



ECFMG

FAIMER

Guidance for Teaching Hospitals

Temporary Pause on Certain Immigrant Visas (Effective January 21, 2026)

Dear Program Director,

As you may know, the U.S. Department of State has announced a temporary pause affecting the issuance of certain **immigrant** visas (green cards) processed at U.S. embassies and consulates abroad for nationals of specific countries.

Importantly, this policy does not affect J-1 or H-1B residents and fellows. Training, employment authorization, visa issuance, extensions, and changes of status for **nonimmigrant** physicians remain unaffected. That said, this announcement does not change or override existing entry restrictions imposed under the [June](#) and [December](#) 2025 Presidential Proclamations (“travel bans”). Where there is overlap between countries subject to the new immigrant visa pause and countries subject to existing travel bans, the travel ban restrictions continue to apply independently. (*See previous correspondence to training programs related to the travel bans [here](#).*)

What Is Happening?

Effective January 21, 2026, the Department of State will implement a temporary pause on issuing certain immigrant visas while it reviews how applicants are evaluated under public charge rules (i.e., whether an applicant is likely to rely on U.S. government benefits).

This is a procedural pause, not a change in eligibility criteria and not a permanent policy.

Who Is Affected?

This pause applies only to immigrant visa (green card) applications processed outside the United States for individuals who:

- Are nationals of specific countries identified by the Department of State, and
- Are applying for an immigrant visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad (consular processing)

Applicants may still attend their immigrant visa interview, but visa issuance will be temporarily withheld, unless a narrow exception applies.

Who Is NOT Affected? (*Critical for Teaching Hospitals*)

- Residents and Fellows in J-1 or H-1B status are NOT affected by this pause
- This policy does not apply to any nonimmigrant (temporary) visa categories, including those most relevant to GME programs:
 - **J-1 Exchange Visitors**
 - **H-1B specialty occupation physicians**
 - B-1/B-2 (visitor visas)
 - F-1/M-1 (students)
 - L-1, O-1, E-1/E-2, TN
 - Dependent visas (H-4, J-2, L-2, O-3, etc.)

Nonimmigrant visa processing is expected to continue normally, including:

- Visa issuance
- International travel
- Extensions
- Changes of status
- Transfers between programs (where otherwise permitted)

There is no impact on residents' or fellows' ability to train, work, or maintain valid immigration status as a result of this immigrant visa pause.

That said, individuals from countries subject to existing travel bans may continue to face entry restrictions or additional scrutiny under those separate Presidential Proclamations.

What Does “Pause” Mean in Practice?

For those who are affected (immigrant visa applicants abroad only):

- Immigrant visa interviews will still occur
- Consular officers will complete their review
- Instead of issuing the visa, the case will be temporarily refused under an administrative provision

This is not a denial, not a revocation, and not a finding of ineligibility.

Key Takeaway for Teaching Hospitals

This is a narrow, temporary policy affecting only certain immigrant visas processed abroad.

This policy itself does not impact:

- J-1 or H-1B residents and fellows
- GME program operations
- Visa sponsorship for training

Existing travel bans remain in effect and operate independently of this policy.

