

## Change of Category: Departures



### **PHYSICIANS WHO COMPLETED PARTICIPATION AS EXCHANGE VISITOR (J-1) “RESEARCH SCHOLARS” WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF THE PROPOSED CLINICAL START DATE**

The information in this memorandum applies to you if:

1. You are currently living outside of the United States, AND
2. You held status as an exchange visitor “research scholar” within the six months preceding your proposed clinical training start date BUT are no longer in J-1 status.

The U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (22CFR§62) mandates that anyone in the United States in J-1 status at the time of application to ECFMG seek a change of J-1 category through the U.S. Department of State (DOS). Such change of category (COC) requests require that the applicant maintain the underlying J-1 status (e.g., “research scholar”) through the proposed start date of ECFMG-sponsored clinical training. If an applicant completes participation in the Exchange Visitor Program and returns to the home country within the six months prior to a proposed clinical start date, a COC request through the DOS is still required. However, the documentation required for a “departure” COC request differs slightly from that of a traditional COC request. See below for required documentation.

### Required “Departure” COC Documentation

- **COMPLETE APPLICATION FOR ECFMG SPONSORSHIP**  
Please see “Application Checklists and Descriptions” at <https://www.ecfm.org/evsp/applying-checklists.html> for additional information on the application process and all general application requirements.
- **COPIES OF ALL PREVIOUS FORMS DS-2019**
- **PROOF OF DEPARTURE FROM THE UNITED STATES**  
Acceptable documents include, but are not limited to, a copy of the boarding pass, passport entry stamp, or a copy of the travel history from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) website.
- **STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES (SEO) FROM APPLICANT**  
Completion of SEO Form. The SEO Form is available at <https://www.ecfm.org/evsp/applicant-SEO.pdf>.
- **RESEARCH MENTOR SUPPORT LETTER**  
Letter of support from previous/recent research program director/mentor clearly explaining how the research activities relate to the proposed clinical training activity.
- **CLINICAL PROGRAM DIRECTOR SUPPORT LETTER**  
Letter of support from proposed clinical program director clearly explaining how the research activities relate to the proposed clinical training activity.
- **ECFMG APPLICATION FEES OF \$570.00**  
Fees include the \$370.00 regular application fee + \$200.00 for COC case review and preparation. Required method of payment is on-line through MyIntealth.
- **DOS FEE OF \$367.00**  
This fee is separate from any and all ECFMG fees. This fee should be paid to ECFMG through MyIntealth. ECFMG will, in turn, submit payment to DOS on behalf of the applicant.

**All required documentation must be uploaded by the TPL and/or applicant through MyIntealth at the time of application to ECFMG. Upon receipt and review of all above-listed documentation and fees, ECFMG will determine an individual’s eligibility to request a COC through the DOS. As individual circumstances vary, additional documentation may also be requested.**

## Important Information for “Departure” COC Applicants

Should an applicant pursue a “departure” COC per requirements outlined in this memo, it is imperative that he/she understands the following:

- Applicants pursuing a “departure” COC must remain outside of the United States while the COC request is pending with the DOS.
- The DOS reserves up to 60 days for review of and decision on all COC requests.
- ECFMG is unlikely to receive status updates while a case is pending with the DOS; generally, ECFMG will be notified only when a decision has been reached. Therefore, it is unnecessary to call/e-mail for status updates. Applicants and TPLs will be informed immediately once the DOS provides ECFMG with notification of a case decision.
- If a change of visa category is approved, ECFMG sponsorship is limited to the specific training/time frame requested in the original request. Any deviation from the original training plan, including subspecialty training, must be approved through formal request to and review by the DOS.

The DOS has indicated that worthy COC requests must document consistency with and relationship to one’s original exchange objective. Additionally, the DOS has indicated that applicants who have applied for or received a waiver of a two-year home country physical presence requirement associated with their current (or any previous) J status are *not* eligible to apply for a change of J-1 category.

**NOTE:** The preferred pathway for any individual seeking a COC is for the applicant to maintain J-1 status and seek a traditional COC through DOS. For traditional COC documentation requirements, see <https://www.ecfm.org/evsp/evspcocmemo.pdf>.

**Please contact [EVSP-support@ecfm.org](mailto:EVSP-support@ecfm.org)  
with questions about the “departure” COC request process.**