



NEW MAINERS RESOURCE CENTER



MAINE PHYSICIAN LICENSING GUIDE

FOR INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED PROFESSIONALS

nmrcmaine.org



WHO WE ARE

The New Mainers Resource Center (NMRC) is a state-wide program serving internationally trained professionals (ITPs). We offer resources to assist New Mainers in overcoming barriers to entering the US workforce. Our services include: career advising, licensing and credential support, job readiness skills, and networking with employers, colleges and universities.

NMRC is proud to be affiliated with the Welcome Back Initiative, a national program committed to building a bridge between internationally trained health workers and the need for health services in underserved communities.

The Purpose of this Guide

One major challenge faced by skilled professionals, such as physicians, is the successful navigation of the complex re-licensing requirements in Maine. The purpose of this guide is to provide internationally trained physicians with the information they need to make informed decisions about their options to work in the healthcare field in Maine.

For additional information or assistance from the New Mainers Resource Center contact:



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DATA Currency Disclaimer: Labor market, wage, and cost information presented in this guide is based on data collected in August 2025. Employment conditions, licensing requirements, wages, and associated costs may change over time and may vary by employer, region, or individual circumstances. This guide is intended as an informational resource and does not guarantee employment, wages, or licensing outcomes.

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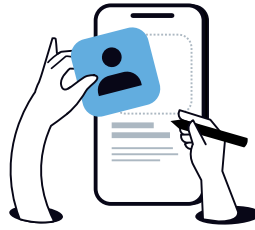
PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED PHYSICIANS IN MAINE



1

VERIFY MEDICAL SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY

Confirm that your medical school is listed in the World Directory of Medical Schools and review the Sponsor Notes for any special instructions.



2

APPLY FOR USMLE THROUGH ECFMG

Submit your USMLE application to the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG). ECFMG will verify your medical diploma.



3

PREPARE FOR AND PASS USMLE EXAMS

Study for and successfully pass the USMLE Step 1 (Medical Knowledge) and Step 2 (Clinical Knowledge) exams.



4

OBTAIN ECFMG CERTIFICATION

After passing all required exams and completing verification, you'll be issued an ECFMG Certificate.



5

APPLY TO RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

Submit your applications through ERAS and NRMP to join a Graduate Medical Education Program.



6

APPLY FOR MEDICAL LICENSURE IN MAINE

Submit your Medical Board of Maine Application to obtain your state medical license.



[LEARN MORE ABOUT ELIGIBILITY & TIMELINE FOR LICENSING](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How long does this process take?

This process to register, take exams and apply for a residency takes approximately 2–4 years. Because each person is different, the amount of time needed to study and prepare for the exams can vary. (Please see [Timeline](#) included in this guide for more details.)

2. Once I register with ECFMG, how long do I have in order to satisfy the examination requirements?

ECFMG has a seven-year rule: This means that they require International Medical Graduates (IMGs) satisfy the examination requirements for ECFMG Certification within a seven-year period. Essentially, once you pass an exam, you will have seven years to meet the other examination requirements for ECFMG Certification.

3. What is a competitive score for the 3 exams?

- Step 1: Pass/Fail
- Step 2: CK 240+
- Step 2: CS N/A (This exam was discontinued.)
- Step 3: 220+

4. How do I know if I am ready to take the USMLE Step 1 exam?

If you are scoring in the target range of 225–235 on practice exams, then you are ready.

5. What is an observership and how can it help?

An observership is a brief period (2–4 weeks) during which you observe a doctor. You are not given any clinical responsibilities. This is simply an opportunity to better understand the US healthcare system, clinical communication styles and workflow. Many programs require or prefer US Clinical Experience (USCE), and **observerships count as one type**. Observerships can also give you the chance to earn **US-based Letter of Recommendation (LoR)**, which are essential for your ERAS application.

In our experience, these observerships have been difficult to secure. It is possible to contact a medical institution and request the opportunity. NMRC continues to try to build its network of doctors and medical institutions in Maine in order to better facilitate these opportunities. If you already know of someone who works in the medical field (e.g., doctor or nurse practitioner) in Maine, this is a good starting point for inquiring about the possibility of doing an observership.

6. Will I need to take an English proficiency exam?

Yes, you must take the Occupational English Test (OET for Medicine) if you are an international medical graduate who:

- Did not complete your **entire** medical education in English, OR
- Cannot prove that English was the language of instruction and patient care throughout your medical program.

7. What is a passing score on the OET?

According to ECFMG, a score of 350 is required on Listening, Reading, Speaking, and 300 on Writing in one sitting. The recommended timeline is to take OET before or during your ERAS season (ideally August–September).

8. What are residency programs considering?

- Step 1: Pass on first try
- Step 2 CK: Numeric score
- Medical school transcript
- Medical Student Performance Evaluations (MSPE)
- Observership, if possible
- Letters of recommendation
- Research, leadership, volunteer work

9. Will I need to relocate in order to do my medical residency?

Residencies are competitive. If you are willing to relocate, then you can apply to many more residencies and this will increase your chances of being matched. Additionally, the willingness to relocate will give you more options in terms of finding a residency which matches your specialty.



Overview of the Profession

The medical profession in the United States is a highly structured and regulated field that requires extensive education, training, and licensing. After earning a medical degree—either a Doctor of Medicine (MD) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO)—graduates must complete a residency program, which provides hands-on training in a chosen specialty such as internal medicine, surgery, or pediatrics. Residency programs typically last three to seven years, depending on the specialty. For those who wish to further specialize, fellowships provide focused training in sub-specialties such as cardiology, oncology, or critical care. These stages are essential for board certification and long-term medical practice in the US.

For IMGs, gaining clinical experience in the US is critical for building a competitive Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) application. US clinical experience (USCE)—through observerships, externships, or hands-on rotations—demonstrates familiarity

with the American healthcare system, patient communication standards, and clinical protocols. It also allows IMGs to build relationships with US physicians who can write strong letters of recommendation. Without USCE, many program directors view applications as less competitive, regardless of academic performance abroad. Therefore, securing clinical exposure in the US is a strategic and often necessary step for IMGs pursuing residency through ERAS.

IMGs—Essential to US Health Care

- Comprise about 25% of all US physicians
- Serve frequently in primary-care specialties such as family medicine, pediatrics, and internal medicine
- Add diversity to the US physician workforce
- Provide essential health care services in medically underserved areas, rural and urban
- Enrich clinical learning and practice environments with international perspectives

Source: ECFMG Certification FactSheet

US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

As of **April 2024**, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that there were approximately **834,500 physicians and surgeons** employed across the United States. Medical specialties vary widely in terms of training and demand, with residency programs ranging from **3 to 7 years** depending on the specialty, and **fellowships** requiring an additional **1 to 3 years** for sub-specialization (e.g., cardiology, oncology). The “BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook” provides detailed data on employment outlook, wages, and job duties for major physician specialties such as **family medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, and pathology**, highlighting differences in projected job growth and compensation.

Please check the US Department of Labor’s [BLS](#) website for the most current information.

Eligibility & Timeline for Licensing

Core Eligibility Requirements

- Graduated from a medical school that is listed in the [World Directory of Medical Schools](#). Once you find your school, check Sponsor Notes to verify that your graduation year is eligible and to check for any additional conditions.
- Obtain an ECFMG certificate: This certificate confirms that you successfully passed USMLE Step 1 & 2 exams and that your medical school education has been verified through them.



Timeline



1st Year

- Study for and take USMLE Step 1 Exam
- Gain clinical experience via volunteer work, job and/or observership

2nd Year

- Study for Step 2 CK Exam
- Gain clinical experience via volunteer work, job and/or observership

3rd Year

- Jan–Apr:** Take Step 2 CK and research residency programs
- May–Aug:** Take OET, Request Letters of Recommendation (LoRs), draft personal statement and register for ERAS
- Sept:** Send in applications to residency programs
- Oct–Jan:** Interview season, send Thank You notes

4th Year

- Feb:** Submit rank order list
- Mar:** Match results announced. If unmatched, participate in SOAP (Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program)
- Jul:** Residency begins
- Take Step 3 Exam in the **second or third year of residency** (Residency is 3–7 years, depending on specialty.)



Costs

Here is a list of some of the costs associated with pursuing medical licensure. Please keep in mind that these are the costs **as of August 2025** and this list is not meant to be exhaustive.

CORE ECFMG & EXAM FEES	APPROXIMATE COST
ECFMG Certification Application	\$160
USMLE Step 1	\$1,050
USMLE Step 2 CK	\$1,050
IWA (Interactive Web Application) processing	Included
Extension of Eligibility Period (if needed)	\$90
Rescheduling USMLE exam (varies by Prometric)	\$0-\$600
ERAS & NRMP	APPROXIMATE COST
ERAS Token	\$170
ERAS Application Fees	\$100-\$1,000+ (depends on # of programs)
NRMP Registration Fee (Match)	\$70
NRMP Rank Order List Fee (if >20 programs)	\$30 per extra program
MSPE/Document Submission Fees	\$75
RELATED	APPROXIMATE COST
Online USMLE Study package (360-days)	\$500-600
US Clinical Experience (Observership/Externship)	\$500-\$3,000 per rotation
Medical Licensing (after residency)	\$300-\$800 per state
State Background Check/Fingerprinting	\$50-\$100

Other Jobs in Healthcare



LPN

Licensed Practical Nurse

Requirements:

- Complete an approved LPN program (usually 12–18 months at a vocational school, technical college, or community college. This is NOT an associate's degree.)
- Pass NCLEX-PN
- Licensure through the Maine State Board of Nursing

Scope: Basic care, vital signs, wound dressing, assist RNs

Pathway Time: 12–18 months

Salary Range: \$45,000–\$60,000/year

NOTE: Can bridge to RN later (LPN-to-RN programs)



RN

Registered Nurse—Associate's or Bachelor's

Requirements:

- Associate's (ADN) or Bachelor's (BSN) in Nursing
- Pass NCLEX-RN
- Licensure through the Maine State Board of Nursing

Scope: Administer meds, coordinate care, perform assessments

Pathway Time: 2–4 years (faster with prior credits or accelerated programs)

Salary Range: \$75,000–\$100,000/year

NOTE: Many hospitals prefer BSN





NP

Nurse Practitioner

Requirements:

- RN + BSN
- Master's or Doctorate in Nursing Practice
- National board exam (AANP or ANCC)

Scope: Diagnose, prescribe, manage care independently

Pathway Time: 2–3 years after BSN

Salary Range: \$110,000–\$140,000/year

NOTE: Some states offer full practice authority



CNM

Nurse Midwife (Certified Nurse Midwife)

Requirements:

- RN + BSN degree
- Graduate-level Nurse Midwifery program (MSN or DNP)
- Pass AMCB Certification Exam (American Midwifery Certification Board)
- Licensure through Maine State Board of Nursing

Scope: Prenatal care, labor and delivery, postpartum, family planning

Pathway Time: 2–3 years post-RN

Salary Range: \$100,000–\$130,000/year

NOTE: CNMs have prescriptive authority in most states



PA

Physician Assistant

Requirements:

- Bachelor's + science prerequisites
- Accredited PA program (Master's level)
- Pass PANCE
- Licensure through the Maine Board of Licensure in Medicine

Scope: Diagnose, treat, assist in surgery, prescribe meds

Pathway Time: 2.5–3 years

Salary Range: \$115,000–\$145,000/year

NOTE: Team-based model, but highly autonomous



Short-term Jobs While Studying for Exams

Here we outline three potential healthcare careers for IMGs who are preparing for their ECFMG exams. These careers require a relatively short training (approximately 2–3 months) and can help build relevant experience. You can find information about training and apprenticeships by contacting your local Adult Education Center and/or community college. They may have a workforce program that interests you. Likewise, some local hospitals also offer apprenticeships.

Please note that this information is only current as of August 2025.

Phlebotomist (Phlebotomy Technician)

What you do: Draw blood samples, label and process specimens, assist in clinics or labs

Training in Maine: ~10 weeks (~60 hours) of coursework plus practical training

Certification: Eligible for national certification (e.g., CPT through NHA, ASCP, or AMT) following training; no Maine-specific state license required

Certification: After completing training, you take Maine competency exams (written/oral + skills); a certified CNA may apply to Maine’s CNA Registry

Medical Assistant

What you do: Hybrid clinical and administrative tasks including scheduling, vital signs, phlebotomy, billing, and assisting providers

Training in Maine: There are accelerated apprenticeship programs through local hospitals and some Adult Education Centers

Certification: Not required in Maine but strongly recommended

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)

What you do: Provide basic patient care (bathing, dressing, take vital signs), assist nursing staff

Training in Maine: State-approved programs require 130 hours (~13 weeks)



Professional Associations & Resources

ECFMG® (Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates)

The official certifying body for IMGs applying for US residency

Offers up-to-date guidance on exams, pathways, OET, and certification

www.ecfmg.org

AMA International Medical Graduates Section (AMA-IMG)

A branch of the American Medical Association that advocates for IMGs

Offers networking, legislative updates, and resources

www.ama-assn.org

NRMP (National Resident Matching Program)

Responsible for the residency match

Stay connected here for deadlines and match policies

www.nrmp.org

FREIDA™ (The AMA Residency & Fellowship Database)

Private organizations offering guidance, mentoring, and application help

Useful for researching IMG-friendly residency programs

www.freida.ama-assn.org

Networking & Peer Support Communities

Facebook Groups for IMGs

Examples:

- IMGs for USMLE
- ECFMG Certification Support
- IMG Match 202X (Search and join groups that match your exam year)

r/IMGreddit (Reddit)

A very active community of IMGs sharing real-time experiences, advice, and encouragement

reddit.com/r/IMGreddit



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