



News Release

July 19, 2004

USCIS ANNOUNCES EXTENSION OF CERTIFICATION DEADLINE FOR CERTAIN FOREIGN HEALTH CARE WORKERS FROM CANADA AND MEXICO

Washington, D.C.- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced today that certain foreign health care workers from Canada and Mexico will remain exempt, for a period of one year, from the foreign health care worker certification requirement. The announcement will publish later this week in the *Federal Register*. This exemption applies only to Canadian and Mexican TN (NAFTA professional) health care workers who were employed as TN nonimmigrant health care workers before September 23, 2003 and held a valid license from a U.S. jurisdiction before September 23, 2003.

On July 23, 2003, USCIS announced that, after July 26, 2004, foreign health care workers, other than physicians, who are subject to the foreign health care worker certification requirement, are inadmissible, and ineligible for an extension of status or change of status if already in the United States, unless they present a certificate granted by an approved credentialing organization.

That one-year transition period was sufficient for the vast majority of foreign health care workers. In the case of Canadian and Mexican TN health care workers, however, USCIS has determined that an extended transition period is needed. Many Canadian and Mexican citizens working in the border regions regularly travel across their respective borders. Because the process of obtaining certification is not an immediate one, USCIS has extended the transition period for Canadian and Mexican TN health care workers only for an additional year. This will ensure that there is no disruption to the regional health care systems along the Canadian and Mexican borders.

Congress mandated the certification requirement in the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996.

-USCIS-

On March 1, 2003, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services became one of three legacy INS components to join the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. USCIS is charged with fundamentally transforming and improving the delivery of immigration and citizenship services, while enhancing the integrity of our nation's security.