

Dear TPL:

ECFMG is aware that the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina has impacted training programs along the Gulf Coast. Training in several programs has been suspended and J-1 physicians are among the residents and fellows that have been temporarily displaced. While we cannot know the long-term effects of this interruption of training on individual trainees, we realize that physicians will seek to relocate to other training institutions, either on a temporary or permanent basis. We have been advised that training institutions across the U.S. are currently collaborating with the AAMC and ACGME to establish guidelines for physicians for whom training has been interrupted. While we await a formal directive from the academic medical community, it is important to remember that U.S. graduate medical education guidelines require an official release from the current training institution before a physician is eligible to transfer to another residency or fellowship program. Similarly, the J-1 regulations require ECFMG's pre-approval of any changes in training plan, location or activity. Unauthorized employment is considered a violation of visa status. ECFMG is working closely with U.S. government offices to ensure the continuity of sponsorship for all J-1 physicians. If your program(s) plan to offer temporary or permanent training opportunities to J-1 physicians displaced by the hurricane, you are asked to contact your ECFMG Regional Advisor as soon as possible to discuss visa status considerations.

ECFMG appreciates the continued efforts of the academic medical community during this difficult time.

Sincerely,  
Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program