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Board considers the following key factors:

(a) The program or activity at the applicant institution or organization in which the Exchange Visitor is employed must be of high priority and of national or international significance in an area of interest to the Department.

(b) The Exchange Visitor must be needed as an integral part of the program or activity, or of an essential component thereof, so that loss of his/her services would necessitate discontinuance of the program, or a major phase of it. Specific evidence must be provided on how the loss or unavailability of the individual's services would adversely affect the initiation, continuance, completion, or success of the program or activity. The applicant organization/institution must clearly demonstrate that a suitable replacement for the Exchange Visitor cannot be found through recruitment or any other means. The Board will not request a waiver when the principal problem appears to be one of administrative, budgetary, or program inconvenience to the institution or other employer.

(c) The Exchange Visitor must possess outstanding qualifications, training and experience well beyond the usually expected accomplishments at the graduate, postgraduate, and residency levels, and must clearly demonstrate the capability to make original and significant contributions to the program. The Board will not request a waiver simply because an individual has specialized training or experience or is occupying a senior staff position in a university, hospital, or other institution.

[67 FR 77696, Dec. 19, 2002]

§ 50.5 Waivers for the delivery of health care service.

In determining whether to request a waiver for an Exchange Visitor to deliver health care service, the Board will consider information from and coordinate with State Departments of Public Health (or the equivalent), other "interested government agencies" which request waivers, and other relevant agencies. The Board requires the following criteria for requests for

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waivers for the delivery of health care service:

(a) The Exchange Visitor must submit a statement that he or she does not have pending and will not submit any other "interested government agency" waiver request while HHS processes the waiver request being submitted.

(b) Waivers are limited to primary care physicians and general psychiatrists who have completed their primary care or psychiatric residency training programs no more than 12 months before the date of commencement of employment under the contract described in subparagraph (d). This 12-month eligibility limitation is to ensure that the physicians' primary care training is current and they are not engaged in subspecialty training. This HHS eligibility requirement relates only to eligibility for an HHS waiver request and does not relieve physicians of the responsibility to maintain lawful status. Alien physicians are strongly encouraged to begin the waiver process as early as they possibly can while still in the residency training program. Early filing of the waiver request by the alien physician, coupled with timely processing of the request by the relevant government agencies, will facilitate the timely completion of the waiver process before the authorized J-1 admission expires, and the physician's subsequent application for change of nonimmigrant status from J-1 to H-1B.

(c) Primary care physicians are defined as: physicians practicing general internal medicine, pediatrics, family practice or obstetrics/gynecology willing to work in a primary care Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) or Medically Underserved Area or Population (MUA/P); and general psychiatrists who are willing to work in a Mental Health HPSA. Note: these HHS eligibility criteria for waivers are in addition to and independent of the existing waiver and visa criteria established by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the Department of State, and the Department of Labor.

(d) The Exchange Visitor must have entered a contract with the applicant employer. This contract must:

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(1) Require the Exchange Visitor to provide primary medical care in a facility physically located in an HHS-designated primary care HPSA or MUA/P, or general psychiatric care in a Mental Health HPSA.

(2) Require the Exchange Visitor to complete a term of employment of not less than three years providing primary care health services for not less than 40 hours per week.

(3) Require the Exchange Visitor to:

(i) Be licensed by the State where he or she will practice;

(ii) Have completed a residency in one of the following specialties: family practice, general pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology, general internal medicine, or general psychiatry; and

(iii) Be either board certified or board eligible in the relevant primary care discipline.

(4) Be terminable only for cause until completion of the three-year commitment, except that, with the agreement of the alien physician, the employer may assign the contract to another eligible employer with the prior approval of HHS and compliance with all applicable INS and Department of Labor requirements. Prior to approving an assignment of the contract, HHS will review and consider the health care needs of the alien physician's current and proposed new locations, as well as the reasons for the request.

(5) Not contain a restrictive covenant or non-compete clause which prevents or discourages the physician from continuing to practice in any HHS-designated primary care HPSA or MUA/P or Mental Health HPSA after the period of obligation under the contract has expired.

(6) Provide that any amendment to the contract complies with all applicable Federal statutes, regulations and HHS policy.

(7) Be consistent with all applicable Federal statutes, regulations and HHS policy.

(e) The facility or practice sponsoring the physician:

(1) Must provide health services to individuals without discriminating against them because either they are unable to pay for those services or payment for those health services will be made under Medicare or Medicaid.

(2) May charge no more than the usual and customary rate prevailing in the geographic area in which the services are provided.

(3) Must provide care on a sliding fee scale for persons at or below 200 percent of poverty income level. Persons with third-party insurance may be charged the full fee for service.

(4) Must post a notice in a conspicuous location in the patient waiting area at the practice site to notify patients of the charges for service as required in this paragraph.

(5) Must provide evidence that the applicant facility made unsuccessful efforts to recruit a physician who is a United States physician for the position to be filled by the Exchange Visitor.

(6) Must provide a statement by the head of the facility to confirm the facility is located in a specific, designated HPSA or MUA/P, and that it provides medical care to Medicaid and Medicare eligible patients and to the uninsured indigent.

(f) The employer and the alien physician must submit information to the Secretary at the times and in the manner that the Secretary may reasonably require.

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§ 50.6 Procedures for submission of application to HHS.

(a) The Exchange Visitor Waiver Review Board will review applications submitted by private or non-federal institutions, organizations, or agencies or by a component agency of HHS. The Board will not accept applications submitted by Exchange Visitors or, unless under extenuating and exceptional circumstances, other U.S. Government Agencies.

(b) Applications, instruction sheets and information are available from the Executive Secretary, Exchange Visitor Waiver Review Board. An authorized official of the applicant institution (educational institution, hospital, laboratory, corporation, etc.) must sign the completed application. The applicant institution must send the completed application to the address indicated on the instruction sheet.

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