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Physical Therapists

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Immigrant Visa for Physical Therapists

General Information

A physical therapist, who wishes to apply for an Immigrant Visa (Permanent Resident Status) coming to the United States to perform labor in covered health care occupations (other than as a physician) requires:

1. A job offer from a financially capable health care facility in the US willing to file Immigrant Visa petition with USCIS, on behalf of the physical therapist.
2. Credentials showing that the applicant has a permanent license to practice in the state of intended employment or, a letter or statement, signed by an authorized state physical therapy licensing official, stating that the alien beneficiary is qualified to take that state's written licensing examination for physical therapists.
3. The Health Care Worker must produce FCCPT/CGFNS certification (Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy/Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools), or certification from an equivalent independent credentialing organization approved by the Attorney General in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS).

NOTE: Aliens coming to the US to perform labor in covered health care occupations (other than as a physician) are inadmissible unless they present a certificate relating to their education, qualifications, and English language proficiency. The reason for this requirement is to ensure that aliens possess the necessary proficiency in the skills that affect the provision of health care services in the US.

Qualifications Required of a Professional Licensed/Registered Physical Therapist

A. Licensed/Registered in the Country of Education

The physical therapist need have only the minimum requirement of physical therapy studies in his/her own country. Some countries offer a full, five-year Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy program at a university; others offer a Graduate Physical Therapy degree after two or three years of study. Still other countries may offer a physical therapy course through a hospital study program that leads to a diploma. There is no requirement of any specific degree. The only requirement is that the physical therapist is licensed/registered in the country of study.

B. FCCPT/CGFNS Certification

Applicants who wish to obtain an occupational visa to practice as a physical therapist in the United States must produce FCCPT/CGFNS certification (Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy/Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools), or certification from an equivalent independent credentialing organization approved by the Attorney General in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS).

FCCPT:The FCCPT grants two types of certificates namely **FCCPT Comprehensive Credentials Evaluation (Type I Certificate)** [2] and **FCCPT Visa Credentials Certification (Type II Certificate)**.

FCCPT Comprehensive Credentials Evaluation (Type I Certificate)

This certificate is for individuals who have never been licensed to practice physical therapy in the U.S. and who need a visa that permits employment from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This Certificate service has two components. (1) Comprehensive evaluation based on FCCPT's approved guidelines, which meet or exceed the minimum credential requirements for licensure in most U.S. states and for USCIS. The evaluation determines whether or not the education is substantially equivalent to a first professional degree in physical therapy in the U.S. (2) Verification compliance with USCIS requirements for a Healthcare Worker Certificate is done by documenting compliance with English language proficiency requirements and verification of eligibility to practice in the country of education. The Type I Certificate is a Health Care Worker Certificate required by USCIS. Some of the states that require Type 1 Certificate are: Louisiana, Massachusetts, North Dakota, Tennessee, Texas and Washington, D.C. Type I Certificate application requirements include:

1. Notarized copies of high school and college diplomas;
2. Notarized form and photo of applicant with signature;
3. Official transcripts/marksheets sent directly from the institution for each higher education attended by the applicant;
4. Official course descriptions sent directly from the institution for all physical therapy coursework;
5. Verification of all licenses and registrations showing eligibility to practice in country of education, sent directly from the appropriate agency; (If applicant is licensed in the U.S., then verification of U.S. licensure from the jurisdiction, and NPTE score transfer is required);
6. English proficiency examinations (TOEFL, TWE & TSE) scores from the testing agency which are to be sent directly; and
7. Appropriate filing fee.

FCCPT Visa Credentials Certification (Type II Certificate)

This certificate is required by the USCIS from individuals who are currently licensed in the U.S. or do not hold a current Type I Certificate and are seeking adjustment of visa status or need to produce a Healthcare Worker Certificate to maintain their visa status. The certificate review process focuses on the verification of applicant's education (certificates, diplomas, transcripts and degrees), the verification of all licenses to practice physical therapy, and the demonstration of English language proficiency. If the applicant is currently licensed in the U.S. as a physical therapist, and is residing in the U.S., and wants to change the status with USCIS, he/she needs this type of certificate. This type of certificate is also needed if applicant is required to produce a Healthcare Worker Certificate to maintain his/her status with USCIS. The requirements of this type of certificate are almost similar to that of Type I Certificate.

For more details contact www.fccpt.org [3] and FSBPT (The Federation Of State Boards of Physical Therapy): www.fsbpt.org [4]

CGFNS

In order to obtain a CGFNS Certificate, applicants must successfully complete CGFNS' Certification Program, a three-part program, comprised of a credentials review, a one-day Qualifying Exam of physical therapy knowledge and an English language proficiency exam. Upon successful completion of all three elements of the program, applicants are awarded a CGFNS Certificate. For more details visit www.cgfns.org [5].

C. VISASCREEN CERTIFICATE

U.S. immigration law requires that physical therapist complete a screening program. VisaScreen is a screening program offered by International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP - in association with CGFNS). Before the immigrant visa or adjustment of status is granted, the VisaScreen certificate or certified statement must be obtained from the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP), which is a part of the CGFNS.

VisaScreen enables healthcare professionals to meet this screening program requirement by verifying and evaluating their credentials to ensure compliance with the government's minimum eligibility standards. The waiting period required for receipt of the VisaScreen certificate varies, but we suggest proceeding with the application as soon as the I-140 Petition has been filed with USCIS. You'll need to present the certificate when you go for the final visa interview at the consulate. VisaScreen enables healthcare professionals to meet legal requirements by verifying and evaluating their credentials to ensure compliance with the government's minimum eligibility standards. Applicants who receive a VisaScreen Certificate can present it to a consular office, or in the case of adjustment of status, the Attorney General, as part of a visa application. To satisfy all federal screening requirements, a VisaScreen evaluation must include:

1. Educational Review

The educational review ensures that the applicant's education meets all applicable, statutory, and regulatory requirements for the profession the applicant intends to practice, and is comparable to that of a U.S. graduate seeking licensure.

In order to meet the educational requirements for the VisaScreen program, applicants must have:

- a) Successfully completed a senior secondary school education that is separate from their professional education;
- b) Graduated from a government-approved, professional healthcare program of at least two years in length; and
- c) Successfully completed a minimum number of clock and/or credit hours in specific theoretical and clinical areas during their professional program.

2. Licensure Review

The licensure review evaluates initial and all current and past licenses. Validations provided directly to ICHP by the issuing/validating institution, affirm that the applicant has completed all practice requirements and that the registration/licensure has no encumbrances.

3. English Language Proficiency Assessment

The English language proficiency assessment confirms that the applicant has demonstrated the required competency in oral and written English by submitting passing scores on tests approved by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. Currently, to fulfill this requirement, applicants must take either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Test of Written English (TWE) and Test of Spoken English (TSE), or the Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) parts 1-4, which include an Oral Interview and a Speaking Test. Certain applicants may be exempt from the English language proficiency requirement if they meet all of the following criteria:

- a) Country of professional education was Australia, Canada (except Quebec), Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom or the United States;
- b) Language of instruction was English; and
- c) Language of textbooks was English.

Contents of the Certificates

The certificate must contain the following information:

- The name and address of the certifying organization;
- Contact information where the organization can be contacted for verification of the validity of the certificate;
- The date that the certificate was issued;
- The occupation for which the certificate was issued;
- The alien's name, and date and place of birth;
- Verification that the alien's education, training, license and experience are comparable with the requirements for an American health care worker of the same type;
- Verification that the alien's education, training, license and experience are authentic and, in the case of a license, unencumbered;
- Verification that the alien's education, training, license and experience meet all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements for admission into the US as an

immigrant; and

- Verification either that the alien has passed a test predicting success on the occupation's licensing or certification examination, provided such a test is recognized by a majority of States licensing the occupation for which the certificate is issued, or that the alien has passed the occupation's licensing or certification examination.

Immigration Procedures for a Professional Physical Therapist

Step I: Applying to USCIS for an Immigrant Visa (Form I-140 with ETA 9089)

Since U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has determined the occupation of licensed/registered physical therapist as a Schedule A occupation, there is no need of Labor certification approval to file an immigrant visa petition. The first step of the immigration process is the filing and approval of Immigrant visa petition (I-140) along with duplicate ETA 9089 directly with the USCIS Service Center having jurisdiction over the place of employment. Unlike the filing requirements of Labor Certification under other PERM provisions, an employer seeking a labor certification for a professional physical therapist is required to submit the applicable documentation when the employer files the application with the appropriate USCIS office.

A. Requirements for Filing ETA 9089

The petitioner should complete and submit following documents.

1. A completed Form ETA-9089, in duplicate, signed in the original by an authorized official of the petitioning organization, the alien, and the representative, if any,
2. A Wage Determination issued by the U.S Dept. of Labor for the proposed area where the job opportunity exists,
3. A copy of the posted notice, (Should be posted for ten CONSECUTIVE BUSINESS days in a conspicuous place in the employer's premises at the place of intended employment), and
4. Copies of any and all in-house media, whether electronic or printed, in accordance with the normal procedures used for the recruitment of similar positions to the position specified in the Form 9089 in the employer's organization.

B. Requirements for Filing I-140

1. Petitioner must provide proof of ability to pay the wage (a letter from a financial officer of an employer with 100 or more employees, or copy of annual report, federal tax return, or audited financial statement if employees number fewer than 100).
2. Credentials showing that the applicant has a permanent license to practice in the state of intended employment or, a letter or statement, signed by an authorized state physical therapy licensing official, stating that the alien beneficiary is qualified to take that state's written licensing examination for physical therapists.

3. The I-140 petition cannot be filed until 30 days have passed after the last date of the removal of the job posting notice i.e. the notice must be posted between 30 and 180 days prior to filing the I-140 petition.

Step 2: Adjustment of Status OR Consular Processing

If the Physical Therapist applicant is already in the United States, there are two choices, processing through Adjustment of Status (AOS) OR through Consular Processing (CP). Both processes have their pros and cons.

If the Physical Therapist applicant is outside the US, they have to go through CP. This involves a brief interview at the US consulate in their home country. This process is usually completed within 6-9 months upon the priority date (date when the I-140 petition is received at the USCIS upon filing) becoming current as per the visa bulletin.

Note that the second step can be filed only if the cut off dates (visa numbers availability) for the country of birth of the applicant or his/her spouse for the category under which the petition is filed are current or have reached the priority date of the applicant. Most of such cases may qualify under employment third preference category. You can review the current dates on our [web site](#) [6].

Review the dates in the Visa Bulletin under Employment Based Categories, category three for the specific country in which either the nurse or his/her spouse was born. You can also read further about the concept of Priority Dates in the Visa Bulletin: Feel free to contact us if any clarifications or further information should be needed.

Profession/Occupation:

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Links:

[1] <https://immigration.com/physical-therapists/physical-therapists>

[2] <http://www.immigration.com/node/1356/edit#top>

[3] <http://www.fccpt.org>

[4] <http://www.fsbpt.org/>

[5] <http://www.cgfns.org>

[6] <http://www.immigration.com/visa-bulletin>

[7] <https://immigration.com/profession/professionoccupation/physical-therapists>