

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

Graduate Medical Education
Administrative Offices

Medical School

B654 Mayo Memorial Building
Mayo Mail Code 293
420 Delaware Street SE
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

Office: 612-625-7634
Fax: 612-624-0150
www.med.umn.edu/gme

DATE

FIRST NAME LAST NAME

ADDRESS

ECFMG #

Dr. LAST NAME:

Welcome to the University of Minnesota! We look forward to further developing your medical career while you are in the PROGRAM NAME Program.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you about how to best maintain lawful J-1 visa status for your upcoming year of training, which is written on your Residency Agreement as starting on TRAINING START DATE and ending on TRAINING END DATE. As a J-1 visa holder, you are subject to further responsibilities for maintaining lawful J-1 visa status. Maintaining lawful J-1 visa status is your personal responsibility, and the Graduate Medical Education (GME) office, in cooperation with your program, will assist you in adhering to these regulations.

In order to maintain lawful J-1 visa status, you must:

1. Obtain J-1 Visa Status and Proper Work Authorization: All INITIAL J-1 visa holders must obtain J-1 visa status upon receiving the Form DS-2019. Your employment at the University of Minnesota is dependent on valid work authorization, and as a visa holder, you must have obtained J-1 visa status prior to beginning your training program. Additionally, your signed Residency Agreement states that you will be starting your program on TRAINING START DATE, and it is your responsibility to be in lawful J-1 visa status by this date. **Failure to start your training program on the predetermined start date can lead to termination of the contract.**

You are **required** to notify the ECFMG Training Program Liaison (contact information at the end of this letter) of which method you will choose to obtain J-1 visa status. You may obtain lawful J-1 visa status through one of these options:

- a. Schedule an appointment with the U.S. embassy or consulate in another country to apply for a J-1 visa and then enter the United States in J-1 visa status. This option is the **preferred and expected** method for all Residents/Fellows at the University of Minnesota, as it is the only method by which GME can reasonably expect you to be able to start in your training program on the predetermined start date. Please see the

ECFMG website for information on how to obtain J-1 visa status by this method:

http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/SEVIS_init.pdf

- b. Applying for change of visa status through USCIS by filing Form I-539 if already present in the U.S in a visa status other than J-1. GME does NOT recommend this method unless absolutely necessary (i.e. cannot travel due to pregnancy, family medical issues, etc.), as change of visa status within the U.S. usually takes anywhere from 3 to 6 months, and USCIS warns that "...you may be in danger of missing your entire exchange program waiting approval of change of status." (See U.S. Department of State website: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html#16)
 - i. NOTE: neither GME nor ECFMG can request an expedited review process by USCIS of your application.
2. Notifying GME of Changes to your Training Specifics: ECFMG **must** be notified of any proposed changes to your training specifics (i.e. training dates, training level, etc.), as they will then need to update your information in SEVIS and issue a new DS-2019 any time there is a change. As it is your responsibility to maintain lawful J-1 visa status, you are required to notify the ECFMG Training Program Liaison (see contact information at end of this letter) when you experience a change to your training specifics for any reason **BEFORE OR AS SOON AS THEY OCCUR**, such as:
- a. Leave of Absence (Maternity/Paternity Leave, Medical Leave, etc.)
 - i. Will require a new Offer Letter/Contract and other documentation for ECFMG
 - ii. Notify the ECFMG Training Program Liaison BEFORE or IMMEDIATELY upon taking a Leave of Absence!
 - b. Extending Training
 - i. Will require a new Offer Letter/Contract and other documentation for ECFMG
 - ii. Notify the ECFMG Training Program Liaison immediately upon knowledge of the extension requirement
 - c. Departure from Training Program
 - i. Notify the ECFMG Training Program Liaison before departure from the program, as she must notify ECFMG before your departure date.
3. International Travel: ECFMG strongly discourages J-1 visa holders from international travel once J-1 visa status is obtained (see ECFMG website: <http://www.ecfm.org/evsp/travel.html>). More and more J-1 physicians have reported delays in visa issuance at the U.S. embassy/consulate due to security-based initiatives, which can lead to travel delays and failures to return to the training program on the agreed upon return date. ECFMG will not extend a physician's training due to travel-related delays, so it is highly recommended that only essential international travel be encouraged.

The University of Minnesota supports ECFMG's stance on international travel, and as such, all J-1 visa holders **MUST** notify the ECFMG Training Program Liaison at least **60 days prior to international travel** to ensure that all proper documentation is in order before your departure. The ECFMG Training Program Liaison will then notify your Program Coordinator and Program Director of the intended travel, so that they can address any scheduling concerns related to your travel.

If you must travel internationally, please e-mail the Training Program Liaison with the following information at least 60 days prior to your departure date:

- a. Travel destination(s)
- b. Departure and return dates
- c. Current J-1 Visa Stamp expiration date
 - i. NOTE: if the stamp is expired, or set to expire while you are out of the country, you MUST obtain a new J-1 visa stamp from the embassy/consulate before returning to the U.S.
- d. Expected return date to training program
- e. Verification of Travel Authorized Form DS-2019
 - ii. Signed in bottom right corner by ECFMG—valid for one year from signature date; if expired, will need to request new DS-2019 via ECFMG TPL before travelling internationally

Additional information on maintaining lawful J-1 visa status can also be found on the ECFMG website: <http://www.ecfm.org/evsp>.

It is through these simple steps that you can successfully maintain J-1 visa status during the duration of your training in the [PROGRAM NAME] Program at the University of Minnesota. I look forward to supporting your success during your time here at the University of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Erica King
ECFMG Training Program Liaison
Office of Graduate Medical Education, University of Minnesota
e-mail: king0367@umn.edu

CC: [PROGRAM NAME] Program Director
[PROGRAM NAME] Program Coordinator
[PROGRAM NAME] Education Manager (if applicable)
[PROGRAM NAME] HR/Payroll Contact for Dept.