

## **CONRAD/30 J1 VISA WAIVER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What is the Conrad 30/J-1 Visa Waiver Program?**

The Conrad 30/J-1 Visa Waiver Program provides J-1 medical doctors with a waiver of the two (2) year residence requirement upon completion of the J-1 exchange visitor program. See section 214(l) of the Immigration Nationality Act (INA). The program addresses the shortage of qualified doctors in medically underserved areas.

### **What is a J-1 visa?**

The J-1 visa allows international medical graduates to come to the United States under an educational exchange program for up to seven (7) years. When the visa expires, they must return home for at least two (2) years before applying for a permanent visa in the United States.

### **What is a J-1 visa waiver?**

A J-1 visa waiver eliminates the two (2) year home residency requirement and allows the physician to remain in the United States to practice medicine in a designated medically underserved area. State government agencies can sponsor up to 30 J-1 physician waiver requests per year.

### **How do I apply for a U.S. Department of State case file number?**

Before an applicant may apply for a J-1 visa waiver, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) requires that the applicant complete a federal Form DS-3035. Instructions on how to complete the DS-3035 are available on the DOS website: <https://j1visawaiverrecommendation.state.gov/>.

### **How do I apply for a J-1 visa waiver?**

The Massachusetts Conrad 30/J-1 Visa Program is administered by the Health Care Workforce Center at the Department of Public Health (DPH). The DPH only considers requests submitted by the employing health care facility or agency. Applications are typically accepted October 1st through January 15th. Details are in the Massachusetts <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-conrad-30-j-1-visa-waiver-program>.

### **Where are Massachusetts health professional shortage areas and medically underserved area/population designations?**

Massachusetts has federal shortage areas in rural and urban areas. To determine if a county, group of census tracts, or facility is currently designated as a federal shortage area, click on the links below:

- HPSA: <http://hpsafind.hrsa.gov/>
- MUA: <http://muafind.hrsa.gov/>

Massachusetts has areas with physician shortages that do not currently have a federal designation. Please click the link for details about the Flex component of the program: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-conrad-30-j-1-visa-waiver-program>.

### **What are the physician applicant requirements?**

A J1 Visa physician must agree to practice medicine full-time in the identified health care facility for a minimum of three (3) years and begin employment within ninety (90) days of receipt of their waiver.

### **What are the employer requirements?**

The employer must agree to employ the visa waiver recipient for at least three (3) years at the identified site and have a retention plan in place for the physician.

### **What is the cost to apply?**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) does not charge a fee to apply for a J-1 visa waiver. However, an applicant must first apply to the U.S Department of State (DOS) for a case file number that must be included in the J-1 visa waiver application. The DOS charges a processing fee for this case file number.

### **How are applications reviewed in Massachusetts?**

All applications undergo a three-tier review process beginning with an initial review for completeness and eligibility. Next, a more in-depth review assesses if an applicant will further the program's goal of increasing access to medical care for vulnerable populations in high need areas. A final review is then conducted to select the 30 applicants who will be supported with a J1 Visa waiver.

A copy of the program policy is available on our program web portal page at <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-conrad-30-j-1-visa-waiver-program>.

### **How does the Massachusetts Conrad 30/J-1 Visa Program define a primary care physician?**

The Program recognizes primary care physicians as a Doctor of Osteopathic and allopathic medicine including family medicine and general practice, geriatrics, internal medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, obstetrics, and gynecology. Primary care physicians are given priority in the Massachusetts Conrad 30/J-1 Visa Program.

### **How are specialist physician applications reviewed?**

All complete applications received by the January 15<sup>th</sup> application deadline will be reviewed and scored as described above, including specialist physicians.

**Is there a limit to the number of physicians an applicant agency or employer may request?**

Yes, there is a **limit of three (3) physician applications per agency** or employer per visa waiver year. DPH recognizes that in some cases an agency or employer may have sites in different counties. DPH will account for this during the review process.

**If an agency or employer submits multiple applications is there a guarantee that at least one application will be supported by the Department of Public Health (DPH)?**

It is not guaranteed that an application will be supported. All support is at the discretion of DPH and subject to the approval of the U.S. Department of State.

**My rural community has great difficulty recruiting physicians. How are applications from rural areas reviewed?**

The Program understands rural areas have significant provider shortages and require additional resources to recruit physicians so applicants from rural communities are prioritized. Some rural areas are located in HPSAs and/or MUA/Ps others are not. The section on 'Flex slots' in the guidance provides additional information on rural communities not located in a federally designated shortage area. Please see the Massachusetts policy document for details about the Flex component of the program at: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-the-conrad-30-j-1-visa-waiver-program>.

**What if Massachusetts does not fill all 30 slots in the first review process?**

In the event that Massachusetts does not fill all 30 slots in the January review, the program **may** open for a second review session. Should this happen, those eligible applicants that were not supported in the January review will have the option of having their application reviewed again. Information on an additional review opportunity will be posted on the Healthcare Workforce Center webpage.

**Who do I contact for more information about the Massachusetts Conrad 30/J-1 Visa Waiver Program?**

Email: [DPH-HealthCareWorkForce-PCO@mass.gov](mailto:DPH-HealthCareWorkForce-PCO@mass.gov).

This information is provided by the Health Care Workforce Center at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.