Code of Ethical International Recruitment and Employment of Teachers

The Code of Ethical International Recruitment and Employment of Teachers (International Teacher Recruitment Code) is a sister code to the Voluntary Code of Ethical Conduct for the Recruitment of Foreign-Educated Health Professionals to the United States, and is the product of a multi-stakeholder deliberation that included recruiters, employers, and unions. To the extent that the migration of teachers is facilitated by active international recruitment, this code seeks to maximize the benefits and minimize potential harm for all parties involved in, or affected by, the international recruitment process. The Alliance is planning to release the International Teacher Recruitment Code in the spring of 2015.

Implementation of the International Teacher Recruitment Code provides an opportunity to increase public accountability of recruiting agencies and employing school districts with regard to how fairly overseas trained teachers are treated.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following is a list of frequently asked questions about the Code of Ethical International Recruitment and Employment of Teachers (International Teacher Recruitment Code), divided into subject areas.

About the International Teacher Recruitment Code

1. What is the International Teacher Recruitment Code?

   The Code of Ethical International Recruitment & Employment of Teachers establishes voluntary standards to ensure that the practice of recruiting overseas trained teachers to the United States is done in a responsible, ethical, and transparent matter. The Teachers Recruitment Code also sets standards for ensuring that the rights of overseas trained teachers are protected, that cultural orientation programs are adequate.

2. Why was the International Teacher Recruitment Code developed?

   The International Teacher Recruitment Code was developed in response to widespread recognition that international recruitment of teachers is most successful when conducted in an ethical manner that balances various stakeholder interests. Outside of Exchange Visitor
Programs designated by the U.S. Department of State, limited mechanisms exist for preventing or reporting unethical conduct in international recruitment and insufficient guidance for organizations seeking to recruit responsibly. The Code serves as a guide and sets the standard for ethical international teacher recruitment practices.¹

3. Who authored the International Teacher Recruitment Code?

The International Teacher Recruitment Code was authored by a diverse group of stakeholders representing teachers, unions, employers, recruiters, and J-1 Exchange Program Sponsors. A full list of authors is available with the code.

4. How was the International Teacher Recruitment Code developed?

In 2009, The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) published a landmark study, “Importing Educators: Causes and Consequences of International Teacher Recruitment,” that revealed a pattern of problems similar to those experienced by internationally recruited health care and other professionals recruited outside the oversight of official exchange program designations. These problems include alien smuggling, visa fraud, contract “twinning,” document servitude, breakage fees, high housing charges, indefinite at-will status, bureaucratic challenges, and culture shock.

A Task Force on the Ethical International Recruitment and Employment of Teachers was established that included unions, recruiters, overseas-trained teachers, employers and Exchange Program Sponsors. The goal of the Task Force was to engage stakeholders in a dialogue about the problems experienced by teachers recruited from abroad and the need for consensus-based ethical standards that help school districts and recruiters avoid mistreatment of international teachers. A series of Task Force meetings led to the development of Code of Ethical International Recruitment and Employment of Teachers.

5. Who should endorse the International Teacher Recruitment Code?

The goal is that all employers (school districts) and recruiters will endorse the International Teacher Recruitment Code and ensure their recruitment practices align with it. When the Code is launched, recruiters and employers involved in international teacher recruitment will have the opportunity to be certified as being in compliance with these principles.

¹ Note that while recruiting measures and compliance for J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program sponsors will continue to be administered by the U.S. Department of State, this does not preclude J-1 sponsors from endorsing the Code to signify intent to operate within established J-1 exchange program guidelines.
School boards, state boards, national associations, visa sponsors, and other parties involved in the education sector should endorse the Code to express support for its principles.

Overseas trained teachers are encouraged to use the International Teacher Recruitment Code to learn about their rights and to identify how recruiters and employers should be treating them during the recruitment process. Teachers and other individuals involved in the education sector can endorse the Code to raise awareness about international recruitment issues and to encourage the institutions they are involved with to endorse.

6. How will the International Teacher Recruitment Code be implemented?

A multi-stakeholder steering committee of up to 7 members is charged with guiding the implementation process and adjusting the code’s provisions in consultation with the Advisory Committee. As the code launches, the steering committee will develop terms for monitoring code compliance.

7. Who funded this work?

The MacArthur Foundation supplied the initial funding for the Task Force on the Ethical International Recruitment and Employment of Teachers to be put into action. CGFNS International, Inc., the parent of the Alliance, will continue to support the International Teacher Recruitment Code.

8. Where can I get additional information on overseas trained teachers?

Information is available about the Migrant Teachers Rights Project from Education International, a non-profit partner of the Alliance who helped develop the Teachers Recruitment Code. Their website can be accessed here:  
http://www.migrantteachersrights.org/

Another resource is the American Federation of Teachers, which published a report on international recruitment of teachers which is available here:  

Additional information on the U.S. Department of State’s J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program, designated sponsors, rules, and regulations can be found here:  
http://j1visa.state.gov/programs
About the Alliance for Ethical International Recruitment Practices

1. What is the mission of the Alliance?

The mission of the Alliance for Ethical International Recruitment Practices (Alliance) is to facilitate adoption and compliance with voluntary standards which aim to ensure that international recruitment of skilled workers to the United States is ethical, responsible, and transparent. The Alliance first implemented a code for health professionals and has now used a similar approach in developing ethical standards for recruitment in the education sector.

2. When was the Alliance created?

The Alliance for Ethical International Recruitment Practices was created in 2009 to implement the Voluntary Code of Conduct for the Ethical Recruitment of Foreign-Educated Health Professionals to the United States, which was created in 2008.

3. How is the Alliance governed?

The Alliance Board of Directors is currently comprised of up to 12 members representing six stakeholder groups: unions, professional associations, U.S.-based foreign-educated professional associations, employers, staffing/placement agencies, and certification and licensure bodies. In addition, the chair of the board is reserved for neutral leadership from outside the industry.

The International Teacher Recruitment Code is governed by a Steering Committee comprised of stakeholders in the education sector.

4. How is the Alliance funded?

The Alliance is a non-profit organization that began with a grant from The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Following the Alliance’s pilot phase, it was funded by a combination of grants, certification fees, and organizational support. As of September 2014, the Alliance became an independent subsidiary of the CGFNS International, Inc., which will continue to provide infrastructure and support to the Alliance’s mission.