

§ 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.