



# WHAT IS VISASCREEN

*This brochure is designed to provide you with an overview of the International Commission on Healthcare Professions' (ICHP) Visa Credentials Assessment program, known as VisaScreen™. It emphasizes the principle VisaScreen services and answers some commonly asked questions. To obtain additional information on VisaScreen, please refer to the guidelines at the end of this brochure.*

## **World Class Assessments**

Every year, thousands of internationally-educated healthcare professionals apply for a visa to the United States. U.S. immigration law now requires that healthcare professionals, other than physicians, complete a screening program in order to qualify for certain occupational visas and/or an immigrant "green card" visa.

VisaScreen: Visa Credentials Assessment, a program offered by the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP), enables healthcare professionals to meet this requirement by verifying and evaluating their credentials to ensure that they meet the government's minimum eligibility standards.

Applicants who successfully complete VisaScreen receive a VisaScreen Certificate, which can be presented to a consular office or, in the case of adjustment of status, the attorney general as a part of a visa application.

## **Meeting Federal Requirements**

Section 343 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996 requires that certain non-U.S. healthcare professionals successfully complete a screening program prior to receiving an occupational visa. Screening includes

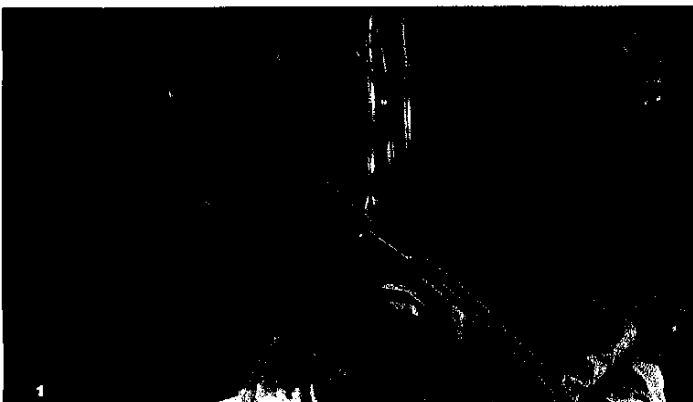
an assessment of an applicant's education to ensure that it is comparable to a U.S. graduate in that same profession; verification that licenses are valid and unencumbered; English language proficiency; and, in the case of nurses, verification that the nurse has either earned a CGFNS Certificate or passed the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN® examination).

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) was named in the legislation as an organization qualified to offer this federal screening program. In response to this legislation, CGFNS created a new division, the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP), which administers VisaScreen.

## **International Healthcare Authority**

In 1996 the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) launched its new division, ICHP. Building on CGFNS' more than 20 years of experience in international healthcare credentialing, ICHP analyzes and verifies education, licensure and registration credentials, as well as other preparation for healthcare professionals other than physicians.

In addition to customized screening and certification programs, the division provides models/benchmarks for international standards, and serves as a clearinghouse on education, licensure and practice standards around the globe.



# WHAT IS ICHP AND HOW CAN IT HELP



## **ICHP's Mission**

ICHP fulfills a dual mandate: to protect the public trust and to foster equitable treatment for healthcare professionals throughout the world. ICHP augments CGFNS' foundation of expertise by developing networks of international contacts, maintaining essential databases and evaluating credentials from more than 200 countries around the world. ICHP makes available the recognized expertise of its parent organization to a broader range of healthcare professions than ever before. It also extends its services to organizations in both the U.S. and other countries.

ICHP's parent company, CGFNS, a not-for-profit, immigration-neutral organization, has earned an international reputation as the foremost authority on the education, practice standards, registration and licensure of healthcare professionals worldwide. It maintains this status through ongoing research activities, networks of international contacts, continual enhancement of resources and databases and a dedicated staff of professionals experienced in the fields of healthcare and international education.

Throughout its history, CGFNS has demonstrated its commitment to excellence and quality in the healthcare arena and to fostering equitable treatment of healthcare professionals. CGFNS was established to protect the public by ensuring that nurses educated in countries other than the United States are eligible and qualified to meet licensure and other practice requirements in the U.S. Its mission is to provide leadership in healthcare education, registration and licensure to the global nursing and healthcare professional community. CGFNS protects the public in relation to evolving healthcare policies and standards of professional practice for migrating healthcare professionals.

## **Program Elements**

The VisaScreen program is comprised of an educational analysis, licensure validation, English lan-



guage proficiency assessment, and in the case of nurses, an exam of nursing knowledge. Once the applicant has successfully completed all elements of the VisaScreen program, the applicant is awarded a VisaScreen Certificate, which can be presented to a consular office or, in the case of adjustment of status, the attorney general as a part of a visa application.

### **Educational Review**

The Educational Review ensures that the applicant's education meets all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements for the profession the applicant intends to practice, and is comparable to the education of a U.S. graduate seeking licensure.

### **Licensure Review**

The Licensure Review evaluates initial and *all* current and past licenses. Validations provided directly to ICHP by the issuing/validating institution affirm that the applicant has completed all practice requirements and that the registration/licensure has no encumbrances.

### **English Language Proficiency Assessment**

The English Language Proficiency Assessment confirms that the applicant has demonstrated the required competency in oral and written English by submitting passing scores on tests approved by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. Currently, to fulfill this requirement, applicants must take either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Test of Written English (TWE) and Test of Spoken English (TSE), or



# THE ELEMENTS OF VISASCREEN



the Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) parts 1-4, which include the Oral Interview and the Speaking Test.

Applicants must apply directly to the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to take the TOEFL, TWE and TSE. For information or an application, contact:  
TOEFL, TWE and TSE  
Educational Testing Service  
P.O. Box 6151  
Princeton, NJ 08541-6151 USA  
Telephone: (609) 771-7100  
Email: toefl@ets.org

Applicants must apply directly to the English Language Institute in order to take the MELAB. For information or an application, contact:

MELAB  
English Language Institute  
3020 North University Building  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1057 USA  
Telephone: (313) 763-3452

Certain applicants may be exempt from the English language proficiency requirement if they meet *all* of the following criteria:

- Country of professional education was Australia, Canada (except Quebec), Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom or the United States;
- Language of instruction was English; and
- Language of textbooks was English.

## Exam for Nurses

Applicants who wish to obtain an occupational visa to practice as nurses in the United States must present a CGFNS Certificate or a passing score on the U.S. registered nurse licensure examination (NCLEX-RN® examination) to provide proof of their nursing knowledge.

In order to obtain a CGFNS Certificate, applicants must successfully complete CGFNS' Certification

Program, a three-part program, comprised of a credentials review, a one-day Qualifying Exam of nursing knowledge and an English language proficiency exam. Upon successful completion of all three elements of the program, applicants are awarded a CGFNS Certificate. Most states require the CGFNS Certificate from nurses educated abroad before they can take the NCLEX-RN® examination.

## Eligibility

U.S. immigration law now requires that all internationally-educated healthcare professionals, other than physicians, complete a screening program, such as VisaScreen, in order to qualify for certain occupational visas.

## Requirements

In order to meet the educational requirements for the VisaScreen program, applicants must have:

- Successfully completed a senior secondary school education that is separate from their professional education;
  - Graduated from a government-approved, professional healthcare program of at least two years in length; and
  - Successfully completed a minimum number of clock and/or credit hours in specific theoretical and clinical areas during their professional program.
- Physical therapists must include a self-reported, typewritten summary of their supervised clinical experience.



# HOW VISASCREEN CAN HELP YOU

Foreign educated healthcare professionals must also provide the following registration/licensure documents, which must be sent to ICHP *directly* from the issuing authority:

- Validation of initial registration/licensure in the country where the applicant completed his/her professional education; and
- Validations of *all* current and past professional registrations/licenses.

In order to meet the English language proficiency requirements, applicants must provide a passing score in either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Test of Written English (TWE) and Test of Spoken English (TSE), or the Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB), including the oral interview.

Foreign-educated nurses wishing to practice as a registered nurse in the United States must also provide one of the following:

- A CGFNS Certificate, which can be earned through the CGFNS Certification Program; or
- A passing score on the U.S. registered nurse licensure examination (NCLEX-RN® examination).

## **Program Purpose**

The VisaScreen program was designed for internationally-educated healthcare professionals, other than physicians, seeking employment in the United States. VisaScreen evaluates an individual's credentials to determine if they meet the U.S. immigration standards for obtaining occupational visas.

## **Who Benefits from the Program**

Applicants who successfully complete the VisaScreen program will receive a VisaScreen Certificate. The VisaScreen Certificate, which satisfies all federal screening requirements as set forth in section 343 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, can then be presented to a consular office or, in the case of adjustment

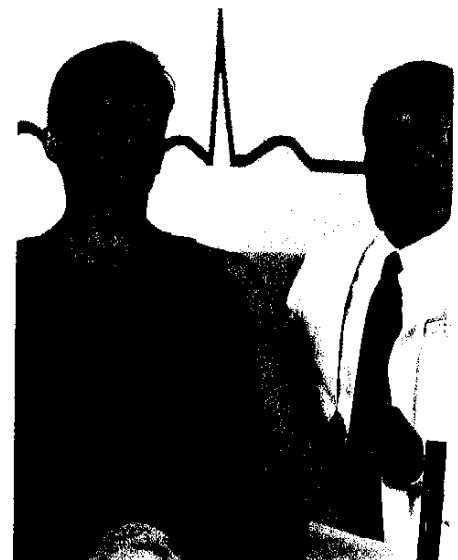
of status, the Attorney General as a part of a visa application. ICHP, through its parent company CGFNS, was named in section 343 as a qualified provider of such a screening program.

Also, anyone with an interest in selecting highly-qualified foreign-educated healthcare professionals for employment or education in the United States will find the program highly beneficial. Federal agencies, healthcare employers, educational institutions, health and education ministries, professional regulatory boards and international management companies all make use of VisaScreen or other ICHP evaluation services.

ICHP welcomes collaboration with healthcare, regulatory and educational professionals to develop screening programs that meet their needs. ICHP customizes each program – through listening carefully to program sponsors, anticipating potential challenges and then developing a program that responds to the sponsor's requirements.

ICHP's data and expertise have uses extending well beyond certification programs. Educators and employers can turn to ICHP to find out if applicants whose earlier education was completed in another country have the preparation they require. ICHP can also offer information to professional groups wishing to survey the best practices in other countries.

ICHP brings the same commitment to excellence and valuable resources to its work as CGFNS, its parent organization. ICHP can provide a full examination of a healthcare professional's credentials by not only reviewing educational history, but also the professional licensing standards and practical experience that complete the professional's credentials.





## QUESTIONS MOST COMMONLY ASKED BY APPLICANTS



**What is VisaScreen and why do I need it?** U.S. immigration law now requires that healthcare professionals, other than physicians, complete a screening program in order to qualify for certain occupational visas. VisaScreen, a program offered by ICHP, a division of CGFNS, enables healthcare professionals to meet this requirement by verifying and evaluating their credentials to ensure that they meet the government's minimum eligibility standards. CGFNS is named in the law as a qualified provider of such a screening program.

### **What does VisaScreen verify and evaluate?**

VisaScreen includes an educational review, licensure review, English language proficiency assessment and, for nurses a test of nursing knowledge. Applicants who successfully complete VisaScreen will receive a VisaScreen Certificate, which can be presented to a consular office or, in the case of adjustment of status, the Attorney General as part of a visa application.

**Do foreign-educated nurses need to complete both the CGFNS Qualifying Exam and the NCLEX-RN examination in order to complete their VisaScreen Certificate?** No. Foreign-educated nurses only need to successfully complete one of the exams.

**Who is exempt from fulfilling the English language proficiency requirement?** Applicants may be exempt from the English language proficiency requirement if they meet *all* of the following criteria:

- Country of professional education was Australia, Canada (except Quebec), Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom or the United States;
- Language of instruction was English; and
- Language of textbooks was English.

**Who pays for the program?** The applicant typically pays for the VisaScreen program. The application fee can be paid by an international money order or certified bank check in U.S. dollars, drawn on a U.S. bank and made payable to "ICHP," or by one of the following credit cards: Visa, Mastercard or Discover/Novus.

**Must I submit my original documents for review?** Yes and no. ICHP accepts clear and legible photocopies of secondary school documents for evaluation. However, ICHP will only accept original verification from issuing agencies. All validation of registration/licenses and the applicant's professional school's transcripts must come *directly* from the issuing authority to ICHP. In addition, since ICHP verifies credential authenticity, ICHP maintains the right to validate any documentation with the source agency.

**What do I do if my educational institution has closed?** ICHP only accepts certain documentation from source agencies (such as transcripts and validations of registration/licensure). If your school has closed or no longer operates, you will need to contact the organization or agency authorized to hold documentation for that institution (such as a ministry of health or the national, provincial or state licensing authority in your country of education). If you are uncertain about where to go, call the ICHP Customer Service Department.





**What if my documents are not in English?** A certified word-for-word English translation, signed with a certification of authenticity by the translator, must accompany any credentials not in English. If you cannot furnish a translation of your documents, ICHP can provide an official translation of each document for an additional fee. ICHP will accept translations of documents submitted by source agencies (such as transcripts and validations) only from the issuing authorities. Otherwise, ICHP will translate documents for the appropriate fee.

**How does ICHP ensure its evaluations?** To ensure quality evaluations, ICHP consistently uses standards developed by the specific profession as the foundation for the assessment of an applicant's qualification.

**What is the difference between a CGFNS Certificate and the ICHP Visascreen Certificate?** The VisaScreen Certificate is a result of successful completion of the ICHP VisaScreen program, which meets all federal requirements of a screening program for healthcare professionals seeking certain occupational visas in the United States. The CGFNS Certificate is a result of successful completion of the CGFNS Certification Program, which is a program consisting of an educational and registration/licensure review, a Qualifying Exam of nursing knowledge, as well as an English language proficiency assessment, designed specifically for first-level, general (registered) nurses seeking licensure in the United States.

**Once a VisaScreen Certificate is issued, who receives the original document?** The VisaScreen Certificate is issued directly to the applicant who successfully completed all of the requirements of the program. The applicant then presents it to a consular office or attorney general (when applicable) as part of a visa application.

**I am from a foreign country, but**

**graduated from a college in the United States. Do I still need to apply for the VisaScreen program?**

Yes. Although your professional education was completed in the United States, the purpose of the VisaScreen program is to provide a screening program which meets all federal requirements for international healthcare professionals seeking an occupational visa in the United States, irrespective of where the professional education was completed.

**What are the passing scores for the TOEFL, TWE and TSE, as well as the MELAB exams?**

For registered nurses (RNs): 540 paper-based TOEFL or 207 computer-based TOEFL; 4.0 TWE; 50 TSE; 79 overall MELAB; 3+ oral MELAB. For licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs): 530 paper-based TOEFL or 197 computer-based TOEFL; 4.0 TWE; 50 TSE; 77 overall MELAB; 3+ oral MELAB. For physical and occupational therapists: 560 paper-based TOEFL or 220 computer-based TOEFL; 4.5 TWE; 50 TSE.





## TO FIND OUT MORE



### **The Complete Story**

Since the information given here is brief and cannot completely describe the unique services offered, CGFNS encourages those interested to contact CGFNS for additional information.

### **Please contact:**

The International Commission on  
Healthcare Professions (ICHP)  
3600 Market Street, Suite 400  
Philadelphia, PA 19104-2651  
USA

Business Office: (215) 222-8454  
Applicant Inquiries: (215) 349-8767  
Fax: (215) 349-0026  
Email: [info@ichp.org](mailto:info@ichp.org)  
Website: [www.ichp.org](http://www.ichp.org)



### **International Commission on Healthcare Professions**

3600 Market Street, Suite 400, Philadelphia, PA 19104-2651 USA

[www.ichp.org](http://www.ichp.org)

*a division of*

**COMMISSION ON GRADUATES OF  
FOREIGN NURSING SCHOOLS**