



# ARC J-1 Visa Waiver Program FAQs

## 1. What is a J-1 Visa Waiver?

“J-1” is a U.S. immigration status given to foreign-trained physicians who come to the U.S. to do residency work in an American hospital. Under immigration law, once J-1 doctors have completed their residency training, they must return to their home countries for at least two years before they may apply for immigrant status in the U.S. The law, however, does allow this “foreign residence requirement” to be waived at the request of an interested U.S. government agency. The ARC makes use of this waiver provision to fill documented healthcare services gaps in Appalachia.

## 2. Who is eligible to apply to the ARC J-1 Waiver Program?

J-1 physicians who agree to provide direct patient care for at least 40 hours per week for a minimum of three years within a designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) or mental health HPSA of the legislatively defined Appalachian Regional Commission service area. ARC will accept a waiver application for a physician licensed by the ARC State where he or she will practice and who has completed graduate medical education and training. The application must demonstrate a need for a particular physician at a specific site (see below for additional information on demonstrating need).

## 3. What is the process for applying for a J-1 Waiver via ARC?

To begin the process with ARC, contact the designated [J-1 Program Contact](#) in the ARC State in which the physician has been offered employment to submit the application. Complete ARC application information can be found on ARC's [website](#). Once the ARC State provides a recommendation, the physician's application is submitted to ARC for review. If the ARC Federal Co-Chair ultimately recommends a waiver for the physician, an email notification will be sent to the attorney/applicant upon ARC recommendation to the U.S. Department of State (DOS). Upon the favorable recommendation of the application by USDOS and the subsequent approval by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the physician must begin work at the ARC HPSA location(s) described in the ARC J-1 Visa Waiver Recommendation. Within 30 days of the employment start date the physician and sponsor must complete an [ARC Placement Verification Form](#) and submit it to [fobrien@arc.gov](mailto:fobrien@arc.gov).

## 4. What is the ARC processing time?

Customarily 90 days upon receipt of the J-1 Visa Waiver application from the ARC State J-1 program contact. Incomplete, inaccurate, and non-compliant applications will delay processing.

## 5. Does ARC charge a fee?

No. There is no fee to apply for a waiver recommendation through the ARC.

## **6. When does the ARC three-year service commitment begin?**

The ARC three-year service commitment begins upon USCIS approval of the ARC J-1 waiver recommendation and no later than 90 days after said approval.

## **7. What is the ARC Placement Verification Form and when is it due?**

The [ARC Placement Verification Form](#) is used to confirm the start date and practice site(s) of the physician. It is due within 30 days of when the service commitment begins.

## **8. What is need-based?**

The purpose of ARC's J-1 program is to address unmet healthcare needs in Appalachia. The gateway to ARC consideration is the ARC State's recommendation of the J-1 physician placement at a site in an Appalachian HPSA. In addition, waiver requests must provide a specific and detailed explanation of the reasons why a particular physician is needed at a certain site. An explanation of need is based on myriad factors that will vary from case to case, such as, the lack of a specific set of medical expertise in an area, especially one in high demand due to the particular health/population demographics; staffing changes at a site that strain providers and/or create new healthcare gaps; unsuccessful recruitment efforts, or similar factors.

## **9. Does ARC make placements in MUAs?**

No, ARC only makes placements in designated HPSAs.

## **10. Does ARC have a HPSA threshold?**

No, ARC will make placements at the recommendation of the ARC State in HPSAs designated by HRSA as having a shortage of physicians.

## **11. Who processes hospitalists in the ARC region?**

HHS has expanded their program to include hospitalist placements in the ARC region.

## **12. Does ARC allow telework?**

ARC does not permit telework placements in order to ensure that the people of Appalachia are the direct beneficiaries of a physician's service. ARC has allowed for specific, temporary, pre-approved cases such as pandemic-, weather-, or cancer patient lab follow-up-related cases.

## **13. What is a Transfer?**

A transfer is a change in practice site(s) and/or sponsoring medical practice due to extenuating circumstances. All transfers must continue to comply with the underlying ARC requirements and include supporting documents reflecting the change(s), such as an employer support letter and contract amendment, and must include ARC State concurrence. In addition, USCIS may require further action from the physician. All transfers must be initiated by contacting ARC to obtain written concurrence. Please email [Deann Fairfax](mailto:Dfairfax@arc.gov) [dfairfax@arc.gov](mailto:Dfairfax@arc.gov) to begin the transfer process.

**14. Will you provide a letter of completion for my waiver commitment?**

ARC does not provide certificates of completion, however, upon request, ARC does provide a verification of commitment via email.

**15. Where can I get more information?**

Complete application materials can be found on the [ARC website](#). Please email Fiona O'Brien [fobrien@arc.gov](mailto:fobrien@arc.gov) with any additional questions.