

SOCIAL SECURITY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why do I need to provide my social security number?

Massachusetts General Law, chapter 30A, section 13A, requires the Board of Registration of Medicine to have every applicant provide his or her social security number as a condition of issuing or renewing a license.

What do I do if I am a foreign national who does not have a social security number?

To be eligible to apply for a social security number, the Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS) must first grant you a visa. Once you have the visa, you must be physically present in the United States to request the social security number. In order to be granted a social security number, the Social Security Administration (SSA) must verify with the INS that your visa is valid. The SSA has therefore advised the Board of Registration in Medicine that it is advisable for an individual seeking a social security number to wait at least ten (10) business days after entering the United States before requesting a number. This will allow the individual's visa to be fully activated in the INS computer systems, which will provide for immediate verification via computer. If an individual does not wait the ten (10) days, the SSA will have to request a paper verification, which could take up to six (6) weeks.

I am a foreign national. When should I apply for my license to practice medicine?

You need to apply for your license five months before you will begin practicing medicine in Massachusetts. We request that you apply at the five month mark because after six months certain documents that you need to collect to submit with your application will be considered expired and because the process for obtaining your visa has been lengthened.

In such a case, once all of the documentation required for licensure has been submitted, the Board will issue a letter to your program director or sponsor stating that your license application is complete and will be issued pending confirmation of a social security number. Your sponsor should submit this letter with your visa application to qualify you for a one year H1-B visa. Once you have obtained a social security number, you will be issued a license to practice medicine. At the end of the one-year visa, you will be required to furnish your Massachusetts medical license to INS in order to have your H1-B visa issued for the remaining years for which you are eligible.

DISCLAIMER

The preceding information is an interpretation of the Board's regulations given by the Licensing Division. This information is provided for the benefit of license applicants and licensees and is subject to change. You may refer to the Board's regulations, 243 CMR 2.00, for more information.