



USCIS Update

May 11, 2009

USCIS Announces Extension of the J-1 Entry Date for International Medical Graduates to Qualify for “Conrad 30” Waiver

WASHINGTON — U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reminds customers that Public Law 111-9, signed by President Obama on March 20, 2009, extends the date until Sept. 30, 2009 by which international medical graduates have to have been granted J-1 nonimmigrant status in order to later qualify for the “Conrad 30” program. Before this latest extension was granted, the most recent sunset date for qualifying J-1 admission was March 6, 2009.

Under the “Conrad 30” program, each state health department may submit a request directly to the Department of State (DOS) to initiate the waiver process for a J-1 medical doctor. This request enables J-1 doctors to obtain a waiver of the two-year foreign residence requirement, if DOS submits a favorable recommendation to USCIS and will generally be granted as long as there are no underlying concerns. Once the waiver is granted, J-1 doctors must practice medicine for at least three years in a medically underserved shortage area or areas. The Department of Health and Human Services designates the medical shortage areas.

The Conrad 30 (originally Conrad 20) program was originally established in 1994 to address the shortage of qualified doctors in medically underserved areas, and has been extended several times since then. In 2004, Congress amended the program to exempt J-1 doctors who received a Conrad 30 waiver from the annual H-1B numerical limitation (otherwise known as the “H-1B cap”), as these doctors must complete their required three-year period of service as H-1B nonimmigrants.

This current sunset date of Sept. 30, 2009, applies to the date the medical doctor originally entered the United States in J-1 status or received a change of status to J-1, to complete a residency program in the United States. Doctors who acquired J-1 status before Sept. 30, 2009, may pursue a waiver of the two-year foreign residence requirement under the Conrad State 30 program, if they meet all the eligibility requirements.

For additional information, customers may check USCIS’ Web site, www.uscis.gov or call the National Customer Service Center at (800) 375-5283.