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LEGAL NOTES

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Health Care Certificates

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Health care workers, other than physicians, cannot obtain their green card unless a health care certification known as Visa Screen certificate is issued to them by an authorized credentialing agency.

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Under this new rule that become effective on June 29, 1999, physical therapists will be able to apply to either the CGFNS or the FFCPT (Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy). The CGFNS will be authorized to issue the certifi-

cates to physical therapists because of its experience beyond nursing with regard to educational compatibility and credentials evaluation and also because of its extensive database on health-related programs in foreign countries.

The INS was prompted to add the occupation of physical therapist to the list of those that can apply for the certificate because of the sustained level of demand for them. According to data compiled by the Department of Labor, the number of job openings for this occupation continues to remain high. Under the H-1B program, therapists have the second highest number of job openings and physical therapists comprise the biggest component of this occupation.

It is not known at this time when the other health care workers like medical technologists and physician's assistants will be able to apply. To date, there are thousands of health care workers who have not obtained their green card because they have not been issued the health care certificate.

One of the requirements of the certificate is competence in oral and written English. Physical therapists must take the English Tests administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). They must obtain the following scores: Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): paper-based 560, computer-based 220; Test of Written English (TWE): 4.5; Test of Spoken English (TSE): 50.

The Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) is not an appropriate test for physical therapists or occupational therapists. It is, however, an acceptable test for nurses.