

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Administrative Appeals Office (AAO)
20 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., MS 2090
Washington, DC 20529-2090

(b)(6)



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**



DATE: **DEC 30 2014**

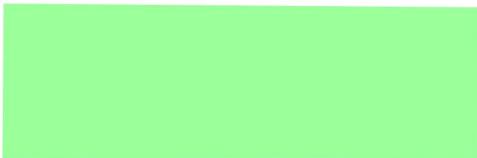
OFFICE: VERMONT SERVICE CENTER

FILE: [REDACTED]

IN RE: Petitioner:
Beneficiary: [REDACTED]

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

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:



INSTRUCTIONS:

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) in your case.

This is a non-precedent decision. The AAO does not announce new constructions of law nor establish agency policy through non-precedent decisions. If you believe the AAO incorrectly applied current law or policy to your case or if you seek to present new facts for consideration, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen, respectively. Any motion must be filed on a Notice of Appeal or Motion (Form I-290B) within 33 days of the date of this decision. **Please review the Form I-290B instructions at <http://www.uscis.gov/forms> for the latest information on fee, filing location, and other requirements.** See also 8 C.F.R. § 103.5. **Do not file a motion directly with the AAO.**

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Rosenberg".

Ron Rosenberg
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

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

I. FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

The petitioner submitted a Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker (Form I-129) to the Vermont Service Center. In the Form I-129 visa petition, the petitioner indicated that it was established in 1980. The petitioner did not indicate the type of business.¹ In order to extend the employment of the beneficiary in what it designates as a lead teacher position, the petitioner seeks to classify her 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, finding that the petitioner failed to establish that the proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation in accordance with the applicable statutory and regulatory provisions. On appeal, the petitioner's executive director states, "Please allow me to apologize for not submitting enough information regarding our Teacher's Educational requirements." Thus, the petitioner's executive director acknowledges that the H-1B submission did not establish eligibility for the benefit sought.

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

For the reasons that will be discussed below, we agree with the director that the petitioner has not established eligibility for the benefit sought. Accordingly, the director's decision will not be disturbed. The appeal will be dismissed, and the petition will be denied.

¹ We observe that the petitioner designated its business operations under the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code of 624410, "Child Day Care Services." The U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau website describes this NAICS code as follows:

This industry comprises establishments primarily engaged in providing day care of infants or children. These establishments generally care for preschool children, but may care for older children when they are not in school and may also offer pre-kindergarten educational programs.

Illustrative Examples: Child day care babysitting services; Nursery schools; Child or infant day care centers; Preschool centers

See U.S. Dep't of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 NAICS Definition, 624410 – Child Day Care Services on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/sssd/naics/naicsrch> (last visited December 24, 2014).

² We conduct appellate review on a *de novo* basis. *See Soltane v. DOJ*, 381 F.3d 143, 145 (3d Cir. 2004).

II. SPECIALTY OCCUPATION

A. The Law

For an H-1B petition to be granted, the petitioner must provide sufficient evidence to establish that it will employ the beneficiary in a specialty occupation position. To meet its burden of proof in this regard, the petitioner must establish that the employment it is offering to the beneficiary meets the applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

Section 214(i)(l) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(i)(l), 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.

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii) states, in pertinent part, the following:

Specialty occupation means an occupation which [(1)] requires theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge in fields of human endeavor including, but not limited to, architecture, engineering, mathematics, physical sciences, social sciences, medicine and health, education, business specialties, accounting, law, theology, and the arts, and which [(2)] requires the attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher in a 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, a proposed position must also 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.

As a threshold issue, it is noted that 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) must logically be read together with section 214(i)(1) of the Act and 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). In other words, this regulatory language must be construed in harmony with the thrust of the related provisions and with the statute as a whole. *See K Mart Corp. v. Cartier, Inc.*, 486 U.S. 281, 291 (1988) (holding that construction of language which takes into account the design of the statute as a whole is preferred); *see also COIT Independence Joint Venture v. Federal Sav. and Loan Ins. Corp.*, 489 U.S. 561 (1989); *Matter of W-F-*, 21 I&N Dec. 503 (BIA 1996). As such, the criteria stated in 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) should logically be read as being necessary but not necessarily sufficient to meet the statutory and regulatory definition of specialty occupation. To otherwise interpret this section as stating the necessary *and* sufficient conditions for meeting the definition of specialty occupation would result in particular positions meeting a condition under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) but not the statutory or regulatory definition. *See Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F.3d 384, 387 (5th Cir. 2000). To avoid this result, 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) must therefore be read as providing supplemental criteria that must be met in accordance with, and not as alternatives to, the statutory and regulatory definitions of specialty occupation.

As such and consonant with section 214(i)(1) of the Act and the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) consistently 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. *See Royal Siam Corp. v. Chertoff*, 484 F.3d 139, 147 (1st Cir. 2007) (describing "a degree requirement in a specific specialty" as "one that relates directly to the duties and responsibilities of a particular position"). Applying this standard, USCIS regularly approves H-1B petitions for qualified aliens who are to be employed as engineers, computer scientists, certified public accountants, college professors, and other such occupations. These professions, for which petitioners have regularly been able to establish a minimum entry requirement in the United States of a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the particular position, fairly represent the types of specialty occupations that Congress contemplated when it created the H-1B visa category.

To determine whether a particular job qualifies as a specialty occupation, USCIS does not simply rely on a position's title. The specific duties of the proffered position, combined with the nature of the petitioning entity's business operations, are factors to be considered. USCIS must examine the ultimate employment of the alien, and determine whether the position qualifies as a specialty occupation. *See generally Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F. 3d 384. The critical element is not the title of the position nor an employer's self-imposed standards, but whether the position actually requires the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree in the specific specialty as the minimum for entry into the occupation, as required by the Act.

When determining whether a position is a specialty occupation, we must look at the nature of the business offering the employment and the description of the specific duties of the position as it relates to the particular employer. To ascertain the intent of a petitioner, USCIS looks to the Form I-129 and the documents filed in support of the petition. It is only in this manner that the agency can determine the exact position offered, the location of employment, the proffered wage, et cetera.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(9)(i), the director has the responsibility to consider all of the evidence submitted by a petitioner and such other evidence that he or she may independently require to assist his or her adjudication. Further, the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iv) provides that "[a]n H-1B petition involving a specialty occupation shall be accompanied by [d]ocumentation . . . or any other required evidence sufficient to establish . . . that the services the beneficiary is to perform are in a specialty occupation."

That is, for H-1B approval, the petitioner must demonstrate a legitimate need for an employee exists and to substantiate that it has H-1B caliber work for the beneficiary for the period of employment requested in the petition. It is incumbent upon the petitioner to demonstrate it has sufficient work to require the services of a person with at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, to perform duties at a level that requires the theoretical and practical application of at least a bachelor's degree level of a body of highly specialized knowledge in a specific specialty for the period specified in the petition.

B. Analysis

In the Form I-129 Supplement, the petitioner described the proposed duties for the proffered position as "[d]esign, implement and evaluate lesson plans."³ No further information regarding the proffered position was provided. The petitioner did not state that the position has any particular requirements.⁴ Thus, from the onset, the petitioner did not establish that the proffered position

³ The petitioner indicated on the LCA that the proffered position falls under the occupational category "Teachers and Instructors, All Others" and corresponds to a Level I wage. The "Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance" issued by DOL provides a description of the wage levels. A Level I wage rate is described by DOL as follows:

Level I (entry) wage rates are assigned to job offers for beginning level employees who have only a basic understanding of the occupation. These employees perform routine tasks that require limited, if any, exercise of judgment. The tasks provide experience and familiarization with the employer's methods, practices, and programs. The employees may perform higher level work for training and developmental purposes. These employees work under close supervision and receive specific instructions on required tasks and results expected. Their work is closely monitored and reviewed for accuracy. Statements that the job offer is for a research fellow, a worker in training, or an internship are indicators that a Level I wage should be considered.

See U.S. Dep't of Labor, Emp't & Training Admin., *Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance*, Nonagric. Immigration Programs (rev. Nov. 2009), available at http://www.foreignlaborcert.dolceta.gov/pdf/NPWHC_Guidance_Revised_11_2009.pdf.

⁴ On appeal, the petitioner states that it is a "preschool serving students from ages 2-5 years."⁴ The petitioner adds that "[d]uring the time [the beneficiary] was hired, we were in search of a Teacher for our four-year-old classroom (emphasis added)." The petitioner provided an excerpt from an advertisement that it placed on Craigslist, which describes the position as a "[f]ull-time position for a 2 year old Teacher for an established preschool servicing children ages 2-5 years of age."

qualifies as a specialty occupation.

In response to the director's RFE, counsel submitted a letter with a description that counsel claims refers to the duties of the proffered position. Upon review, we note that the wording of the duties provided by counsel is copied verbatim from the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Occupational Information Network (O*NET) Code Connector description for "Elementary School Teachers." However, counsel did not cite or reference the O*NET Code Connector as the source of the tasks.

Notably, the petitioner has identified itself as child day care service for children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old. The record lacks any evidence to support an assertion that the beneficiary would be performing the duties of an elementary school teacher. Furthermore, while the description from DOL's O*NET may be appropriate when defining the range of duties that may be performed within an occupational category, the description does not convey the substantive work that the beneficiary will perform. In establishing a position as a specialty occupation, a petitioner must describe the specific duties and responsibilities to be performed by a beneficiary in the context of its business operations, as well as demonstrate a legitimate need for an employee exists, and substantiate that it has H-1B caliber work for the beneficiary for the period of employment requested in the petition.

Moreover, counsel's letter was not endorsed or signed by the petitioner. Without documentary evidence to support the claim, the assertions of counsel will not satisfy the petitioner's burden of proof. The unsupported assertions of counsel do not constitute evidence. *Matter of Obaigbena*, 19 I&N Dec. 533, 534 (BIA 1988); *Matter of Laureano*, 19 I&N Dec. 1 (BIA 1983); *Matter of Ramirez-Sanchez*, 17 I&N Dec. 503, 506 (BIA 1980). Therefore, the description of duties provided by counsel is not probative evidence.

The record lacks evidence sufficiently concrete and informative to demonstrate that the proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation position. The tasks as described by the petitioner fail to communicate (1) the actual work that the beneficiary would perform, (2) the complexity, uniqueness and/or specialization of the tasks, and/or (3) the correlation between that work and a need for a particular level education of highly specialized knowledge in a specific specialty.

Therefore, we are precluded from finding that the proffered position is a specialty occupation under any criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A), because it is the substantive nature of that work that determines (1) the normal minimum educational requirement for entry into the particular position, which is the focus of criterion 1; (2) industry positions which are parallel to the proffered position and thus appropriate for review for a common degree requirement, under the first alternate prong of criterion 2;⁵ (3) the level of complexity or uniqueness of the proffered position, which is the focus of the second alternate prong of criterion 2; (4) the factual justification for a petitioner normally requiring

⁵ We observe that the record contains documents regarding other individuals, as well as job advertisements. We reviewed the documents and observe that the record lack sufficient information to conduct a meaningfully substantive comparison of the positions. The petitioner has not provided a meaningful job description of the proffered position. There is insufficient information regarding the complexity of the job duties, supervisory duties (if any), independent judgment required or the amount of supervision received. Thus, it is not possible to ascertain whether these other jobs are similar to the proffered position.

a degree or its equivalent, when that is an issue under criterion 3; and (5) the degree of specialization and complexity of the specific duties, which is the focus of criterion 4. Thus, the petitioner has failed to satisfy any of the criteria under the applicable provisions at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A).

Importantly, on appeal the petitioner describes its requirements for teachers as a [REDACTED] credential, an associate's degree, or a four-year college degree in child development or related field. Accordingly, the petitioner's statement is an admission that the proffered position is not in fact a specialty occupation.

Thus, for the reasons discussed in this decision, the appeal will be dismissed and the petition denied.

III. BENEFICIARY'S QUALIFICATIONS

A beneficiary's credentials to perform a particular job are relevant only when the job is found to be a specialty occupation. As discussed in this decision, the petitioner has failed to establish that the proffered position requires a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent. Therefore, we need not and will not address the beneficiary's qualifications further.

IV. CONCLUSION AND ORDER

The petition will be denied and the appeal dismissed for the above stated reason. In visa petition proceedings, it is the petitioner's burden to establish eligibility for the immigration benefit sought. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361; *Matter of Otiende*, 26 I&N Dec. 127, 128 (BIA 2013). Here, that burden has not been met.

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