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U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services



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FILE: LIN 03 086 54826 Office: NEBRASKA SERVICE CENTER

Date JUL 26 2004

IN RE: Petitioner:
Beneficiary:



PETITION: Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker Pursuant to Section 101(a)(15)(H) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

SELF-REPRESENTED

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

Maui Johnson

Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The service center director denied the nonimmigrant visa petition and the matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed. The petition will be denied.

The petitioner provides outpatient rehabilitation services. It seeks to employ the beneficiary as a quality assurance coordinator.¹ The petitioner endeavors to classify the beneficiary as a nonimmigrant worker in a specialty occupation pursuant to section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b).

The director denied the petition because the proffered position is not a specialty occupation and the beneficiary is not qualified to perform a specialty occupation. On appeal, the petitioner submits a brief.

The AAO will first address the director's conclusion that the position is not a specialty occupation.

Section 214(i)(1) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(i)(1), defines the term "specialty occupation" as an occupation that requires:

- (A) theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and
- (B) attainment of a bachelor's or higher degree in the specific specialty (or its equivalent) as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A), to qualify as a specialty occupation, the position must meet one of the following criteria:

- (1) A baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the particular position;
- (2) The degree requirement is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations or, in the alternative, an employer may show that its particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree;
- (3) The employer normally requires a degree or its equivalent for the position; or
- (4) The nature of the specific duties is so specialized and complex that knowledge required to perform the duties is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree.

Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) interprets the term "degree" in the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) to mean not just any baccalaureate or higher degree, but one in a specific specialty that is directly related to the proffered position.

¹ 8 C.F.R. § 103.2(a)(3) specifies that a petitioner may be represented "by an attorney in the United States, as defined in § 1.1(f) of this chapter, by an attorney outside the United States as defined in § 292.1(a)(6) of this chapter, or by an accredited representative as defined in § 292.1(a)(4) of this chapter." In this case, the person listed on the G-28 is not an authorized representative.

The record of proceeding before the AAO contains: (1) Form I-129 and supporting documentation; (2) the director's request for additional evidence; (3) the petitioner's response to the director's request; (4) the director's denial letter; and (5) Form I-290B and supporting documentation. The AAO reviewed the record in its entirety before issuing its decision.

The petitioner is seeking the beneficiary's services as a quality assurance coordinator. Evidence of the beneficiary's duties includes: the I-129 petition; the petitioner's January 2, 2003 letter in support of the petition; and the petitioner's response to the director's request for evidence. According to this evidence, the beneficiary would perform duties that entail: performing complex and independent activities involved in the collection, analysis, documentation, and interpretation of clinical data related to the petitioner's quality assurance; evaluating and interpreting data from patients' charts for completeness and accuracy; developing forms and procedures to track and compile information and to maintain computerized patient database; conferring with clinical manager and/or director of nursing in the design and review of reporting procedures; serving as liaison with the case management unit, utilization management unit, risk management unit, and the financial and administrative departments; planning and conducting in-service orientation and education for clerical staff and office staff; and supervising new or lower-level staff. The petitioner indicated that a qualified candidate for the job would possess a bachelor's degree in physical therapy.

The director found that the proffered position was not a specialty occupation because the petitioner had not demonstrated that the proposed duties, which are primarily administrative in nature, are so complex as to require a baccalaureate degree. The director found further that the petitioner failed to establish any of the criteria found at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A).

On appeal, the petitioner submits job postings from the National Association for Healthcare Quality (NAHQ) to demonstrate that the proffered position normally requires a baccalaureate degree in a health-related field. The petitioner states that such postings are proof that the degree requirement is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations. The petitioner further states that it stands to reason that the proposed duties are so complex and unique that they can be performed only by a person with a bachelor's degree in a related field. The petitioner provides the names of two of the petitioner's employees holding positions directly related to quality assurance who have been granted H-1B status.

Upon review of the record, the petitioner has established none of the four criteria outlined in 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A). Therefore, the proffered position is not a specialty occupation.

The AAO turns first to the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(1) and (2): a baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is the normal minimum requirement for entry into the particular position; a degree requirement is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations; or a particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree.

Factors often considered by CIS when determining these criteria include: whether the Department of Labor's (DOL) *Occupational Outlook Handbook (Handbook)* reports that the industry requires a degree; whether the industry's professional association has made a degree a minimum entry requirement; and whether letters or affidavits from firms or individuals in the industry attest that such firms "routinely employ and recruit only degreed individuals." See *Shanti, Inc. v. Reno*, 36 F. Supp. 2d 1151, 1165 (D.Min. 1999)(quoting *Hird/Blaker Corp. v. Slattery*, 764 F. Supp. 872, 1102 (S.D.N.Y. 1991)).

The AAO routinely consults the *Handbook* for its information about the duties and educational requirements of particular occupations. The AAO does not concur with the petitioner that the proffered position, which is similar to that of an office and administrative support worker supervisor or manager, is a specialty occupation. None of the beneficiary's job duties entails the level of responsibility of a specialty occupation. A review of the Office and Administrative Support Worker Supervisors and Managers job description in the *Handbook*, 2004-2005 edition, confirms the accuracy of this assessment. No evidence in the *Handbook* indicates that a baccalaureate or higher degree, or its equivalent, is required for an office and administrative support worker or manager job.

The petitioner's comments regarding the type of credentials required for the proffered position in the petitioner's industry are without merit. Counsel's/petitioner's personal observations do not constitute evidence in these proceedings. *Matter of Obaigbena*, 19 I&N Dec. 533, 534 (BIA 1988); *Matter of Ramirez-Sanchez*, 17 I&N Dec. 503, 506 (BIA 1980).

Regarding parallel positions in the petitioner's industry, the petitioner submitted Internet job postings for various positions, including "quality improvement coordinator," "performance improvement manager," and "quality administrator." There is no evidence, however, to show that the proposed duties of the proffered position are as complex as those listed for the advertised positions. For example, one of the positions is that of a quality improvement coordinator for one of the largest private, non-profit academic medical centers in California, with duties that entail ensuring compliance with internal as well as external regulatory requirements, and serving as primary support to clinical leadership in monitoring and evaluating processes for outcome management, performance improvement, and peer review. Another position is that of a quality management specialist for a leading provider of managed behavioral health and work/life support services, serving over 25 million Americans. The evidence in the record does not demonstrate that the proffered position is parallel to the advertised positions. Thus, the advertisements have little relevance.

The record also does not include any evidence from professional associations regarding an industry standard, or documentation to support the complexity or uniqueness of the proffered position. The petitioner has, thus, not established the criteria set forth at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(1) or (2).

The AAO now turns to the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(3) – the employer normally requires a degree or its equivalent for the position. On appeal, the petitioner states that the petitioner normally requires a bachelor's degree for the proffered position. The petitioner asserts that CIS has already determined that the proffered position is a specialty occupation since CIS has approved two other, similar petitions in the past for the petitioner. This record of proceeding does not, however, contain all of the supporting evidence submitted to the service center in the prior cases. In the absence of all of the corroborating evidence contained in those records of proceeding, the documents submitted by the petitioner are not sufficient to enable the AAO to determine whether the other H-1B petitions were parallel to the proffered position. See *Matter of Treasure Craft of California*, 14 I&N Dec. 190 (Reg. Comm. 1972).

Finally, the AAO turns to the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(iii)(A)(4) – the nature of the specific duties is so specialized and complex that knowledge required to perform the duties is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree.

To the extent that they are depicted in the record, the duties do not appear so specialized and complex as to require the highly specialized knowledge associated with a baccalaureate or higher degree, or its equivalent,

in a specific specialty. Therefore, the evidence does not establish that the proffered position is a specialty occupation under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(4).

As related in the discussion above, the petitioner has failed to establish that the proffered position is a specialty occupation.

The AAO will now address the director's conclusion that the beneficiary is not qualified to perform a specialty occupation.

Section 214(i)(2) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(i)(2), states that an alien applying for classification as an H-1B nonimmigrant worker must possess full state licensure to practice in the occupation, if such licensure is required to practice in the occupation, and completion of the degree in the specialty that the occupation requires. If the alien does not possess the required degree, the petitioner must demonstrate that the alien has experience in the specialty equivalent to the completion of such degree, and recognition of expertise in the specialty through progressively responsible positions relating to the specialty.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(C), to qualify to perform services in a specialty occupation, an alien must meet one of the following criteria:

- (1) Hold a United States baccalaureate or higher degree required by the specialty occupation from an accredited college or university;
- (2) Hold a foreign degree determined to be equivalent to a United States baccalaureate or higher degree required by the specialty occupation from an accredited college or university;
- (3) Hold an unrestricted state license, registration or certification which authorizes him or her to fully practice the specialty occupation and be immediately engaged in that specialty in the state of intended employment; or
- (4) Have education, specialized training, and/or progressively responsible experience that is equivalent to completion of a United States baccalaureate or higher degree in the specialty occupation, and have recognition of expertise in the specialty through progressively responsible positions directly related to the specialty.

The director found that the beneficiary was not qualified for the proffered position because the record indicates that, although the beneficiary holds a degree in physical therapy, he will be unable to supervise new or lower level staff until he gains additional experience and training. On appeal, the petitioner states that the beneficiary is qualified for the position because he holds a degree in physical therapy conferred by a Filipino institution, and he is a licensed physical therapist in the Philippines. The petitioner further states that the beneficiary's foreign degree has been determined to be equivalent to a baccalaureate degree in physical therapy from an accredited U.S. university. The petitioner additionally states that the State of Michigan does not require a license to practice as a quality assurance coordinator, and that the requisite "on-the-job" training is really only a short orientation phase.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(D), equating the beneficiary's credentials to a United States baccalaureate or higher degree shall be determined by one or more of the following:

- (1) An evaluation from an official who has authority to grant college-level credit for training and/or experience in the specialty at an accredited college or university which has a program for granting such credit based on an individual's training and/or work experience;
- (2) The results of recognized college-level equivalency examinations or special credit programs, such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), or Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction (PONSI);
- (3) An evaluation of education by a reliable credentials evaluation service which specializes in evaluating foreign educational credentials;
- (4) Evidence of certification or registration from a nationally-recognized professional association or society for the specialty that is known to grant certification or registration to persons in the occupational specialty who have achieved a certain level of competence in the specialty;
- (5) A determination by the Service that the equivalent of the degree required by the specialty occupation has been acquired through a combination of education, specialized training, and/or work experience in areas related to the specialty and that the alien has achieved recognition of expertise in the specialty occupation as a result of such training and experience.

The record indicates that the beneficiary holds a Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy degree conferred by a Filipino institution. A credentials evaluation service has determined that the beneficiary's foreign degree is equivalent to a bachelor's degree in physical therapy conferred by an accredited U.S. university. As stated previously, the proffered position is similar to that of an office and administrative support worker supervisor or manager. In its *Handbook*, the DOL finds that most firms fill office and administrative support supervisory and managerial positions by promoting office or administrative support workers from within their organizations. In view of the foregoing, the beneficiary is qualified for the proffered position. The petition may not be approved, however, because the proffered position is not a specialty occupation. Accordingly, the AAO shall not disturb the director's denial of the petition.

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The petitioner has not sustained that burden.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed. The petition is denied.