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## Appalachian Regional Commission Visa Waiver Program

### BACKGROUND

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) represents a partnership of federal, state and local governments. The ARC is composed of 13 Appalachian states, their governors and a co-chair. The program allows for the Department of Health to request that the Appalachian Regional Commission an Interested Government Agency recommend a waiver of the two-year home residency requirement of foreign physicians on a J-1 visa in their last year of residency training.

### WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

International Medical Graduates in their last year of residency or fellowship may apply. Physicians may not be “out of status” for more than 180 days since receiving a visa.

Practice sites must be in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) located in one of PA’s 57 counties which the ARC governs in Pennsylvania.

### HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

The employer must submit a formal application to the Department of Health (DOH) which includes information about the organization, the practice site, and the physician.

If the Department agrees to sponsor the physician, a written recommendation by a state public health official in support of the waiver is sent to the ARC along with an application packet.

Upon successful recommendation by the ARC a waiver recommendation letter is then submitted along with an application packet to the United States Department of State (USDOS).

There is no limit to the number of waivers requested through this program.

### WHO DOES THE PROGRAM IMPACT?

Persons or population groups living in health professional shortage areas (HPSA) who are unable by reasons of poverty or other circumstances to obtain access to a physician.

To recruit and retain primary care physicians within designated shortage areas of the Commonwealth who are engaged in providing service to the underserved residents of their area.

### RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

Physician Visa Waiver Program

Pennsylvania Department of Health – Primary Care Office

(717) 772-5298 E-mail: [waiverprograms@pa.gov](mailto:waiverprograms@pa.gov) Website: [WaiverPrograms](http://WaiverPrograms)

Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Website: [ARC](http://ARC)