



Alta Bates Summit  
Medical Center

A Sutter Health Affiliate

## Clinical Pastoral Education Program Nine frequently asked questions about J-1 visas and CPE residency

*Q1 What is a J-1 visa?*

A1 A J-1 visa is a permit issued by the U.S. Department of State that authorizes people to enter the United States as an “exchange visitor” for the purposes of sharing knowledge or gaining training. Almost all of the international students who are interested in CPE need a J-1 visa in order to participate.

Without a J-1 visa (or another visa that specifically allows employment or work-related training), you cannot receive a stipend for your CPE training, and we cannot accept you into our program. It is therefore important that you apply for CPE as soon as you know you are interested, and that you comply with the application requirements as fully as possible.

*Q2 How do I obtain a J-1 visa?*

A2 The process does take some time, and so **our CPE center will only consider international applicants whose materials arrive in our office before December 31<sup>st</sup> of the year prior to the year in which they wish to enter residency** (for example, you would apply before December 31, 2005, for the 2006-2007 residency year). If you are accepted into our CPE program, one of our staff members will contact you and ask you to complete several documents, including furnishing copies of your valid passport. This information will be utilized to complete a request for a DS-2019 form, which is issued by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc., and sent directly to you. (Please *do not* contact the ACPE office directly, as this complicates the process.) Once you receive the DS-2019 form, you may contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate to schedule an appointment with a consular officer to apply for the J-1 visa. Because of recent security-related changes to consular procedures, these appointments are more difficult to obtain. You should make your appointment as soon as possible after receiving the DS-2019 form. Be advised that having the DS-2019 form is *not* a guarantee that you will be given a J-1 visa. U.S. immigration law requires consular officers to assume that all visa applicants are trying to enter the United States permanently and therefore they will seek reasons to exclude you from entering the country. The more documentation you can provide to show that you have compelling reasons to return to your home country (such as bank accounts, reference letters, etc.), the better your chances of receiving the visa. If the consular officer decides not to issue a visa to you, *contact us immediately* so that we may pursue other possibilities for obtaining the visa.

*Q3 How long will the visa be valid?*

A3 If you are a chaplain resident, your J-1 visa will be valid for the length of the residency program (normally twelve [12] months). Once your visa expires, you must leave the United States within thirty [30] days. If you do not, you are considered an “illegal alien,” and you could be deported and prohibited from reentering this country for up to ten years.

If you decide to leave the CPE residency program before the expiration date of your visa, or if your residency is terminated by our center, then you must leave the country immediately. ACPE will be notified of your ending date, and ACPE will in turn notify the U.S. Government, in accordance with federal law.

*Q4 Can a J-1 visa be renewed or extended?*

A4 Yes, if you have been accepted into another educational program or if you apply and are accepted for more residency training in our program. However, in order to extend your J-1 visa, you may have to leave the United States and reapply with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your home country. There is no guarantee, however, that you will receive an extension of the J-1 visa.

- Q5 Can a J-1 visa be “converted” into a work visa that will allow me to stay longer?*  
A5 While you are in the U.S. on a J-1 visa, you are considered a student, not an employee of Alta Bates Summit Medical Center or of any of Sutter Health’s facilities. Therefore, please do not ask us or ACPE to sponsor you for a work visa. Our CPE center is recognized only as an educational program and cannot serve as a sponsor for immigration purposes. If your faith group is willing to sponsor you as a religious worker, you may be eligible to apply for a R-1 visa. However, this process must be initiated by your faith group or denomination, not by our office or ACPE.
- Q6 Can family members come with me to the United States?*  
A6 Family members, such as spouses, children, and parents, can be invited to come to the United States with you as holders of J-2 (dependent) visas. However, you must be able to document that you will have sufficient funds to provide for their needs during their stay. You can apply for the J-2 visas at the same time that you apply for the J-1, or your dependents may apply after you have come to this country. If you are interested in this possibility, please be sure to mention it to us.
- Q7 Why do I need to have health insurance for my J-1 visa?*  
A7 The U.S. Government wants to make sure that all persons who enter the country have some way to take care of themselves in the event that they become ill, and health insurance is evidence of your ability to provide for your medical needs. There are specific legal requirements that must be met in order for your insurance to be considered sufficient; please consult our office for current guidelines. If you want to purchase medical insurance coverage, we can refer you to an insurance carrier. However, this referral does not constitute an endorsement, and our program receives no commission or other payment for referrals.
- Q8 What about income taxes on the stipend I receive while on J-1 status?*  
A8 If you receive a stipend from our program, no money will be deducted from your stipend check for U.S. income taxes. Please consult your accountant or financial advisor to determine your tax obligations, particularly since you may be covered by a tax treaty that has been negotiated between the United States and your home country.
- Q9 Can I work at another job while taking CPE?*  
A9 Your J-1 visa permits you only to engage in the activities listed on the DS-2019 form. Other work for monetary compensation is not permitted. If you wish, you may offer your services as a volunteer; that is allowed under J-1 regulations.

There is more information about international students at the website of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE): <http://www.acpe.edu>. If you have other questions, please call our offices at 510-204-6730. Thank you for your interest.

The Clinical Pastoral Education program at the Alta Bates Summit Medical Center is accredited to offer Level I and II CPE and Supervisory CPE by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (ACPE), an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. Its offices are located at 1549 Clairmont Road, N.E., Suite 103, Decatur, GA 30033-4611 USA; telephone 404-320-1472; facsimile 404-320-0849; World Wide Web URL <<http://www.acpe.edu>>. The Rev. Dr. Teresa E. Snorton is ACPE’s executive director. The Rev. Carrie L. Buckner is a certified ACPE supervisor and director of chaplaincy services, and the Rev. Dr. Peter Yuichi Clark is an ACPE supervisor and chaplain administrator.

This document is informational only. It may not reflect the most recent government regulations, and it should not be construed as offering legal counsel. Readers are advised to consult with an immigration attorney if they have specific legal issues they wish to discuss.