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Administrator



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State Health Officer

NEVADA STATE HEALTH DIVISION NEWS RELEASE

State Examining J-1 Doctor Visa Program

Nevada State Health Division will establish web-based complaint system

Carson City – The Nevada State Health Division announced today that it will be conducting an extensive examination of the state’s J-1 Visa program to identify areas that may need to be improved.

“I would like to thank Las Vegas Sun reporter Marshall Allen for his investigative work regarding the J-1 Visa program,” said Alex Haartz, Health Division Administrator. “The goal of the J-1 program is to provide quality primary health care to underserved areas in Nevada. If these areas are not receiving the medical attention they justly deserve because of discrepancies and/or abuses in the J-1 program, it is our responsibility to rectify those situations. Our goal is to ensure that Nevadans are receiving the health care they need and, that employers are abiding by their representation to the state in order to receive the state’s support.”

Congressman Jon Porter said, “It is disappointing that the well-intentioned J-1 visa waiver program is potentially being abused for profit. All cases of exploitation must be fully investigated and those who are guilty of wrongdoing be held accountable. I want to also ensure that those doctors who hold the visas are fully protected. These individuals play a critical role in providing healthcare to the neediest communities in Southern Nevada.”

Some of the actions being undertaken include:

- Creation of a web-based complaint system where physicians and/or employers can enter complaints/concerns via a confidential or anonymous process.
- Sending letters to each participating employer and physician outlining the upcoming examination and asking them to collaborate in the process.
- Establishing an employer and J-1 physician auditing process by which unannounced site visits will occur, with findings being measured against their submitted application.
- Re-examining the federal regulation requirements and how the requirements compare with state processes and rules to ensure compliance.
- An analysis to identify best practices being implemented in other states.



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In 1994, Congress passed Public Law 103-416, which created the J-1 Physician Visa Waiver Program, also known as the “Conrad 30 Program.” International Medical Graduates enter the United States to complete a medical residency and medical fellowship on a J-1 Visa. Upon completion of the medical residency/fellowship program, the International Medical Graduates are required to return to their home countries for two years. The J-1 Visa Waiver Program allows these physicians to remain in the United States, instead of returning to their home country, if they have an employment contract with a clinic in an identified Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). The employment contract must be for a minimum of three years.

After completion of the three year J-1 commitment, the physician may continue to practice at the current clinic, or transfer to another clinic located in a HPSA for an additional two years through a “National Interest Waiver.”

The federal J-1 Physician Visa Waiver Program allows the state of Nevada to recommend 30 J-1 Visa Waiver applications each federal fiscal year (October 1st to September 30th). The Nevada State Health Division’s Primary Care Development Center begins accepting J-1 Visa Waiver applications on November 1st of each year. The state of Nevada reviews all applications for completeness and conformity with the guidelines established by the state. The potential candidate must also have a letter of support from the Board of Medical Examiners (BOE), verifying that the applicant has met all of the necessary requirements in order to receive a medical license from the BOE. Applications that are deemed to be in the best interest of the state in improving the health care of the citizens of Nevada are forwarded to the United States Department of State for approval. The U.S. Department of State reviews the application and makes a recommendation to the federal Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) as to whether or not the waiver should be granted. The BCIS makes the final determination and will inform the applicant and the Nevada State Health Division of their decision. If the applicant receives approval from the federal government, the applicant must also possess a medical license from the BOE, prior to practicing medicine in Nevada. The process takes approximately four to five months.

For more information about the J-1 Visa Program, please visit the Health Division’s website: <http://health.nv.gov>. Once on the main page, click on the Bureau of Family Health Services and then click on Primary Care Development Center.

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