

**§ 655.212**

**§ 655.212 Administrative-judicial reviews.**

(a) Whenever an employer has requested an administrative-judicial review of a denial of an application or a petition in accordance with §§ 655.204(d), 655.205(d), 655.206(c), or 655.211, the Chief Administrative Law Judge shall immediately assign an Administrative Law Judge to review the record for legal sufficiency, and the OFLC Administrator shall send a certified copy of the case file to the Chief Administrative Law Judge by means normally assuring next day delivery. The Administrative Law Judge shall not have authority to remand the case and shall not receive additional evidence. Any countervailing evidence advanced after decision by the OFLC Administrator shall be subject to provisions of 8 CFR 214.2(h)(3)(i).

(b) The Administrative Law Judge, within five working days after receipt of the case file shall, on the basis of the written record and due consideration of any written memorandums of law submitted, either affirm, reverse or modify the OFLC Administrator's denial by written decision. The decision of the Administrative Law Judge shall specify the reasons for the action taken and shall be immediately provided to the employer, OFLC Administrator, and DHS by means normally assuring next-day delivery. The Administrative Law Judge's decision shall be the final decision of the Department of Labor and no further review shall be given to the temporary labor certification determination by any Department of Labor official.

**§ 655.215 Territory of Guam.**

Subpart C of this part does not apply to temporary employment in the Territory of Guam, and the Department of Labor does not certify to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) the temporary employment of nonimmigrant aliens under H-2B visas in the Territory of Guam. Pursuant to DHS regulations, that function is performed by the Governor of Guam, or the Governor's designated representative within the Territorial Government.

**20 CFR Ch. V (4-1-12 Edition)**

**Subpart D—Attestations by Facilities Using Nonimmigrant Aliens as Registered Nurses**

SOURCE: 59 FR 882, 897, Jan. 6, 1994, unless otherwise noted.

**§ 655.300 Purpose and scope of subparts D and E.**

(a) *Purpose.* The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) establishes the H-1A program to provide relief for the nursing shortage crisis. Subpart D of this part sets forth the procedure by which health care facilities seeking to use nonimmigrant registered nurses may submit attestations to the Department of Labor relating to the effects of the nursing shortage on their operations, their efforts to recruit and retain United States workers as registered nurses and certain information on wages and working conditions for nurses at the facility. Subpart E of this part sets forth complaint, investigation, and penalty provisions with respect to such attestations.

(b) *Procedure.* The INA establishes a procedure for health care facilities to follow in seeking admission to the United States for, or use of, nonimmigrant nurses under H-1A visas. The procedure is designed to reduce reliance on nonimmigrant nurses in the future, and calls of the health care facility to attest, and be able to demonstrate, that, e.g., there would be substantial disruption to health services without the nonimmigrant nurses and that it is taking timely and significant steps to develop, recruit, and retain U.S. nurses. Subparts D and E of this part set forth the specific requirements for those procedures.

(c) *Applicability.* (1) Subparts D and E of this part apply to all facilities that seek the temporary admission or use of nonimmigrants as registered nurses.

(2) During the period that the provisions of appendix 1603.D.4 of Annex 1603 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) apply, subparts D and E of this part shall apply to the entry of a nonimmigrant who is a citizen of Mexico under and pursuant to the provisions of section D of Annex 1603 of NAFTA.

**§ 655.301 Overview of process.**

This section provides a context for the attestation process, to facilitate understanding by health care facilities that may seek nonimmigrant nurses under H-1A visas.

(a) *Federal agencies' responsibilities.* The United States Department of Labor (DOL), Department of Justice, and Department of State are involved in the H-1A visa process. Within DOL, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and the Employment Standards Administration (ESA) have responsibility for different aspects of the process.

(b) *Health care facility's attestation responsibilities.* Each health care facility seeking one or more H-1A nurses shall, as the first step, submit an attestation on *Form ETA 9029*, as described in § 655.310 of this part, to the designated regional office of the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of DOL. If the attestation is found to meet the requirements set at § 655.310 (a) through (k) of this part, ETA shall accept the attestation for filing, shall return the cover form of the accepted attestation to the health care facility, and shall notify the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) of the Department of Justice of the filing. As discussed in § 655.310 of this part, if the facility proposes to utilize alternative methods to comply with Attestation Elements I and/or IV, or asserts that taking a second timely and significant step under Element IV would be unreasonable, or claims a bona fide medical emergency exemption from Element IV as a worksite using one or more H-1A nurses through a nursing contractor only, additional supporting information and ETA review shall be required.

(c) *Visa petitions.* Upon ETA's acceptance of the filing, the health care facility may then file with INS H-1A visa petitions for the admission of H-1A nurses, or to extend the stay of alien nurses currently working at the facility. The facility shall attach a copy of the accepted attestation form (Form ETA 9029) to the visa petition filed with INS. At the same time that the facility files a visa petition with INS, it shall also send a copy of the visa petition with INS, it shall also send a copy of the visa petition to the Chief,

Division of Foreign Labor Certifications, U.S. Employment Service, Employment and Training Administration, Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW., room N-4456, Washington, DC 20210.

(d) *Visa issuance.* INS assures that the nonimmigrants possess the required qualifications and credentials to be employed as nurses. See 8 U.S.C. 1182(m)(1)). The Department of State is responsible for issuing the visa.

(e) *Board of Alien Labor Certification Appeals (BALCA) review of attestations accepted and not accepted for filing.* The decision whether or not to accept for filing an attestation which ETA has reviewed, that is: an attestation where the facility is attesting to alternative methods of compliance with Element I and/or Element IV; an attestation where the facility is claiming that taking a second timely and significant step would not be reasonable; and/or an attestation where a facility that is not an employer of H-1A nurses is claiming a bona fide medical emergency as the basis for requesting a waiver of Element IV; may be appealed by any interested party to the BALCA.

(f) *Complaints.* Complaints concerning misrepresentation in the attestation or failure of the health care facility to carry out the terms of the attestation may be filed with the Wage and Hour Division (Division), Employment Standards Administration (ESA) of DOL, according to the procedures set forth in subpart E of this part. Complaints of "misrepresentation" may include assertions that a facility's attestations of compliance failed to meet the regulatory standards for attestation elements under which the attestation was accepted by ETA for filing without ETA review. The Division shall then investigate, and, where appropriate, after an opportunity for a hearing, assess sanctions and penalties. Subpart E of this part also provides that interested parties may obtain an administrative law judge hearing and may seek the Secretary's review of the administrative law judge's decision.

**§ 655.302 Definitions.**

For the purposes of subparts D and E of this part:

*Accepted for filing* means that the attestation and supporting documentation submitted by the health care facility have been received by the Employment and Training Administration of the Department of Labor (DOL) and have been found to be in compliance with the attestation requirements in § 655.310 of this part.

*Act* and *INA* mean the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended, 8 U.S.C. 1101 *et seq.*

*Administrative law judge* means an official appointed pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3105.

*Administrator* means the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, Employment Standards Administration, Department of Labor, and such authorized representatives as may be designated to perform any of the functions of the Administrator under subparts D and E of this part.

*Attorney General* means the chief official of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Attorney General's designee.

*Board of Alien Labor Certification Appeals (BALCA)* means a panel of one or more administrative law judges who serve on the permanent Board of Alien Labor Certification Appeals established by 20 CFR Part 656. BALCA consists of administrative law judges assigned to the Department of Labor and designated by the Chief Administrative Law Judge to be members of the Board of Alien Labor Certification Appeals.

*Bona fide medical emergency* means a situation in which the services of one or more H-1A contract nurses are necessary at a worksite facility (which itself does not employ an H-1A nurse) to prevent death or serious impairment of health, and, because of the danger to life or health, nursing services for such situation are not elsewhere available in the geographic area.

*Certifying Officer* means a Department of Labor official, or such official's designee, who makes determinations about whether or not H-1A attestations are acceptable for filing.

*Chief Administrative Law Judge* means the chief official of the Office of the Administrative Law Judges of the Department of Labor or the Chief Administrative Law Judge's designee.

*Chief, Division of Foreign Labor Certifications, USES* means the chief official

of the Division of Foreign Labor Certifications within the United States Employment Service, Employment and Training Administration, Department of Labor, or the designee of the Chief, Division of Foreign Labor Certifications, USES.

*Date of filing* means the date an attestation is "accepted for filing" by ETA.

*Department* and *DOL* mean the United States Department of Labor.

*Director* means the chief official of the United States Employment Service (USES), Employment and Training Administration, Department of Labor, or the Director's designee.

*Division* means the Wage and Hour Division of the Employment Standards Administration, DOL.

*Employer* means a person, firm, corporation, or other association or organization involved in the direct provision of health care services, which:

(1) Suffers or permits a person to work;

(2) Has a location within the United States to which U.S. workers may be referred for employment;

(3) Proposes to employ workers at a place within the United States; and

(4) Has an employer-employee relationship with respect to employees under subpart D and E of this part, as indicated by the fact that it may hire, pay, fire, supervise or otherwise control the work of such employee.

*Employment* means full-time work by an employee for an employer/health care facility other than oneself. "Full-time work" means work where the nurse is regularly scheduled to work 40 hours or more per week, unless the facility documents as part of its attestation that it is common practice for the occupation at the facility or for the occupation in the geographic area for nurses to work fewer hours per week.

*Employment and Training Administration (ETA)* means the agency within the Department of Labor (DOL) which includes the United States Employment Service (USES).

*Employment Standards Administration (ESA)* means the agency within the Department of Labor (DOL) which includes the Wage and Hour Division.

*Facility* means a user of nursing services with either a single site or a group

of contiguous locations at which it provides health care services. "Facility" includes an employer of registered nurses which provides health care services in a home or other setting, such as a hospital, nursing home, or other site of employment, not owned or operated by the employer (e.g., a visiting nurse association or a nursing contractor). "Facility" also includes a private household which employs or seeks to employ one or more H-1A nurses, but does not include a private household which uses H-1A nurses only through a nursing contractor. Groups of structures which form a campus or separate buildings across the street from one another are a single facility. However, separate buildings or areas which are not physically connected or in immediate proximity are a single health care facility if they are in reasonable geographic proximity, used for the same purpose, and share the same nursing staff and equipment. An example is an entity which manages a nursing home and a hospital in the same area and which regularly shifts or rotates the nurses between the two. Non-contiguous sites, even within the same geographic area, which do not share the same nursing staff and operational purposes are not a single facility. For example, hospitals which are located on opposite sides of a municipality, but which are managed or owned by a single entity, are separate facilities if they do not regularly share nursing staff and operational purpose.

*Geographic area* means the area within normal commuting distance of the place (address) of the intended worksite. If the geographic area does not include a sufficient number of facilities to make a prevailing wage determination, the term "geographic area" shall be expanded (by the State employment service, unless directed not to do so by the Director) with respect to the attesting facility to include a sufficient number of facilities to permit a prevailing wage determination to be made. If the place of the intended worksite is within a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), any place within the MSA may be deemed to be within normal commuting distance of the place of intended employment.

*Governor* means the chief elected official of a State or the Governor's designee.

*H-1A nurse* means any nonimmigrant alien admitted to the United States to perform services as a nurse under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(a) of the Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(a)).

*Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)* means the component of the Department of Justice which makes the determination under the Act on whether to grant visa petitions to petitioners seeking the admission of non-immigrant nurses under H-1A visas.

*Layoff* means any involuntary separation of one or more staff nurses without cause/prejudice. If a staff nurse is separated from one specialized activity and is offered retraining and retention at the same facility in another activity involving direct patient care at the same wage and status, but refuses such training and retention, such separation shall not constitute a layoff. The layoff provision applies to staff nurses only, not to other health occupations. If the position occupied by the staff nurse is covered by a collective bargaining agreement, the collective bargaining agreement definition of "layoff" (if any) shall apply to that position.

*Lockout* means a labor dispute involving a work stoppage, wherein an employer withholds work from its employees in order to gain a concession from them.

*Nurse* means a person who is or will be authorized by a State Board of Nursing to engage in registered nursing practice in a State or U.S. territory or possession at a facility which provides health care services. A staff nurse means a nurse who provides nursing care directly to patients. In order to qualify under this definition of "nurse" the alien shall:

- (1) Have obtained a full and unrestricted license to practice nursing in the country where the alien obtained nursing education, or have received nursing education in the United States or Canada;
- (2) Have passed the examination given by the Commission on Graduates for Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS), or have obtained a full and unrestricted (permanent) license to practice as a registered nurse in the state

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of intended employment, or have obtained a full and unrestricted (permanent) license in any state or territory of the United States and received temporary authorization to practice as a registered nurse in the state of intended employment; and,

(3) Be fully qualified and eligible under the laws (including such temporary or interim licensing requirements which authorize the nurse to be employed) governing the place of intended employment to practice as a registered nurse immediately upon admission to the United States, and be authorized under such laws to be employed by the employer. For purposes of this paragraph, the temporary or interim licensing may be obtained immediately after the alien enters the United States and registers to take the first available examination for permanent licensure.

*Nursing contractor* means an entity that employs registered nurses and supplies these nurses, on a temporary basis and for a fee, to health care facilities or private homes.

*Prevailing wage* means the average wage paid to similarly employed registered nurses within the geographic area.

*Secretary* means the Secretary of Labor or the Secretary's designee.

*Similarly employed* means employed by the same type of facility (acute care or long-term care) and working under like conditions, such as the same shift, on the same days of the week, and in the same specialty area.

*State* means one of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam.

*State employment security agency (SESA)* means the State agency designated under section 4 of the Wagner-Peyser Act to cooperate with USES in the operation of the national system of public employment offices.

*Strike* means a labor dispute wherein employees engage in a concerted stoppage or work (including stoppage by reason of the expiration of a collective-bargaining agreement) or engage in any concerted slowdown or other concerted interruption of operations.

*United States Employment Service (USES)* means the agency of the Department of Labor, established under

the Wagner-Peyser Act, which is charged with administering the national system of public employment offices.

*United States (U.S.) nurse* means any nurse who is a U.S. citizen; is a U.S. national; is lawfully admitted for permanent residence; is granted the status of an alien admitted for temporary residence under 8 U.S.C. 1160(a), 1161(a), or 1255a(a)(1); is admitted as a refugee under 8 U.S.C. 1157; or is granted asylum under 8 U.S.C. 1158.

*United States (U.S.) worker* means any worker who is a U.S. citizen; is a U.S. national; is lawfully admitted for permanent residence; is granted the status of an alien lawfully admitted for temporary residence under 8 U.S.C. 1160(a), 1161(a), or 1255(a)(1); is admitted as a refugee under 8 U.S.C. 1157; or is granted asylum under 8 U.S.C. 1158.

*United States* is defined at 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(38).

*Worksite* means the health care facility or home where the nurse is involved in the practice of nursing. It is possible, in the case of nursing contractors, that the employer's physical location and the worksite facility's physical location will differ.

**§ 655.310 Attestations.**

(a) *Who may submit attestations?* Any entity meeting the definition of "facility" in § 655.302, may submit an attestation. The attestation shall include: a completed Form ETA 9029, which shall be signed by the chief executive officer of the facility (or the chief executive officer's designee); and explanatory statements prescribed in paragraphs (c) through (k) of this section. A nursing contractor that seeks to employ non-immigrant nurses shall file its own attestation (including Form ETA 9029 and explanatory statements) as prescribed by this section, and, as part of its own attestation, shall attest that it shall refer H-1A nurses only to facilities that, with the exception of private households which themselves do not employ H-1A nurses, have current and valid attestations on file with ETA. Subparts D and E of this part shall apply both to the nursing contractor and to the worksite facility.

(b) *Where should attestations be submitted?* Attestations shall be submitted,

by U.S. mail or private carrier, to the U.S. Department of Labor ETA Regional Office which has jurisdiction over the geographic area where the H-1A nurse will be employed, as designated by the Chief, Division of Foreign Labor Certifications, USES. The addresses of the Certifying Officers are set forth in the instructions to *Form ETA 9029*.

(c) *What should be submitted?*—(1) *Form ETA 9029* and explanatory statements.

(i) A completed and dated original *Form ETA 9029*, containing the required attestation elements and the original signature of the chief executive officer of the facility, shall be submitted, along with two copies of the completed, (signed, and dated) *Form ETA 9029*. (Copies of *Form ETA 9029* are available at the address listed in paragraph (b) of this section.) In addition, explanations, where required, for the required attestation elements as to what documentation is available at the facility and how such documentation indicates compliance with the regulatory standards as prescribed in paragraphs (d) through (i) of this section. In addition,

(A) If the facility is a nursing contractor, the special attestation element in paragraph (j) of this section; or

(B) If the facility is a worksite (other than a private household which itself does not employ, seek to employ, or file a visa petition on behalf of an H-1A nurse), which will use H-1A nurses only through a nursing contractor, the special attestation element in paragraph (k) of this section, shall be submitted in triplicate with the *Form ETA 9029*.

(ii) If the facility is proposing to meet alternative standards for substantial disruption (Element I) and/or the taking of timely and significant steps (Element IV), an explanation of the standards being proposed and an explanation of how these proposed standards are of comparable significance to those set forth in the statute shall be submitted in triplicate. If the facility is attesting that it can only take one timely and significant step (Element IV), it shall submit an explanation, in triplicate, demonstrating that taking a second step is unreasonable. If the facility uses H-1A nurses only through a nursing contractor, but claims a bona

fide medical emergency exemption from Element IV, it shall submit a written explanation, in triplicate, demonstrating the existence of such an emergency. DOL may request additional explanation and/or documentation from a facility in the process of determining acceptability in cases described in this paragraph (c)(1)(ii).

(2) *Attestation elements.* The attestation elements referenced in paragraph (c)(1) of this section are mandated by section 212(m)(2)(A) of the Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(m)(2)(A)). Section 212(m)(2)(A) of the Act requires covered facilities to attest as follows:

(i) The attestation referred to in section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(a) of the Act, with respect to a facility for which an alien will perform services, is an attestation as to the following:

(A) There would be a substantial disruption through no fault of the facility in the delivery of health care services of the facility without the services of such an alien or aliens.

(B) The employment of the aliens will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of registered nurses similarly employed.

(C) The aliens employed by the facility will be paid the wage rate for registered nurses similarly employed by the facility.

(D) Either—(1) The facility has taken and is taking timely and significant steps designed to recruit and retain sufficient registered nurses who are United States citizens or immigrants who are authorized to perform nursing services, in order to remove as quickly as reasonably possible the dependence of the facility on nonimmigrant registered nurses, or

(2) The facility is subject to an approved State plan for the recruitment and retention of nurses (described in section 212(m)(3) of the Act; 8 U.S.C. 1182(m)(3)).

(E) There is not a strike or lockout in the course of a labor dispute, and the employment of such an alien is not intended or designed to influence an election for a bargaining representative for registered nurses of the facility.

(F) At the time of the filing of the petition for registered nurses under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(a) of the Act, notice of the filing has been provided by the facility to the bargaining representative of the registered nurses at the facility or, where there is no such bargaining representative, notice of the filing has been provided to registered nurses at the facility through posting in conspicuous locations.

(ii) A facility is considered not to meet paragraph (c)(2)(i)(A) of this section (relating to an attestation of a substantial disruption in delivery of health care services) if the facility, within the previous year, has laid off registered nurses. A facility which lays off a registered nurse *other than a staff nurse* still meets the “no layoff” requirement if, in its attestation, it attests that it will not replace the nurse with an H-1A nurse (either through promotion or otherwise) for a period of 1 year after the date of the layoff. Nothing in paragraph (c)(2)(i)(D) of this section shall be construed as requiring a facility to have taken significant steps described in such paragraph before December 18, 1989 (*i.e.*, the date of enactment of the Immigration Nursing Relief Act of 1989).

(d) *The first attestation element: substantial disruption.* The facility shall attest that “there would be substantial disruption through no fault of the facility in the delivery of health care services of the facility without the services of such an alien or aliens.” This element shall be met if the facility provides the following information:

(1) *Layoffs.* The facility shall attest that it has not laid off nurses during the 12-month period prior to submitting the attestation. A facility which lays off a registered nurse *other than a staff nurse* still meets the “no layoff” requirement if, in its attestation it attests that it will not replace the nurse with an H-1A nurse (either through promotion or otherwise) for a period of 1 year after the date of the layoff.

(2) *Nursing shortage.* (i) The facility shall attest to one of the following:

(A) It has a current nurse vacancy rate of 7 percent or more. An explanatory statement does not have to be submitted for this attestation element, but documentation to support this at-

testation shall be maintained at the facility and shall be available for review in accordance with § 655.350(b).

(B) It is unable to utilize 7 percent or more of its total beds due to a shortage of nurses. An explanatory statement does not have to be submitted for this attestation element, but supporting documentation for this attestation shall be maintained at the facility and shall be available for review in accordance with § 655.350(b).

(C) It has had to eliminate or curtail the delivery of essential health care services due to a shortage of nurses, and provide brief explanatory information about the essential services eliminated or curtailed by the facility due to a nursing shortage, what documentation is available at the facility to substantiate this attestation, where this documentation is located and can be reviewed, and the applicable time period of the documentation.

(D) It has been unable to effect established plans to provide needed new health care services in the community due to a shortage of nurses, and provide brief explanatory information about needed new services that have not been implemented by the facility due to a nursing shortage and which will be implemented with the availability of H-1A nurses, what documentation is available at the facility to substantiate this attestation, where this documentation is located and can be reviewed, and the applicable time period of the documentation.

(ii) *Other substantial disruption.* When an attesting facility finds that the indicators in paragraphs (d)(2)(i) (A) through (D) of this section cannot be demonstrated, or that such indicators are inappropriate to that facility, but that without the services of H-1A nurses, substantial disruption in the delivery of health care services of the facility still would occur due to a shortage of nurses, the facility shall provide an explanation of how a shortage of nurses has caused a “substantial disruption” in the delivery of its health care services. Such explanation shall be sufficient to provide a clear showing of “substantial disruption” in the delivery of specific health care services due to a shortage of nurses,

and shall clearly explain why the indicators in paragraphs (d)(2)(i) (A) through (D) of this section cannot be met by or are inappropriate to that facility. In addition to the documentation required to be maintained by attesting facilities described in paragraph (d)(3) of this section, facilities attesting under this paragraph also shall maintain and make available for inspection (as described elsewhere in this section) such additional documentation as is necessary to substantiate such claim of substantial disruption.

(3) *Documentation of facility's nursing positions.* The attesting facility shall maintain and make available for inspection (as described in §655.350(b)) documentation substantiating:

(i) The total number of nursing positions at the facility;

(ii) The number of nursing vacancies at the facility during a 12-month period ending no later than 3 months prior to submittal of the attestation;

(iii) The number of nurses who left the facility during the same 12-month period;

(iv) The number of nurses hired by the facility during the same 12-month period;

(v) The overall staffing pattern for nursing positions at the facility; and

(vi) A description of the facility's efforts to recruit U.S. nurses during the same 12-month period. The documentation on numbers of nurses, maintained for the purposes of this paragraph (d)(3), shall be broken out by numbers of U.S. nurses, nurses admitted under H-1 visas, nurses admitted under H-1A visas, nurses admitted under other nonimmigrant visas, and other nurses.

(e) *The second attestation element: no adverse effect.* The facility shall attest that "the employment of the alien will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of registered nurses similarly employed."

(1) *Wages.* To meet the requirement of no adverse effect on wages, the facility shall attest that it shall pay each nurse of the facility at least the prevailing wage for the occupation in the geographic area. The facility shall pay the higher of the wage required pursuant to this paragraph (e) or the wage required pursuant to paragraph (f) of

this section (*i.e.*, the third attestation element; facility wage).

(i) *State employment security determination.* The facility does not independently determine the prevailing wage. The State employment security agency (SESA) shall determine the prevailing wage for similarly employed nurses in the geographic area in accordance with administrative guidelines or regulations issued by ETA. The facility shall request the appropriate prevailing wage from the SESA not more than 90 days prior to the date the attestation is submitted to ETA. Once a facility obtains a prevailing wage determination from the SESA and files an attestation supported by that prevailing wage determination, the facility shall be deemed to have accepted the prevailing wage determination as accurate and appropriate (both to the occupational classification and wage) and thereafter shall not contest the legitimacy of the prevailing wage determination in an investigation or enforcement action. A facility may challenge a SESA prevailing wage determination through the Employment Service complaint system. See 20 CFR part 658, Subpart E. A facility which challenges a SESA prevailing wage determination shall obtain in final ruling from the Employment Service prior to filing an attestation. Any such challenge shall not require the SESA to divulge any employer wage data which was collected under the promise of confidentiality.

(ii) *Collectively bargained wage rates.* Where wage rates for nurses at a facility are the result of arms-length collective bargaining, those rates shall be considered "prevailing" for that facility for the purposes of this subpart.

(iii) *Total compensation package.* The prevailing wage finding under this paragraph (e)(1) relates to wages only. However, each item in the total compensation package for U.S., H-1A, and other nurses employed by the facility shall be the same within a given facility, including such items as housing assistance and other perquisites.

(iv) *Documentation of pay and total compensation.* The facility shall maintain documentation summarizing its pay schedule and compensation package for nurses. See §655.350(b). The

summary shall cover each category of nursing position in which H-1A nurses are or will be hired or promoted into and each category of nursing position in which H-1A nurses (or nurses admitted on H-1 visas) have been hired or promoted into. Categories of nursing positions not covered by the documentation shall not be covered by the attestation, and, therefore, such positions shall not be filled or held by H-1A nurses.

(2) *Working conditions.* To meet the requirement of no adverse effect on working conditions, the facility shall attest that it shall afford equal treatment to U.S. and H-1A nurses with the same seniority, with respect to such working conditions as the number and scheduling of hours worked (including shifts, straight days, weekends); vacations; wards and clinical rotations; and overall staffing-patient patterns.

(f) *The third attestation element: facility/employer wage.* The facility employing or seeking to employ the alien shall attest that “the alien employed by the facility will be paid the wage rate for registered nurses similarly employed by the facility.” The facility shall maintain documentation substantiating compliance with this attestation which shall include a description of the factors taken into consideration by the facility in making compensation decisions for nurses and the facility pay schedule for nurses maintained pursuant to paragraph (e)(1) of this section. See § 655.350(b). The facility shall pay the higher of the wage required pursuant to this paragraph (f) or the wage required pursuant to paragraph (e) of this section (*i.e.*, the second attestation element: no adverse effect).

(g) *The fourth attestation element: timely and significant steps; or State plan.* The facility may satisfy the fourth attestation element by satisfying Alternative I in paragraph (g)(1) of this section or by satisfying Alternative II in paragraph (g)(2) of this section.

(1) *Alternative I: Timely and significant steps.* The facility shall attest that it “has taken and is taking timely and significant steps designed to recruit and retain sufficient registered nurses who are United States citizens or immigrants who are authorized to perform nursing services, in order to re-

move as quickly as reasonably possible the dependence of the facility on non-immigrant registered nurses.” The facility shall take at least two such steps, unless it demonstrates that taking a second step is not reasonable. The steps described in this paragraph (g)(1) shall not be considered to be an exclusive list of the significant steps that may be taken to meet the conditions of this paragraph (g)(1). Nothing in this subpart or subpart E of this part shall require a facility to take more than one step, if the facility can demonstrate that taking a second step is not reasonable. The facility is not required to have taken any of these steps prior to December 18, 1989. A facility choosing to take timely and significant steps other than those specifically described in paragraph (g)(1)(i)(A) of this section shall submit with its attestation a description of the steps it is proposing to take and an explanation of how the proposed steps are of comparable timeliness and significance to those described in paragraph (g)(1)(i)(A) of this section. A facility claiming that a second step is unreasonable shall submit an explanation of why such second step would be unreasonable.

(i) *Descriptions of steps—(A) Statutory steps.* Each of the actions described in this paragraph (g)(1)(i)(A) shall be considered a significant step reasonably designed to recruit and retain U.S. nurses. A facility choosing any one of the following steps shall attest that its program(s) meets the regulatory requirements set forth for each and provide an explanation of how the requirements are satisfied by the program(s). In addition, the attesting facility shall maintain and make available for inspection (as described in § 655.350(b) of this part) documentation specified in the particular step selected and/or documentation which provides a complete description of the nature and operation of its program(s) sufficient to substantiate its attestation and full compliance with the requirements for the particular step selected. Section 212(m)(2)(E) of the INA provides that a violation shall be found if a facility fails to meet a condition attested to.

Thus, a facility shall be held responsible for all timely and significant steps to which it attests.

(1) *Step One: "Operating a training program for registered nurses at the facility or financing (or providing participation in) a training program for registered nurses elsewhere."* Training programs may include either courses leading to a higher degree (*i.e.*, beyond an associate or a baccalaureate degree), or continuing education courses. If the program includes courses leading to a higher degree, they shall be courses which are part of a program accepted for degree credit by a college or university and accredited by a State Board of Nursing or a State Board of Higher Education (or its equivalent), as appropriate. If the program includes continuing education courses, they shall be courses which meet criteria established to qualify the nurses taking the courses to earn continuing education units accepted by a State Board of Nursing (or its equivalent). In either type of program, financing by the facility, either directly or arranged through a third party, shall cover the total tuition costs of such training. The number of U.S. nurses for whom such training actually is provided shall be no less than half of the number of nurses who left the facility during the 12-month period prior to submission of the attestation. (U.S. nurses to whom such training was offered, but who rejected such training, may be counted towards those provided training, but the facility, in such case, shall maintain documentation of such offer and rejection). See § 655.350(b).

(2) *Step Two: "Providing career development programs and other methods of facilitating health care workers to become registered nurses."* This may include programs leading directly to a degree in nursing, or career ladder/career path programs which could ultimately lead to a degree in nursing. A facility choosing this step shall maintain as documentation a description of the content and eligibility requirements for both types of programs and an explanation of how the requirements of this paragraph (g)(1)(i)(A)(2) are satisfied by each program. Any such degree program shall be, at a minimum, either through an accredited community col-

lege (leading to an associate's degree), 4-year college (a bachelor's degree), or diploma school, and the course of study shall be one accredited by a State Board of Nursing (or its equivalent). For career ladder or career path programs, the facility shall maintain documentation that the programs are normally part of a course of study or training which prepares a U.S. worker for enrolling in formal direct training leading to a degree in nursing, either through an accredited community college, a 4-year college, or a diploma school. See § 655.350(b) of this part. Financing by the facility, either directly or arranged through a third party, shall cover the total costs of such programs. U.S. workers participating in such programs shall be working or have worked in health care occupations or health care facilities. The number of U.S. workers for whom such training is provided shall be equal to no less than half the average number of vacancies for nurses during the 12-month period prior to the submission of the attestation.

(3) *Step Three: "Paying registered nurses wages at a rate higher than currently being paid to registered nurses similarly employed in the geographic area."* A facility choosing this step shall maintain documentation showing that its entire schedule of wages for nurses is at least 5 percent higher than the prevailing wages as determined by the SESA pursuant to paragraph (e)(1)(i) of this section, and it shall attest that such differentials shall be maintained throughout the period of the attestation's effectiveness.

(4) *Step Four: "Providing adequate support services to free registered nurses from administrative and other non-nursing duties."* Non-nursing duties include such activities as housekeeping duties; food preparation and delivery; transporting patients; providing occupational and respiratory therapy; answering telephones; running errands for patients; and clerical tasks. A facility choosing this step shall not require nurses at the facility to perform non-nursing duties. However, it is understood that on an infrequent non-recurring basis, nurses at the facility may perform one or more of the tasks encompassed by the duties listed above in this paragraph

(g)(1)(i)(A)(4) or other non-nursing duties. Facilities choosing this step shall maintain documentation showing what steps they have taken to ensure that nursing jobs do not include any of these duties and that such activity by nurses at the facility occurs without regularity and infrequently. Such a facility also shall maintain documentation with respect to any other steps being taken to relieve nurses from non-nursing duties, or to enhance the nursing function, such as computerizing certain writing and routine functions performed by nurses.

(5) *Step Five: “Providing reasonable opportunities for meaningful salary advancement by registered nurses.”* Documentation for this step shall include documentation of systems for salary advancement based on factors such as merit, education, and specialty, and/or salary advancement based on length of service with other bases for wage differentials remaining constant.

(i) *Merit, education, and specialty.* For salary advancement based on factors such as merit, education, and specialty, the facility shall maintain and make available for inspection documentation that it provides opportunities for professional development of its nurses which lead to salary advancement, e.g., opportunities for continuing education; in-house educational instruction; special committees, task forces, or projects considered of a professional development nature; participation in professional organizations; and writing for professional publications. Such opportunities shall be available to all the facility’s nurses.

(ii) *Length of service.* For salary advancement based on length of service, the facility shall maintain and make available for inspection documentation that it has clinical ladders in place which provide, annually, salary increases of 3 percent or more for a period of no less than 10 years, over and above the costs of living and merit, education, and specialty increases and differentials.

(B) *Other possible steps.* The Act indicates that the five steps described in paragraphs (g)(1)(i)(A) (1) through (5) of this section are not an exclusive list of timely and significant steps which might qualify. Facilities are encour-

aged to be innovative in devising other timely and significant steps, but these shall be of timeliness and significance comparable to those in paragraphs (g)(1)(i)(A) (1) through (5) of this section to qualify. A facility may attest that it has taken and is taking other such steps and explain in its attestation what these steps are, their nature and scope, how they are effected and how they meet the statutory test of timeliness and significance comparable to those Steps One through Five described above. A facility choosing alternative steps shall attest that its program(s) meet(s) the statutory requirements of timeliness and significance in promoting the development, recruitment and retention of U.S. nurses, explaining how these requirements are satisfied by such program(s). In addition, the attesting facility shall maintain and make available for inspection (as described in § 655.350(b)) documentation which provides a complete description of the nature and operation of its program(s) sufficient to substantiate its attestation and full compliance with the requirements of this paragraph (g)(1)(i)(B). Examples of such steps which—depending on the circumstances, the size and nature of the attesting facility, the nature and scope of the step(s) described, the number of persons affected, and other such factors—may meet these requirements are:

(1) *Monetary incentives*—providing monetary incentives to nurses, through bonuses and merit pay plans not included in the base compensation package, for additional education, and for efforts leading to increased recruitment and retention of U.S. nurses. Such monetary incentives can be based on actions by nurses such as: Innovations to achieve better patient care, increased productivity, reduced waste, better safety; obtaining additional certification in a nursing specialty; unused sick leave; recruiting other U.S. nurses; staying with the facility for a given number of years; taking less desirable assignments (other than shift differential); participating in professional organizations, on task forces and on special committees; or contributing to professional publications. Facilities attesting to this step shall have

a documented system for providing significant financial rewards in the form of bonuses or salary advancement to nurses participating in the activities described in this paragraph.

(2) *Special perquisites*—providing nurses with special perquisites for dependent care or housing assistance of a nature and/or extent that constitute a “significant” factor in inducing employment and retention of U.S. nurses.

(3) *Work schedule options*—providing nurses with non-mandatory work schedule options for part-time work, job-sharing, compressed work week or non-rotating shifts (provided, however, that H-1A nurses are employed only in full-time work) of a nature and/or extent that constitute a “significant” factor in inducing employment and retention of U.S. nurses.

(4) *Other training options*—providing training opportunities to become registered nurses to U.S. workers not currently in health care occupations by means of financial assistance (e.g., scholarship, loan or pay-back programs) to such persons.

(ii) *Unreasonableness of second step.* The steps described in this paragraph (g)(1) shall not be considered to be an exclusive list of the significant steps that may be taken to meet the conditions of this paragraph (g)(1). Nothing in this subpart or subpart E of this part shall require a facility to take more than one step, if the facility can demonstrate that taking a second step is not reasonable. However, a facility shall make every effort to take at least two steps. A facility taking only one step shall provide an explanation with its attestation, and maintain documentation at the facility, relating to why taking a second step is not reasonable. The taking of a second step may be considered unreasonable if it would result in the facility’s financial inability to continue providing the same quality and quantity of health care or if the provision of nursing services would otherwise be jeopardized by the taking of such a step. If the single step which is taken is one of the statutorily defined steps described in paragraphs (g)(1)(i)(A)(1) through (g)(1)(i)(A)(5) of this section, the facility shall explain with its attestation, and maintain documentation at the facility, with re-

spect to each of the four statutory steps (described in paragraphs (g)(1)(i)(A)(1) through (g)(1)(i)(A)(5) of this section) not taken, relating to why it would be unreasonable for the facility to take such step and also shall explain with its attestation, and shall maintain and make available for inspection (as described in § 655.350(b)) documentation demonstrating why it would be unreasonable for the facility to take any other steps designed to recruit, develop and retain sufficient U.S. nurses to meet its staffing needs. If the single step which is taken is not one of the five statutory steps described in paragraphs (g)(1)(i)(A)(1) through (g)(1)(i)(A)(5) of this section, the facility shall, with respect to each of the five statutory steps not taken, explain with its attestation, and maintain documentation and make available for inspection (as described in § 655.350(b)) documentation, demonstrating why it would be unreasonable for the facility to take such step; the facility also shall explain with its attestation, and make available for inspection (as described in § 655.350(b)) documentation demonstrating why it would be unreasonable for the facility to take any other steps designed to recruit and retain sufficient U.S. nurses to meet its staffing needs. On the basis of the explanation submitted by the facility, the Certifying Officer shall determine whether the requirements of this paragraph (g)(1)(ii) have been met. See paragraph (m) of this section regarding such determinations and administrative appeals therefrom.

(iii) *Alternative to criteria for each specific step.* Instead of complying with the specific criteria for each of the steps in the second and succeeding years, a facility may include in its prior year’s attestation, in addition to the actions taken under Steps One through Five, that it shall reduce the number of alien (H-1 and H-1A visaholders) nurses it utilizes within 1 year from the date of attestation by at least 10 percent, without reducing the quality or quantity of services provided. If this goal is achieved (as demonstrated by documentation maintained by the facility and made available for inspection, and indicated in its subsequent year’s attestation), the facility’s subsequent

year's attestation may simply include the *Form ETA 9029*, an explanation demonstrating that this goal has been achieved and an attestation that it shall again reduce the number of alien nurses it utilizes within 1 year from the date of attestation by at least 10 percent. This alternative is designed to permit a facility to achieve the objectives of the Act, without subjecting the facility to detailed requirements and criteria as to the specific means of achieving that objective. The first, second, and succeeding years shall be consecutive.

(2) *Alternative II: subject to approved annual State plan.* As an alternative to attesting to the timely and significant steps set forth in paragraph (g)(1) of this section, the facility may attest that it "is subject to an approved State plan for the recruitment and retention of nurses." The contents of the annual State plan are described in more detail in §655.315. For an individual facility to meet the requirements of this paragraph (g)(2), the annual State plan shall provide for the taking of timely and significant steps by that facility, and the facility shall maintain appropriate documentation with respect to those steps. See §655.350(b). To qualify for this Alternative II, the annual State plan shall have been approved prior to the date the facility submits its attestation to ETA for filing.

(h) *The fifth attestation element: No strike or lockout; no intention or design to influence bargaining representative election.* The facility shall attest that "there is not a strike or lockout in the course of a labor dispute, and the employment of such an alien is not intended or designated to influence an election for a bargaining representative for registered nurses of the facility." Labor disputes for purposes for this attestation element relate only to those involving nurses providing nursing services; other health service occupations are not included. This attestation element applies to strikes and lockouts and elections of bargaining representatives at both the facility employing the nurse and, in the case of nursing contractors, at the worksite facility.

(1) *Notice of strike or lockout.* In order to remain in compliance with the no

strike or lockout portion of this attestation element, if a strike or lockout of nurses at the facility occurs during the 1 year's validity of the attestation, the facility, within 3 days of the occurrence of the strike or lockout, shall submit to the ETA National Office, by U.S. mail or private carrier, written notice of the strike or lockout.

(2) *ETA notice to INS.* Upon receiving from a facility a notice described in paragraph (h)(1) of this section, ETA shall examine the documentation, and may consult with the union at the facility or other appropriate entities. If ETA determines that the strike or lockout is covered under 8 CFR 214.2(h)(17), INS's *Effect of strike* regulation for "H" visaholders, ETA shall certify to INS, in the manner set forth in that regulation, that a strike or other labor dispute involving a work stoppage of nurses is in progress at the facility.

(i) *The sixth attestation element: notice of filing.* The facility shall attest that at the time of filing of the petition for registered nurses under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(a) of the Act, notice of filing has been provided by the facility to the bargaining representative of the registered nurses at the facility or, where there is no such bargaining representative, notice of the filing has been provided to registered nurses at the facility through posting in conspicuous locations. The requirement applies to providing notice of filing both for attestations submitted to ETA and for visa petitions filed with INS.

(1) *Notification of bargaining representative.* No later than the date the attestation is mailed to DOL to be considered for filing, the facility shall notify the bargaining representative (if any) for nurses at the facility that the attestation is being submitted to DOL, and shall state in that notice that the attestation is available at the facility (explaining how it can be inspected or obtained) and at the national office of ETA for review by interested parties. No later than the date the facility transmits a visa petition for H-1A nurses to INS, the facility shall notify the bargaining representative (if any) for nurses at the facility that the visa petition is being submitted to INS, and

shall state in that notice that the attestation and visa petition are available at the facility (explaining how they can be inspected or obtained) and at the national office of ETA for review by interested parties. Notices under this paragraph (i)(1) shall include the following statement: "Complaints alleging misrepresentation of material facts in the attestation or failure to comply with the terms of the attestation may be filed with any office of the Wage and Hour Division of the United States Department of Labor."

(2) *Posting notice.* If there is no bargaining representative for nurses at the facility, when the facility submits and attestation to ETA, and each time the facility files an H-1A visa petition with INS, the facility shall post a written notice at the facility (and, in addition, at the worksite facility, if at a different location, such as in the case of nursing contractors), stating that the attestation and/or visa petition(s) have been filed and are available at the facility (explaining how these documents can be inspected or obtained) and at the national office of ETA for review by interested parties. In order for the facility to remain in compliance with this paragraph (i)(2), all such notices shall remain posted during the validity period of the attestation and the attestations and petitions shall be available for examination at the facility throughout this period of time. The notice of posting shall provide information concerning the availability of these documents for examination at the facility and at the national office of ETA, and shall include the following statement: "Complaints alleging misrepresentation of material facts in the attestation or failure to comply with the terms of the attestation may be filed with any office the Wage and Hour Division of the United States Department of Labor." Such posted notices shall be clearly visible and unobstructed while posted, shall be posted in conspicuous places, where the facility's U.S. nurses readily can read the posted notice on the way to or from their duties. Appropriate locations for posting such notices include locations in the immediate proximity of mandatory Fair Labor Standards Act wage and hour notices and Occupational

Safety and Health Act occupational safety and health notices.

(j) *Special provisions for nursing contractors.* A nursing contractor submitting an attestation for filing as a facility shall attest, in addition to the first through sixth attestation elements, that it will refer H-1A nurses only to facilities that (with the exception of private households which themselves do not employ H-1A nurses) have valid attestations on file with ETA. The nursing contractor shall obtain from each such worksite facility a copy of that facility's *Form ETA 9029*, accepted for filing by ETA and then currently on file with ETA. The nursing contractor shall maintain a copy of such worksite facility's accepted attestation on file at the nursing contractor's principal office during the validity period of the nursing contractor's attestation or the period of time that any H-1A nurse in its employ is providing nursing services at the worksite facility, whichever is longer.

(k) *Special provisions for worksite facilities which are not employers of H-1A nurses and are not controlled by employers of H-1A nurses.* A facility (other than a private household) which obtains the services of an H-1A nurse by contracting with a nursing contractor, but which is itself neither the employer of any H-1A nurse nor controlled by the employer of any H-1A nurse (see paragraph (k)(1) of this section), shall file an attestation with ETA pursuant to this subpart. Such a worksite facility may request from ETA a waiver of specific elements of the attestation to avoid duplicative attestations, in cases of temporary, emergency circumstances, with respect to information not within the knowledge of the attestor, or for other good cause. The attesting worksite facility shall be to ably demonstrate the existence of the circumstances or good cause which are asserted as the basis(es) for the request for a waiver of a particular element of the attestation, but need not submit such evidence with its request for waiver, except evidence with respect to a bona fide medical emergency (see paragraph (k)(3)(iii) of this section).

(1) *Worksites employing, seeking to employ, or filing visa petitions on behalf of*

*H-1A nurses.* An attestation with respect to which waiver is requested or granted pursuant to this paragraph (k) is not valid (*i.e.*, is not “on file and in effect”) for a worksite facility employing, seeking to employ, or filing a visa petition on behalf of H-1A nurses. Only an attestation meeting the requirements of paragraphs (a) through (i) of this section (and paragraph (j) of this section, in the case of a nursing contractor) can serve as the basis for a petition for an H-1A visa. A worksite facility which uses H-1A nurses only through a nursing contractor and, as part of its attestation, requests waiver of one or more attestation elements nevertheless shall file a complete attestation in order to be able to use such attestation as a basis for itself filing a visa petition for an H-1A nurse. Thus, a worksite facility should consider its future needs for H-1A nurses in filing attestations and requests for waiver pursuant to this paragraph (k).

(2) *Inapplicability of third attestation element: facility/employer wage.* If a worksite facility uses H-1A nurses only through a nursing contractor, the third attestation element (facility/employer wage; see paragraph (f) of this section) is not applicable to that facility, since the worksite facility is not the employer of the H-1A nurse and does not guarantee the H-1A nurse’s wage. The third attestation element is required only for the employer of the H-1A nurse(s), *i.e.*, the third attestation element shall be included in the attestation of and met by the H-1A nurse’s employer (*i.e.*, the nursing contractor).

(3) *Waiver of attestation elements.* ETA may consider, pursuant to this paragraph (k)(3) requests for waiver of certain attestation elements by a worksite facility which uses or will use an H-1A nurse provided by a nursing contractor (*i.e.*, an “H-1A contract nurse”), but which worksite facility itself does not employ, seek to employ, or file a visa petition on behalf of an H-1A nurse. Paragraphs (k)(3) (i) through (iii) of this section set forth different conditions for waiver depending on the number of workdays of H-1A contract nurse services the worksite facility will use. For the purposes of this paragraph (k)(3), a “workday” shall consist of one H-1A contract nurse working for

one normal shift in a day. Thus, for example, three normal shifts worked by each of a group of five H-1A contract nurses totals 15 workdays.

(i) *Minimal use of H-1A contract nurses by a worksite.* Where the attesting worksite facility attests in its request for waiver pursuant to this paragraph (k)(3) that it will use no more than a total of 15 workdays of H-1A contract nurse services in any 3-month period of the attestation’s 1-year period of validity to meet emergency needs on a temporary basis, ETA may waive the first (substantial disruption), second (adverse effect), and fourth (timely and significant steps or State plan) elements of the attesting worksite facility’s attestation. See paragraphs (d), (e), and (g) of this section; see also paragraphs (f) and (k)(2) of this section, with respect to the inapplicability of third attestation element (facility/employer wage). ETA shall not waive pursuant to this paragraph (k)(3)(i) the fifth attestation element (strike, lockout, or intent or design to influence bargaining representative election) or the sixth attestation element (notice). See paragraphs (h) and (i) of this section.

(ii) *Short-term use of H-1A contract nurses.* Where the attesting worksite facility attests in its request for waiver pursuant to this paragraph (k)(3) that it will use no more than a total of 60 workdays of H-1A contract nurse services in any 3-month period of the attestation’s 1-year period of validity to meet temporary needs, ETA may waive the nursing shortage component of the first element (substantial disruption; see paragraphs (d)(2) and (d)(3) of this section) and may waive the fourth (timely and significant steps or State plan; see paragraph (g) of this section) element of the attesting worksite facility’s attestation. See also paragraphs (f) and (k)(2) of this section, with respect to the inapplicability of third attestation element (facility/employer wage). ETA shall not waive pursuant to this paragraph (k)(3)(ii) the no-layoff component of the first attestation element (substantial disruption; see paragraph (d)(1) of this section); the second attestation element (adverse effect); the fifth attestation element (strike, lockout, or intent to influence

a bargaining representative election); or the sixth attestation element (notice). See paragraphs (d), (e), (h), and (i) of this section.

(iii) *Long-term use of H-1A contract nurse services.* Where the attesting worksite facility attests in its request for waiver pursuant to this paragraph (k)(3) that it will use more than 60 workdays of H-1A contract nurse services in any 3-month period of the attestation's 1-year period of validity, ETA shall not waive any attestation element, except that, if the attestor documents a bona fide medical emergency warranting a waiver of the fourth attestation element (timely and significant steps or State plan) ETA may waive such element. See paragraph (g) of this section.

(l) *Agents of worksite facilities.* A worksite facility (including a worksite facility which itself employs or seeks to employ an H-1A nurse) may authorize a nursing contractor to act as its agent in preparing and filing the worksite facility's attestation; however, a worksite facility using an agent for preparation and filing of the attestation is responsible for the contents of such attestation and remains liable for any violations which may be disclosed in any investigation under Subpart E of this Part, and the chief executive officer of the worksite facility shall sign the original attestation, as required by paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section.

(m) *Actions on attestations submitted for filing.* An attestation which meets the established criteria set forth in this § 655.310 shall be accepted for filing by ETA on the date it is signed by the Certifying Officer. ETA shall then follow the procedures set forth in paragraph (m)(1) of this section. An attestation submitted by a facility proposing alternative criteria or steps for the first and/or the fourth attestation elements, and/or proposing to take only one timely and significant step, and/or claiming a bona fide medical emergency exemption from the fourth attestation element shall be reviewed by ETA, and a determination shall be made by the Certifying Officer whether to accept or reject the attestation for filing. See paragraphs (d)(2)(ii), (g)(1)(i)(B), (g)(1)(ii), and (k)(3)(iii) of this section. The Certifying Officer

may request additional explanation and/or documentation from the facility in making this determination. If the Certifying Officer does not contact the facility for such information or make any determination within 30 days of receiving the attestation, the attestation shall become accepted for filing. Upon the facility's submitting the attestation to ETA and providing the notice required by the sixth attestation element (see § 655.310(i)), the attestation shall be available for public examination at the health care facility itself. When ETA accepts the attestation for filing, the Certifying Officer shall forward the attestation to the ETA National Office, where it shall be available for public examination. Information contesting an attestation received by ETA prior to the determination to accept or reject the attestation for filing shall not be made part of ETA's administrative record on the attestation, but shall be referred to ESA to be processed as a complaint pursuant to Subpart E of this part, and, if such attestation nevertheless is accepted by ETA for filing, the complaint will be handled by ESA under that subpart.

(1) *Acceptance.* (i) If the attestation (and any explanatory statements that may be required) meet the requirements of this subpart, ETA shall accept the attestation for filing, shall, in the case of a facility intending to file a visa petition as the employer of an H-1A nurse, notify INS in writing of the filing, shall return to the facility one copy of the attestation form submitted by the facility, with ETA's acceptance indicated thereon, and shall forward one copy of the attestation with ETA's acceptance indicated thereon to the ETA National Office. The facility may then file a visa petition with INS for alien nurses in accordance with INS regulations.

(ii) DOL is not the guarantor of the accuracy, truthfulness or adequacy of an attestation accepted for filing.

(2) *Appeals of acceptances.* If an attestation which is subject to a determination under paragraph (d)(2)(ii), (g)(1)(i)(B), (g)(1)(ii), or (k)(3)(iii) of this section is accepted for filing, any interested party may appeal ETA's determination(s) on the element(s) that

have been reviewed. Appeals of acceptances shall be filed with the BALCA, no later than 30 days after the date of acceptance, and will be considered under the procedures set forth at § 655.320.

(3) *Appeals of rejections.* If the attestation is not accepted for filing, which may occur as a result of a determination under paragraph (d)(2)(ii), (g)(1)(i)(B), (g)(1)(ii), or (k)(3)(iii) of this section, ETA shall notify the facility in writing, specifying the reasons for rejection and quoting the language of § 655.320(a)(1). Any interested party may appeal such rejection to the BALCA, no later than 30 days after the date of rejection. Appeals of rejections shall be filed and considered under the procedures set forth at § 655.320.

(n) *Effective date and validity of filed attestations.* An attestation becomes filed and effective as of the date it is accepted and signed by the Certifying Officer and accepted thereby for filing. Such attestation is valid for the 12-month period beginning on the date of acceptance for filing, unless suspended or invalidated pursuant to § 655.320 or subpart E. The filed attestation expires at the end of the 12-month period of validity.

(o) *Suspension or invalidation of filed attestation.* Suspension or invalidation of an attestation may result from a BALCA decision reversing an ETA acceptance for filing; from investigations by the Administrator, Wage and Hour Division, of the facility's misrepresentation in or failure to carry out its attestation; or from a discovery by ETA that it made an error in its review of the attestation (in those cases where ETA performs such review pursuant to paragraph (d)(2)(ii), (g)(1)(i)(B), (g)(1)(ii), (k)(3)(iii) of this section) and that the explanation and documentation provided and maintained by the facility does not or did not meet the criteria set forth at § 655.310 (a) through (k). If an attestation is suspended or invalidated, DOL shall notify INS.

(1) *Result of BALCA or Wage and Hour Division action.* If an attestation is suspended or invalidated as a result of a BALCA decision overruling an acceptance of the attestation for filing, or is suspended or invalidated as a result of a Wage and Hour Division action pur-

suant to subpart E, such suspension or invalidation may not be separately appealed, but shall be merged with appeals of BALCA's or the Wage and Hour Division's determination on the underlying violation.

(2) *Result of ETA action.* If, after accepting an attestation for filing, ETA discovers that it erroneously accepted that attestation for filing, and, as a result, ETA suspends or invalidates that acceptance, the facility may appeal such suspension or invalidation pursuant to § 655.320 as if that suspension or invalidation were a decision to reject the attestation for filing.

(p) *Facility's responsibilities during suspension and after invalidation or expiration of filed attestation.* A facility shall comply with the terms of its attestation, even if such attestation is suspended, invalidated, or expired, as long as any H-1A nurse is at the facility, unless the attestation is superseded by a subsequent attestation accepted for filing by ETA.

(q) *Facilities subject to penalties.* No attestation shall be accepted for filing from a nursing contractor or other facility which has failed to comply with any penalty, sanction, or other remedy assessed in a final agency action following an investigation by the Wage and Hour Division pursuant to subpart E.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1205-0305)

[59 FR 882, 897, Jan. 6, 1994, as amended at 59 FR 5487, Feb. 4, 1994]

#### § 655.315 State plans.

A State may submit an annual plan for the recruitment and retention of U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens who are authorized to perform nursing services in the State.

(a) *Who should prepare and file the annual plan?* The Governor of each State that chooses to submit an annual State plan shall be responsible for the preparation and filing of the annual plan. The Governor may designate any public and/or private organization(s) to assist the Governor in the development of the annual plan.

(b) *When and where should the annual plan be filed?* If a State determines to file an annual State plan, the Governor shall submit the original plan, signed

by the Governor, by U.S. mail or private carrier, to ETA at the following address: Director, U.S. Employment Service, Employment and Training Administration, Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW., room N-4456, Washington, DC 20210. An annual State plan may be filed with ETA at any time. However, for an individual facility legitimately to attest to being subject to an annual State plan for the purposes of the fourth attestation element, Alternative II (see § 655.310(g)(2)), such annual State plan shall have been approved prior to the date the attestation was submitted to ETA for filing and be in current effect. Therefore, if the Governor is aware that a facility within the State plans to submit an attestation for filing with ETA, the annual State plan should be mailed to ETA at least 35 days prior to the facility's submission of its attestation to ETA.

(c) *What overall issues shall the annual State plan address?* The annual State plan shall address the overall issue of supply of and demand for nurses within the State, with particular emphasis on measures to develop a sufficient supply of U.S. nurses to meet projected demand. The State, as opposed to individual facilities, is in a position to—and may be expected to—address broad issues and perform such functions as conducting a Statewide needs assessment; overall management, facilitation and coordination among various interested entities within the State; and undertaking more regionally based approaches. The State is also in a position to devote resources which individual facilities may be lacking.

(d) *How should the annual State plan address the timely and significant steps?* The annual State plan shall address all of the timely and significant steps in § 655.310(g)(1)(i)(A)(1) through (g)(1)(i)(A)(5) generically, without regard to the specific criteria therein, on a Statewide basis. However, for the annual State plan to satisfy Alternative II of the fourth attestation requirement for an individual facility (see § 655.310(g)(2)), the annual State plan shall indicate which of those timely and significant steps relate to individual facilities, and that each individual facility shall take such a step

(either one step or more, as appropriate) to meet the appropriate specific criteria as set forth in § 655.310(g)(1).

(e) *What other components may the annual State plan include?* An annual State plan may include the following components:

(1) The cooperation of high schools and colleges may be enlisted in counseling health workers and other individuals to enter the nursing profession.

(2) Geographic and salary data may be made available to assist in linking nurses to facilities.

(3) Publications of vacancies and programs may be made in industry and State newsletters.

(4) Training films and videotapes, as well as information on housing and relocation services, may be developed and distributed.

(5) Measures may be taken to encourage other health professionals to become nurses, such as: setting up home study programs with State licensing boards to allow work credits for purposes of meeting educational or State clinical requirements; entering into cooperative agreements for providing health care insurance and other job-related elements which would allow greater flexibility for those attempting to combine careers and school; providing monetary grants or long-term loans to persons preparing to become nurses.

(6) Steps may be taken to encourage nurses who have left the nursing field to return to nursing, by providing such inducements as child care, holiday schedule adjustments, and substantial salary increases.

(7) The State may profile and publicize those facilities with special model programs.

(8) The annual State plan may place demands on facilities for comprehensive plans to reduce reliance on foreign nurses.

(f) *Approval and disapproval of annual State plans.* Determinations of approval and disapproval of annual State plans shall be made by the Director, USES. The annual State plan shall be reviewed by ETA, in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services, and a determination to approve or disapprove the annual State

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plan made within 30 calendar days of ETA's receipt of the plan.

(1) If the annual State plan is approved, the Director shall notify the Governor in writing.

(2) If the annual State plan is disapproved, the Director shall notify the Governor in writing, specifying the reason(s) for disapproval. The notice shall state that within 30 calendar days of the date of the notice of disapproval, the Governor may correct the deficiencies noted in the disapproval and resubmit the annual State plan to ETA; and shall inform the state of its right to an appeal, by quoting the language of § 655.320(a).

(g) An approved annual State plan shall be valid for 12-month period beginning on the date of its approval by DOL.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1205-0305)

### **§ 655.320 Appeals of acceptance and rejection of attestations submitted for filing and of State plans.**

(a) *Appeal right*—(1) *Attestations; when to file appeals from acceptances and rejections.* On the basis that the explanation and documentation provided and maintained by the facility does not or did not meet the criteria set forth at § 655.310(d)(2)(ii), (g)(1)(i)(B)(5), (g)(1)(ii), or (k)(3)(iii), an interested party may appeal an acceptance or rejection by ETA of an attestation submitted by a facility for filing in those cases where DOL performed an attestation review function under those provisions. The appeal shall be limited to ETA's determinations on the element(s) reviewed and shall not be an appeal as to any other element(s) in the attestation. An interested party may also appeal ETA's invalidation or suspension of a filed attestation due to a discovery by ETA that it made an error in its reviewing of the attestation (see § 655.310(o)). In the case of an appeal of an acceptance, the facility shall be a party to the appeal; in the case of the appeal of a rejection, invalidation, or suspension, the collective bargaining representative (if any) representing nurses at the facility shall be a party to the appeal. Appeals shall be in writing; shall set forth the grounds for the appeal; shall state if *de novo* consideration by

BALCA is requested; and shall be mailed by certified mail within 30 calendar days of the date of the action from which the appeal is taken (*i.e.*, the acceptance, rejection, suspension or invalidation of the attestation).

(2) *Annual State plans; when to file appeals from disapprovals.* A Governor of a State may appeal ETA's disapproval of an annual State plan. Individual facilities in the State may file briefs as *amici curiae*. Appeals shall be in writing and shall be mailed by certified mail within 30 calendar days of the disapproval of the annual State plan.

(3) *Where to file appeals.* Appeals made pursuant to this section shall be in writing and shall be mailed by certified mail to: Director, U.S. Employment Service, Employment and Training Administration, Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW., Room N-4456, Washington, DC 20210.

(4) *Complaints.* Appeals under this paragraph (a) shall not encompass questions of misrepresentation by a health care facility or nonperformance by such a facility of its attestation. Such complaints shall be filed with an office of the Wage and Hour Division, United States Department of Labor.

(b) *Transmittal to BALCA; case file.* Upon receipt of an appeal pursuant to this section, the Certifying Officer (or, in the case of State plans, the Director, USES), shall send to BALCA a certified copy of the ETA case file, containing the attestation and supporting documentation and any other information or data considered by ETA in taking the action being appealed. The administrative law judge chairing BALCA shall assign a panel of one or more administrative law judges who serve on BALCA to review the record for legal sufficiency and to consider and rule on the appeal.

(c) *Consideration on the record; de novo hearings*—(1) *General.* BALCA shall not remand, dismiss, or stay the case, except as provided in paragraph (c)(2) of this section, but may otherwise consider the appeal on the record or in a *de novo* hearing (on its own motion or on a party's request). Interested parties and *amici curiae* may submit briefs in accordance with a schedule set by BALCA. The ETA official making the determination from which the appeal

was taken shall be represented by the Associate Solicitor for Employment and Training Legal Services, Office of the Solicitor, Department of Labor, or the Associate Solicitor's designee. If BALCA determines to hear the appeal on the record without a *de novo* hearing, BALCA shall render a decision within 30 calendar days after BALCA's receipt of the case file. If BALCA determines to hear the appeal through a *de novo* hearing, the procedures contained in 29 CFR part 18 shall apply to such hearings, except that:

(i) The appeal shall not be considered to be a complaint to which an answer is required;

(ii) BALCA shall ensure that, at the request of the appellant, the hearing is scheduled to take place within a reasonable period after BALCA's receipt of the case file (see also the time period described in paragraph (c)(1)(iv) of this section);

(iii) Technical rules of evidence, such as the Federal Rules of Evidence and subpart B of the Rules of Practice and Procedure for Administrative Hearings Before the Office of Administrative Law Judges (29 CFR part 18, subpart B), shall not apply to any hearing conducted pursuant to this subpart, but rules or principles designed to assure production of the most credible evidence available and to subject testimony to test by cross-examination shall be applied where reasonably necessary by BALCA in conducting the hearing; BALCA may exclude irrelevant, immaterial, or unduly repetitious evidence; the certified copy of the case file transmitted to BALCA by the Certifying Officer (or, in the case of State plans, the Director, USES), shall be part of the evidentiary record of the case and need not be removed into evidence; and

(iv) BALCA's decision shall be rendered within 120 calendar days after BALCA's receipt of the case file.

(2) *Dismissals and stays.* If the BALCA determines that the appeal is solely a question of misrepresentation by the facility or is solely a complaint of the facility's nonperformance of the attestation, BALCA shall dismiss the case and refer the matter to the Administrator, Wage and Hour Division, for action under subpart E. If the BALCA de-

termines that the appeal is partially a question of misrepresentation by the facility or is partially a complaint of the facility's nonperformance of the attestation, BALCA shall refer the matter to the Administrator, Wage and Hour Division, for action under Subpart E of this part and shall stay BALCA consideration of the case pending final agency action on such referral. During such stay, the 120-day period described in paragraph (c)(1)(iv) of this section shall be suspended.

(d) *BALCA's decision.* After consideration on the record or a *de novo* hearing, BALCA shall either affirm or reverse ETA's decision, and shall so notify the appellant; the Director, if the affirmation or denial involves a State plan; Certifying Officer; Chief, Division of Foreign Labor Certifications; and any other parties. See § 655.450 custody of the record of the appeal.

(e) *Decisions on attestations.* With respect to an appeal of the acceptance, rejection, suspension or invalidation of an attestation, the decision of BALCA shall be the final decision of the Secretary, and no further review shall be given to the matter by any DOL official.

(f) *Decisions on annual State plans.* With respect to an appeal of the disapproval of an annual State plan, the decision of BALCA shall be the final decision by the Secretary, unless a petition for review of the BALCA decision is filed with the Secretary and the Secretary determines to review the decision.

(1) *Filing of petition for review.* The Director or the State desiring review of the decision and order of BALCA may petition the Secretary to review the decision and order. To be effective, such petition shall be received by the Secretary within 30 days of the date of the decision and order. Copies of the petition shall be served on all parties and on BALCA.

(2) *Form of petition for review.* No particular form is prescribed for any petition for Secretary's review permitted by this paragraph (f). However, any such petition shall:

(i) Be dated;

(ii) Be typewritten or legibly written;

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(iii) Specify the issue or issues stated in the BALCA decision and order giving rise to such petition;

(iv) State the specific reason or reasons why the party petitioning for review believes such decision and order are in error;

(v) Be signed by the party filing the petition or by an authorized representative of such party;

(vi) Include the address at which such party or authorized representative desires to receive further communications relating thereto; and

(vii) Attach copies of BALCA's decision and order, and any other record documents which would assist the Secretary in determining whether review is warranted.

(3) *Notice of determination to review.* Whenever the Secretary determines to review the decision and order of BALCA on an annual State plan, a notice of the Secretary's determination to do so shall be served upon BALCA and upon all parties to the proceeding within 30 days after the Secretary's receipt of the petition for review.

(4) *Hearing record.* Upon receipt of the Secretary's notice, BALCA shall within 15 days forward the complete hearing record to the Secretary.

(5) *Contents of Secretary's notice.* The Secretary's notice shall specify:

- (i) The issue or issues to be reviewed;
- (ii) The form in which submissions shall be made by the parties; and
- (iii) The time within which such submissions shall be made.

(6) *Filing of documents.* All documents submitted to the Secretary pursuant to this paragraph (f) shall be filed with the Secretary of Labor, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20210, Attention: Executive Director, Office of Administrative Appeals, Room S-4309. An original and two copies of all documents shall be filed. Documents are not deemed filed with the Secretary until actually received by the Secretary. All documents, including documents filed by mail, shall be received by the Secretary either on or before the due date.

(7) *Service of documents.* Copies of all documents filed with the Secretary pursuant to this paragraph (f) shall be served simultaneously upon all other parties involved in the proceeding.

Service upon the Director shall be in accordance with paragraph (a)(3) of this section.

(8) *Secretary's decision.* The Secretary's final decision pursuant to this paragraph (f) shall be issued within 180 days from the date of the notice of intent to review. The Secretary's decision shall be served upon all parties and BALCA.

(9) *Transmittal of record.* Upon issuance of the Secretary's decision under this paragraph (f), the Secretary shall transmit the entire record to the Chief Administrative Law Judge for custody pursuant to § 655.450.

**§ 655.350 Public access.**

(a) *Public examination at ETA.* ETA shall make available for public examination in Washington, DC, a list of facilities which have filed attestations, and such facilities' visa petitions (if any) for H-1A nurses, and for each such facility, a copy of the facility's attestation and any explanatory statements it has received; the annual State plan (if any) which relates to the facility's attestation; and a copy of each of the facility's H-1A visa petitions (if any) to INS. A copy of the latter shall be transmitted to ETA by the facility at the same time it is submitted to INS. The facility shall also forward to ETA a copy of the INS visa petition approval notice within 5 days after it is received from INS.

(b) *Public examination at facility.* For the duration of the attestation's validity and thereafter for so long as the facility uses any H-1 or H-1A nurse under the attestation, the facility shall maintain a separate file containing the attestation and required documentation, and shall make this file available to any interested parties within 72 hours upon written or oral request. If a party requests a copy of the file, the facility shall provide it and any charge for such copy shall not exceed the cost of reproduction.

(c) *Notice to public.* ETA periodically shall publish a notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER announcing the names and addresses of facilities which have submitted attestations; facilities which have attestations on file; facilities which have submitted attestations

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which have been rejected for filing; facilities which have had attestations suspended; States which have submitted annual State plans; States which have approved annual State plans; and States which have submitted annual State plans which were disapproved.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1205-0305)

[59 FR 882, 897, Jan. 6, 1994, as amended at 59 FR 5487, Feb. 4, 1994]

### Subpart E—Enforcement of H-1A Attestations

SOURCE: 59 FR 882, 897, Jan. 6, 1994, unless otherwise noted.

#### § 655.400 Enforcement authority of Administrator, Wage and Hour Division.

(a) The Administrator shall perform all the Secretary's investigative and enforcement functions under 8 U.S.C. 1182(m) and subparts D and E of this part.

(b) The Administrator, either pursuant to a complaint or otherwise, shall conduct such investigations as may be appropriate and, in connection therewith, enter and inspect such places and such records (and make transcriptions thereof), question such persons and gather such information as deemed necessary by the Administrator to determine compliance regarding the matters to which a health care facility has attested under section 212(m) of the INA (8 U.S.C. 1182(m)) and subparts D and E of this part.

(c) A facility being investigated shall make available to the Administrator such records, information, persons, and places as the Administrator deems appropriate to copy, transcribe, question, or inspect. No facility shall interfere with any official of the Department of Labor performing an investigation, inspection or law enforcement function pursuant to 8 U.S.C. 1182(m) or subparts D or E of this part. In the event of such interference, the Administrator may deem the interference to be a violation and take such further actions as the Administrator considers appropriate. (*Note:* Federal criminal statutes prohibit certain interference with a

Federal officer in the performance of official duties, 18 U.S.C. 111 and 1114.)

(d) A facility subject to subparts D and E of this part shall at all times cooperate in administrative and enforcement proceedings. No facility shall intimidate, threaten, restrain, coerce, blacklist, discharge, or in any manner discriminate against any person because such person has:

(1) Filed a complaint or appeal under or related to section 212(m) of the INA (8 U.S.C. 1182(m)) or subpart D or E of this part;

(2) Testified or is about to testify in any proceeding under or related to section 212(m) of the INA (8 U.S.C. 1182(m)) or subpart D or E of this part;

(3) Exercised or asserted on behalf of himself/herself or others any right or protection afforded by section 212(m) of the INA (8 U.S.C. 1182(m)) or subpart D or E of this part.

(4) Consulted with an employee of a legal assistance program or an attorney on matters related to the Act or to subparts D or E of this part or any other DOL regulation promulgated pursuant to 8 U.S.C. 1182(m).

In the event of such intimidation or restraint as are described in paragraph (d)(1), (2), (3), or (4) of this section, the Administrator may deem the conduct to be a violation and take such further actions as the Administrator considers appropriate.

(e) A facility subject to subpart D and E of this part shall maintain a separate file containing its attestation and required documentation, and shall make that file or copies thereof available to interested parties, as required by § 655.350(b). In the event of a facility's failure to maintain the file, to provide access, or to provide copies, the Administrator may deem the conduct to be a violation and take such further actions as the Administrator considers appropriate.

(f) No health care facility shall seek to have an H-1A nurse, or any other nurse similarly employed by the employer, or any other employee waive rights conferred under the Act or under subpart D or E of this part. In the event of such waiver, the Administrator may deem the conduct to be a violation and take such further actions