME for approval (on GME website)
• If changing from J-1 to H-1B visa: J-1 must still obtain J-1 2 year home stay waiver!
• Allow at least 6 months for processing
  – Can hopefully avoid paying premium processing fee
• Program should choose attorney to use, not applicant
  – Attorney is to represent program’s best interests, not applicant’s needs
Quick Facts: ECFMG and J-1 Visas

• J-1 visa is preferred visa type for U of M residents/fellows
• ECFMG processes appx. 7,500 applications annually!
  – Majority between March and June (after Match Day)
• Maximum time one can be in U.S. on J-1 visa: 7 years
• J-1 trainee + TPL = complete application
New ECFMG J-1 Visa Process

• Effective 8/1/2010
• Erica King (ECFMG TPL) and J-1 trainee communicate directly to complete application
  – Program Coord. is no longer the “middle man”
• Prog. Coord. asked to assist getting Prog. Dir. Signature for offer letter and Form I-644 (if necessary) and help prepare Program Description (if necessary)
• Change ONLY for J-1 alien physician (NOT research scholar—handled by ISSS)
Timing: Submitting the J-1 Visa Application

• ECFMG appreciates early submission of applications
  – DS-2019 will be printed by ECFMG within 6 months of program start date

• Erica initiates application process by notifying J-1 trainee via e-mail (continuing and initial)
  – Program Coordinator submits J-1 spreadsheet to Erica with both incoming and continuing trainee information

• Erica to notify continuing trainees to start application paperwork as soon as stipend rates published on GME website
  – Rates for AY 2011-2012 will be up by mid-November

• Erica to notify initial trainees as soon as informed of who they are by Program Coordinator
J-1 Visa Offer Letter

- Can be used instead of residency agreement for submitting J-1 visa application
- NEW: Per Barb Shiels in OGC: all J-1 trainees must have J-1 offer letter on file each year
  - Must contain language that says visa status must be obtained prior to start date
- Initiated by Erica (to ensure correct version of letter used)
- Program Coordinator asked to help get signature from Program Director
Exact Program Name

- ACGME-Accredited Programs: Program name on all documents must match name on ACGME website: [http://www.acgme.org](http://www.acgme.org)

- Non-accredited Programs: Program name MUST match name on list on ECFMG website: [http://www.ecfmg.org/evsp/nonstand.html](http://www.ecfmg.org/evsp/nonstand.html)

- Documents with other program names will be rejected by ECFMG, causing delays in issuing the DS-2019
Non-Accredited J-1 Visa Application

– Average processing time at ECFMG: 6-8 weeks
  • Important for Erica to know any new INITIAL trainees coming in to non-standard program by end of March (no later!)
– Program name must match EXACTLY list on ECFMG website
– Requires signature from Dr. Ling in GME
OASIS

- On-line Applicant Status and Information System (OASIS)
- Trainees are encouraged to pay application fee via OASIS with credit card—speeds up processing time
- Applicant can check status of application in OASIS—regional advisor does not have time to look this information up
  - Erica doesn’t have access to this!
DS-2019 Distribution

- Erica will notify J-1 trainee when DS-2019 arrives (CC Prog. Coord., HR on e-mail)
  - If on-campus, can arrange to deliver to them or to Program Coordinator for distribution
  - If off-campus, Erica will FedEx to them

- New cover letter from Dr. Ling attached to DS-2019
  - Outlines (read: reminds!) responsibilities as J-1 trainee
J-1 Visa Status

• Initial Applicants obtain either by:
  – visa appointment at embassy/consulate (PREFERRED AND EXPECTED METHOD), or
  – Apply for change of status through USCIS
    • Takes anywhere from 3-6 months
    • USCIS warns could miss entire exchange program awaiting approval of change of status

  MUST inform GME of which option selected to obtain J-1 visa status
    • This is also on the DS-2019 cover letter
J-1 Visa Status (con’t)

• Continuing Applicants by applying for DS-2019 annually and having valid Form I-94
  – Do NOT need new J-1 visa stamp each year to maintain lawful J-1 status!
  • Stamp only matters when returning to US from abroad
J-1 Visa Initial Application

• Visa Appointment at Embassy in home country:
  – J-1 visa appointments have priority
  – Consult embassy website for required documents
  – Earliest appointment can be made: 30 days prior to DS-2019 start date
  – Some countries are taking longer to process
  – Preferred AND Expected Method by GME
J-1 Visa: Initial Arrival

• J-1 must complete “Validation of Initial Arrival” paperwork as soon as arriving in U.S.—included with DS-2019
  – If program start date is different from that on DS-2019, new ECFMG offer letter required

• IMPORTANT: J-1 visa holder has to wait 10 days after arrival to U.S. before being allowed to apply for SSN!
J-1 Visas: Miscellaneous

• Initial vs. Continuing J-1 Visa Application:
  – If has been on J-1 in the past but gap of 1+ years since last sponsorship
    • Will have to check w/ ECFMG if Initial or Continuing

• Plagiarized Application Materials (J-1 visa): contact Erica if situation arises
J-1 Visa Application: Reminders

• Do not send application directly to ECFMG! Has to be routed through Training Program Liaison (Erica)
• J-1 application page: Trainee fills out Section A, Erica fills out Section B
• Form I-644: Part 1 filled out by trainee, Part 2 filled out by trainee’s most recent Program Director
• Moonlighting outside of the program is NOT allowed!
J-2 (dependent) Visa Holders

• J-2 Offer Letter required for any trainee on a J-2 visa: http://www.med.umn.edu/gme/international/ecfmgj2offerltr.html

• EAD card required
  – Renewal process takes up to 6 months

• Important to know: J-2 visa directly related to J-1 visa; any changes to J-1 visa will change J-2 visa’s status as well
J-1 Research Scholar Changing to J-1 Alien Physician

- Requires additional paperwork
- If changing visa status within U.S.—requires Dept. of State review and approval
- Contact Erica right away if incoming R/F is identified as J-1 research scholar
Extension to J-1 for Board Exam

- Can apply for extension to remain in U.S. to prep for and take board exam
  - Exam must be administered by member board of ABMS
- Allowed to remain in U.S. for up to 6 months after graduation date
- If extension puts J-1 trainee over 7-year limit, will require Dept. of State review and approval
- NO TRAINING allowed during this extension! Only for board exam prep!
International Travel by J-1 Visa Holders
DISCOURAGED by ECFMG

• **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”
REMINDER: J-1 Visa and Disruption in Training

- Notify Erica immediately if/when J-1 visa holder:
  - Goes on FMLA (see new GME policy)
  - Requires remedial/repeat training
- Failure to notify ECFMG at time of training disruption can cause problems with future J-1 applications, etc.
- Be as transparent as possible!
- NOTE: ECFMG will generally not issue extension to training for reasons other than those listed above.
Related Links

• ECFMG-EVSP website: http://www.ecfmg.org/evsp/index.html
• IMG Page on GME website: http://www.med.umn.edu/gme/international/home.html
• H-1B Visa Information on GME website: http://www.med.umn.edu/gme/directors/h1bvisainfo/home.html
Contact Information

Erica King, ECFMG Training Program Liaison
B-639 Mayo Building
MMC 293
Phone: 612-624-9641
FAX: 612-624-0150
E-mail: king0367@umn.edu