



HHS EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

Purpose: The Florida Department of Health (FDOH) State Primary Care Office (PCO) administers Florida's visa waiver programs for foreign physicians. The goal is to improve access to primary health care services to Floridians residing in designated HPSA and to encourage the utilization of federally designated health facilities as sources of home medical care.

Florida's HHS Exchange Visitor Program Guidelines:

Applicant

- 1) The HHS Exchange Visitor Program is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physicians applying for a waiver through the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) must submit a request to the FDOH to obtain the required letter of support.
- 2) Applicants may apply year-round.
- 3) The physician must practice primary care medicine full time (no less than 40 hours per week) in a *designated primary care or mental health **geographic or population HPSA*** (A facility HPSA score will not suffice in the absence of a geographic or population HPSA score), for the required three (3) year obligation period.
 - a. The HPSA must have a score of eleven (11) or greater (Florida's median HPSA score).
 - b. Commence employment within **90 days** from the date the waiver is approved by the USCIS.
- 4) Primary care specialties include family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, and psychiatry.
- 5) Transfers: If a physician seeks to transfer to a new practice facility or employer, the physician must submit a formal request to the PCO prior to the transfer. The physician must also provide extenuating circumstance for the transfer in accordance with federal regulations. The Transfer Request Form, guidelines, and additional information are available at: [FDOH PCO Visa Waiver Programs](#).
- 6) FDOH does not maintain a list of employers or vacancies for visa waiver physicians. Florida participates in the [National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network \(3RNet\)](#), which assists in matching physicians with possible employers.
- 7) Recommendation by the FDOH does not guarantee approval by the USCIS.
- 8) Any violations of policy, including failure to provide status reports in a timely and accurate manner, or failure to demonstrate good faith in utilizing a physician's services in accordance with these policies will jeopardize future eligibility for placements and will cause for reporting to federal authorities or the Florida Board of Medicine.

Employer

In order to target communities and populations with the greatest need for primary care and mental health services, HHS will only process an application for waiver from a facility in or with a health professional shortage area (HPSA) score of 07 or higher.

Verification of Medical Practice, Monitoring, and Reporting:

FDOH or its representative may conduct periodic monitoring through telephone calls or site visits to ensure compliance with federal and state policies and procedures. Violation of any of the agreed upon conditions by the employer may result in denial of future requests for visa waivers. Violation of any of the agreed upon conditions by the physician may result in referral of the physician to appropriate authorities.

Contract changes which result in termination of employment, a change in practice scope, or the relocation of the physician from the site approved in the application request to a new site must be presented in writing to the Florida Primary Care Office prior to the change. The new practice facility must receive Florida Primary Care Office approval and be located within a designated shortage area.

Application Submission Procedure:

Submit the following documents electronically in PDF format to FL.PCO@flhealth.gov. Supporting documents are available at: [FDOH PCO Visa Waiver Programs](#)

- 1) Florida HHS Exchange Visitor Program Recommendation Application
- 2) Cover Letter from the practice facility signed, dated, and stating:
 - The name, physical address, phone number, and email address of the facility
 - The HPSA ID number in which the facility is located
- 3) Evidence that the facility is located in a designated shortage area (copy of the HRSA <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/shortage-area/by-address> query result)
- 4) Copy of the physician's valid Florida medical license or a copy of the Florida medical license application
- 5) Curriculum Vitae of the physician
- 6) Personal Statement from physician regarding his or her reasons for not wishing to fulfill the two-year home country residence requirement to which the applicant agreed at the time of acceptance of exchange visitor status
- 7) Form G-28 (Notice of Entry of Appearance as Attorney or Accredited Representative) or letterhead from law office, if an attorney represents the applicant

Application Checklist:

*(For use by attorney and or physician when completing application package; **not required** to be submitted with application)*

- Florida HHS Exchange Visitor Program Recommendation Application
- Practice facility's cover letter
- Evidence of health professional shortage area designation
- Physician's Florida medical license or license application
- Physician's Curriculum Vitae
- Physician's Personal Statement
- Form G-28 or letterhead from law office (if applicable)

Application materials may be submitted electronically to: FL.PCO@flhealth.gov

Or by mail to:

**Application materials may be mailed to:
State Primary Care Office
Division of Public Health Statistics and Performance Management
Florida Department of Health
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin #A05
Tallahassee, Florida 32399**