NM J-1 Waiver Top FAQ's (FFY 2027)

1. What is the Conrad 30/J-1 Visa Waiver Program?
    - The Conrad 30/J-1 Visa Waiver Program allows J-1 medical doctors to apply for a waiver for the two (2) year residence requirement upon completion of the J-1 exchange visitor program (Section 214(l) of the Immigration Nationality Act).
    - The program addresses the shortage of qualified doctors in medically underserved areas.

2. How much does it cost to apply to the New Mexico Conrad 30 J-1 Visa Waiver Program?
    - New Mexico does not require an application fee.

3. Is New Mexico a first come, first serve program?
    - Yes. Only complete applications will be accepted continuously until all Waivers slots have been filled. It is the responsibility of the application(s) submitter to assure completeness and conformity to Federal and State of New Mexico requirements.
    - **For updates on the waiver slot availability, please email NMJ1@doh.nm.gov**

4. When should I start working on my waiver application?
    - This may be somewhat dependent upon when physicians start looking for employment. Typically beginning at the final year of residency or fellowship becomes the time that employers can maximize the number of waiver seekers.

5. I would like to hire an attorney to help me with the J-1 waiver application and filing. Can the NMDOH recommend someone?
    - **NMDOH cannot recommend an attorney or a law firm.**
    - It is recommended to work with an immigration attorney that is proficient in the J-1 visa waiver process and belongs to the International Medical Graduate (IMG) Taskforce. The IMG Taskforce is one of the most important ways physician immigration attorneys stay abreast of the latest news affecting physician immigration.

6. What is the processing time for the NMDOH to review my J-1 application?
    - The processing time for an application begins when an application is complete. An application is complete when ALL wavier application components (State and Federal requirements) are satisfactorily met.

7. After review of a **complete** application packet, a decision for a letter of support from NMDOH typically takes 4-6 weeks.
        → Some waiver recommendation applications require further administrative processing. It will take additional time for the NMDOH to send its recommendation to DOS for such cases.

8. If a letter of support is granted, the NMDOH J-1 Visa Waiver Program Coordinator will send the completed application packet directly to the US Department of State (DOS).
    - According to the DOS website, "the processing times vary depending on the basis under which you request a waiver. After the review process, the DOS will forward its recommendation to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). USCIS makes the final determination on wavier requests."

- For more information on DOS and USCIS processing times, please visit: US DOS: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange/waiver-of-the-exchange-visitor/how-to-apply-waiver.html
- USCIS: https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/conrad-30-waiver-program

9. If I am missing documents in my application, can you reserve a slot for me?
    - No. Waiver slots will not be reserved with incomplete applications. Application(s) with missing components are considered incomplete and will not be reviewed or processed until all components are received. NMDOH staff will work with the applicant submitter to achieve completeness to continue the review process.
    - It is the responsibility of the application(s) submitter to assure completeness and conformity to Federal and State of New Mexico requirements before submitting an application.

10. Which government agency has a final say on my J-1 Waiver application?
    - **USCIS makes the final determination** on your waiver request and will decide whether to approve or deny a waiver application. USCIS will notify you at the address you provided.

11. What is the definition of "full-time" work?
    - DOS considers "full-time" employment to be 40 hours per week and requires the recipient of a Conrad 30 waiver to work full-time for three continuous years in an underserved area.

12. Can I submit an application if my USMLE or ECFMG is scheduled but I haven't taken it?
    - No. Any application that indicates the physician is still needing to take an exam will be considered an incomplete application and will not be reviewed until proof of passage is provided.
    - The requirement is Proof of passage of all required USMLE Steps, ECFMG Certifications must be submitted.

13. Can letters of community support be provided by other medical doctors, such as the Medical Director, where the J-1 provider will be practicing?
    - It will be accepted, however, local community support letters from community members, such as a city official, local health department, school board members, realtor, etc. within the Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) are **strongly encouraged**.

14. Since New Mexico typically fills their slots, are there other options available?
    - Yes, through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Exchange Visitor Program. This Program is specifically for primary care physicians working in HPSA areas.
    - For more information, visit: https://www.hhs.gov/about/agencies/oga/about-oga/exchange-visitor-program/index.html

15. UPDATE: Can you review the contract before we submit our application to ensure it meets the requirements?
    - Yes, please contact Melanie Keams at (505) 659-9588 or NMJ1@doh.nm.gov to review a contract prior to submitting waiver application.

16. UPDATE: I reviewed my contract but did not see a non-compete or non-solicitation cause. For this waiver request, is there any other documentation needed to confirm that it does not contain a non-compete clause(s) or their equivalents?
    - **If the contract has a non-compete or non-solicitation clause, please have the facility provide an addendum stating they do not have a non-compete clause(s) or their equivalents. This will satisfy the New Mexico requirement.**

17. UPDATE: In the FY 2027 application cycle, our office will have a new signatory and there will be a delay in getting your application approval process, in which the timeline in our office may take a minimum of 6 weeks to a possible maximum of 10 weeks for a signed NMDOH support letter for the Conrad 30 program, National Interest Waiver, and any other support letters you team will need.

18. UPDATE: Are there resources that can be used to find a job for J-1s?
    - Yes, there are two reliable resources:
        i. 3RNet at https://www.3rnet.org/jobs
        ii. New Mexico Health Resources, a non-profit organization, assist in locating eligible New Mexico practice sites for J-1 candidates to fulfill their obligation. Website: https://www.nmhr.org

19. UPDATE: Who do I contact for more information about the New Mexico Conrad 30/J-1 Visa Waiver Program?
    - Email: NMJ1@doh.nm.gov
    - Phone: (505) 659-9588
    - Website: https://www.nmhealth.org/about/phd/pchb/oprh/jvwp/

20. UPDATE: How do I submit my application?
    - **Please submit your entire application for the waiver request with the following: one (1) original paper copy of the entire application package to (mailed or submitted in-person):**

Melanie Keams, Program Coordinator
J-1 Visa Waiver Program
Office of Primary Care and Rural Health
5300 Homestead Rd. NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110

and after submission of the paper copy of the application please email one (1) single email/transmission as a ZIP file copy to NMJ1@doh.nm.gov. If other accommodations are required, please email the program coordinator at **NMJ1@doh.nm.gov**, to discuss other options.