

NEBRASKA J1 VISA WAIVER PROGRAM 2001 - 2017

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Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health

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Introduction:

This report is intended to describe J1 Visa Waiver applications that have been sponsored by the State of Nebraska since 2001. The 'State 30' J1 Visa Waiver program was created through federal legislation and is intended to help states address areas in need of services provided by physicians with a J1 Visa (training visa). The program signatory authority was delegated to the Department of Health and Human Services by the Governor.

The Nebraska J1 Visa Waiver program (Nebraska State 30 Program) has been administered by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services since 2001. The Nebraska State 30 Program has been the only method for sponsoring J1 visa waivers in Nebraska since 2001, with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) both gradually phasing out programs as state sponsored waivers became the norm. The update report is intended to provide some general information on the number, type of physician specialty, their status and locations in Nebraska.

Participation by the State of Nebraska is voluntary and done in response to requests from those wishing to sponsor providers with J1 visas. In order to participate, sponsors must first prove that they are unable to fill a position with a native born provider. In exchange for a three year service commitment in an area of need, the two year requirement for J1 visa holders to return to their home country is waived. This allows J1 visa holders to begin practicing in the United States immediately and places them on track to obtain a H1-B visa or permanent residence. Since 2001, 217 J1 Visa Waiver applications have been approved by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. The application sponsorships are forwarded to the Department of State and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for their evaluation and approval.

Summary of Findings:

The average number of J1 visa waiver sponsorships since 2001 for the Nebraska State 30 Program is 13 per year. Over the past 17 years, 8% (18/217) of J1 visa waivers approvals were for mental health providers, 17% (36/217) were for primary care providers and 75% (163/217) were for sub-specialists.

For this report we are focused on the average tenure and the number of years served after completion of the obligation of all of the J1 sponsored physicians since 2001. **The average length of tenure for all J1 providers sponsored since 2001 is 5.24 years. With the current number of 217 sponsored J1 physicians, this means that cumulatively, 1,138 years of service have been provided in Nebraska by J1 sponsored physicians.** This number includes those who have not yet completed their obligation and therefore is a very conservative method of measuring average length of tenure.

Figure 1 shows that currently, 1,138 years of service have been provided in Nebraska by J1 sponsored physicians, which is just about twice as many years as their expected obligation. It cannot be overstated that this is a substantial impact on enhancing access to health care services in Nebraska.

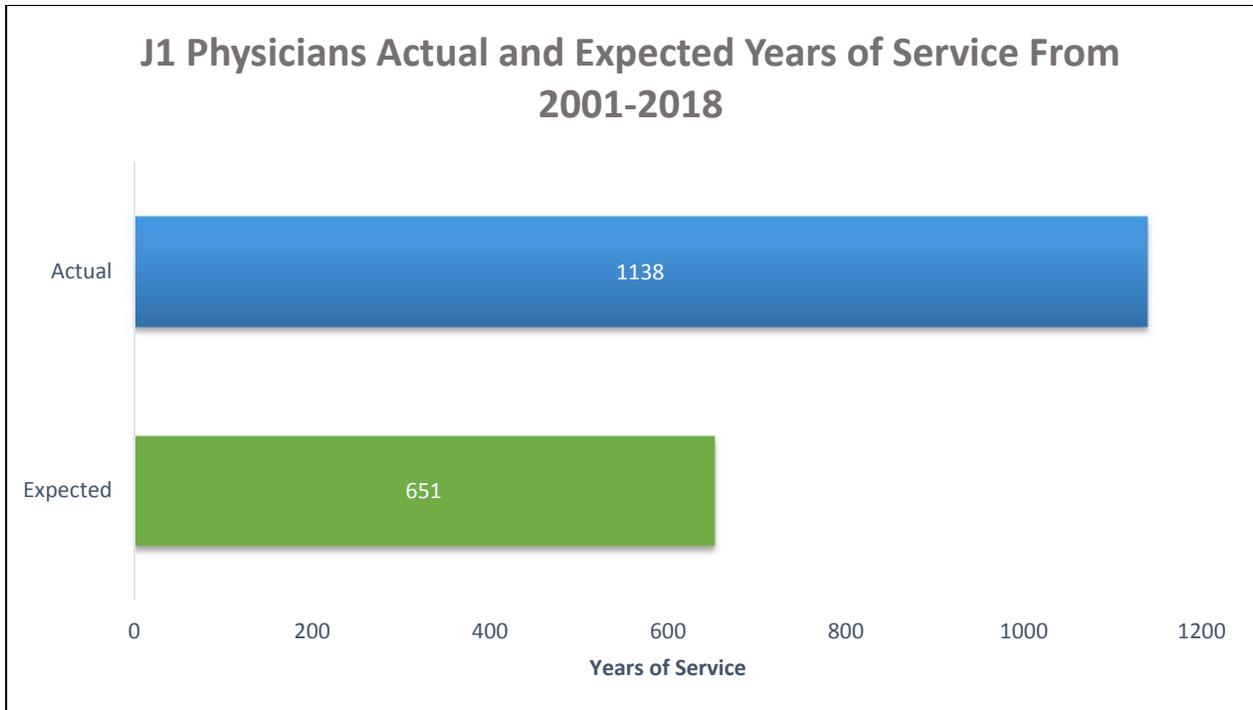


Figure 1

The number of applications approved each year:

Since 2001, the Nebraska State 30 Program has approved 217 J1 visa waiver applications. The number of applications approved is entirely dependent on those submitting requests which meet the [Nebraska program guidelines](#). Sponsors that wish to submit J1 visa waiver applications for approval by the State of Nebraska are asked to share their intentions and to seek assistance and conditional approval. We request to be notified of intentions and solicit input from previous J1 visa waiver sponsors. This significantly reduces unnecessary non-qualifying applications and the preparation time and effort involved.

Figure 2 shows the number of J1 visa waivers approved by the State of Nebraska on a yearly basis since 2001. The number of J1 visa waivers approved has ranged from as few as seven in 2003 to 21 in 2013. There is a slight increase in the number of sponsored J1 visa physicians in Nebraska from 2001 to 2017.

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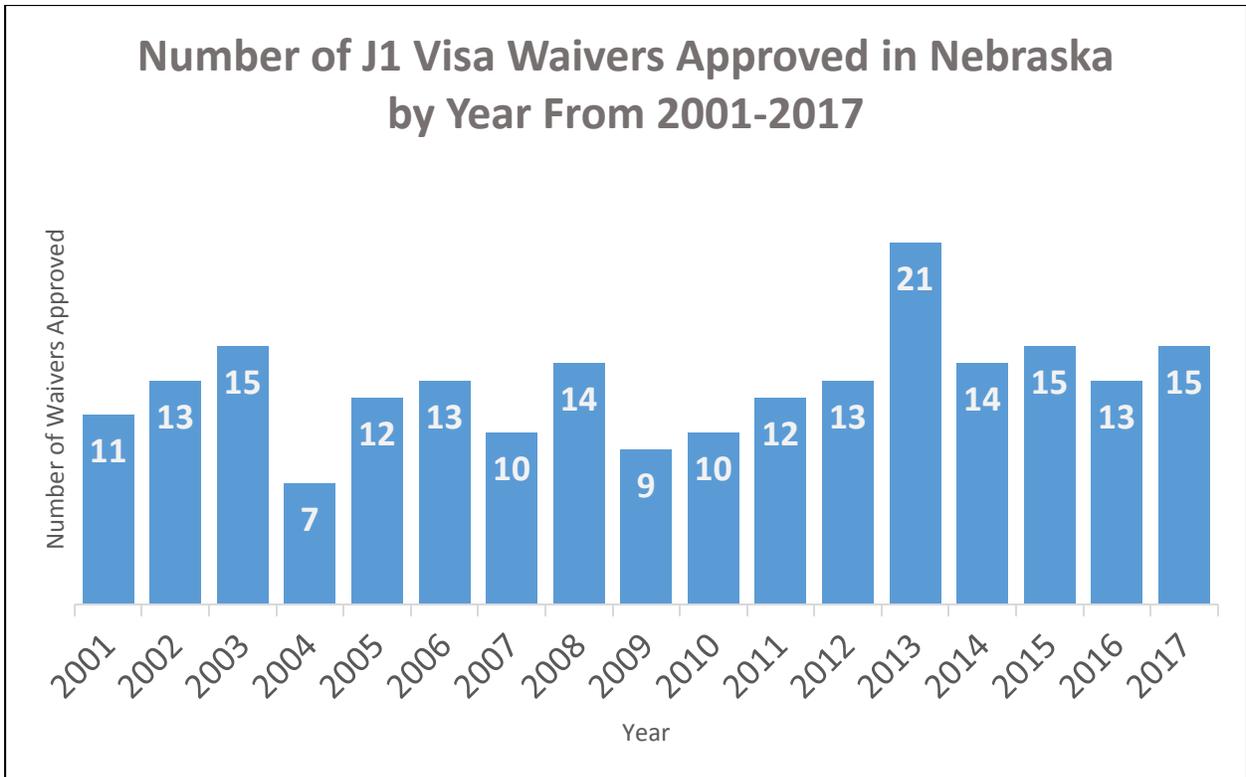


Figure 2

The types of specialties approved each year:

Figure 3A shows the types of specialties which have been categorized as mental health (Psychiatry), primary care (Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Family Medicine), or sub-specialty. These categories are used for a number of programs for comparison purposes and can be further broken down if necessary.

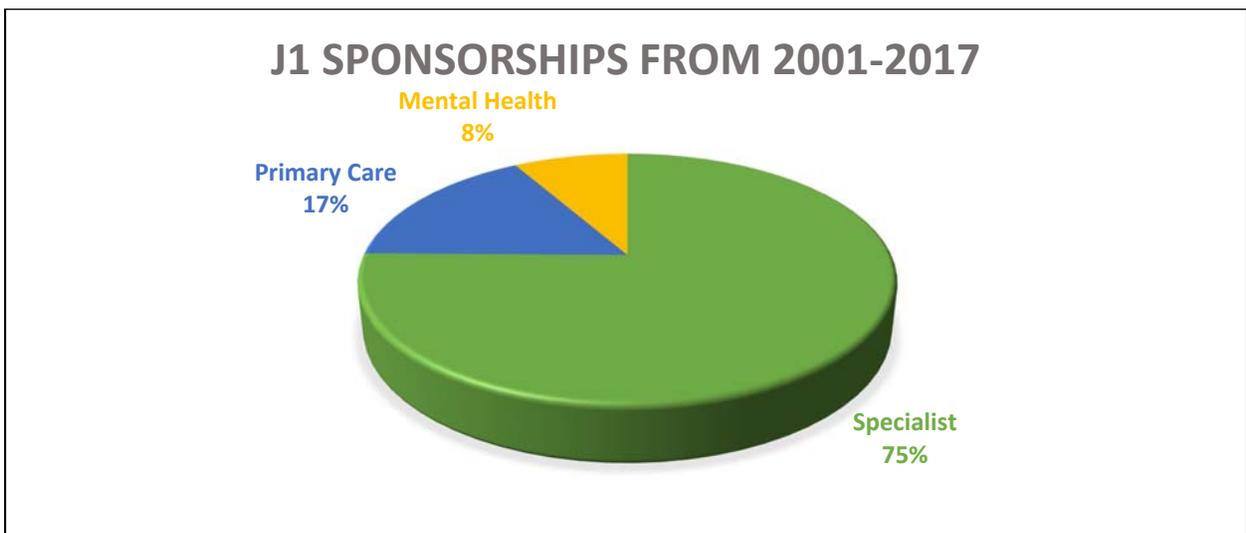


Figure 3A

Over the past 17 years, 8% (18/217) of J1 visa waivers approvals were for mental health providers, 17% (36/217) were for primary care providers and 75% (163/217) were for sub-specialists.

Figure 3B shows J1 visa approvals in Nebraska over the past 17 years, broken down by provider specialty. Since 2001, there has been an increasing number of sub-specialist providers and a slight decrease in mental health and primary care providers. This could be due in part to the increase in the overall number of J1 visa waivers. The phenomenon could also be partially attributed to the number of J1 physicians in sub-specialty programs versus primary care programs as well as retention concerns by sponsoring communities

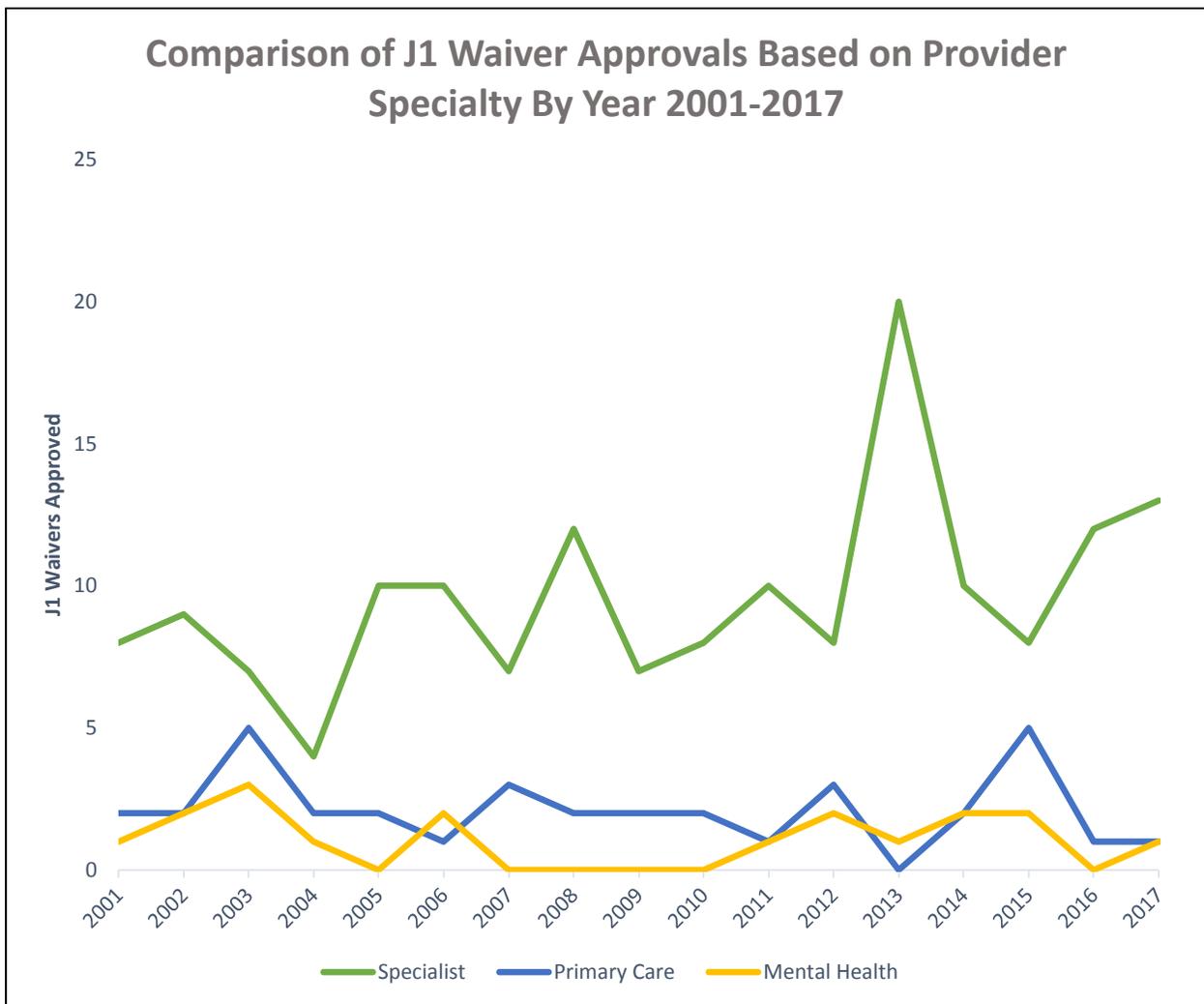


Figure 3B

Figure 4 shows the relative proportion of each specialty (Mental Health, Primary Care, and Sub-Specialist) in each of the counties that have facilities participating in the Nebraska State 30 Program between 2001 and 2017. Counties with rural, regional or metro hospitals have a larger proportion of their J1 sponsored physicians who are sub-specialists. These are also the counties with populations large enough to support psychiatrists (mental health providers).

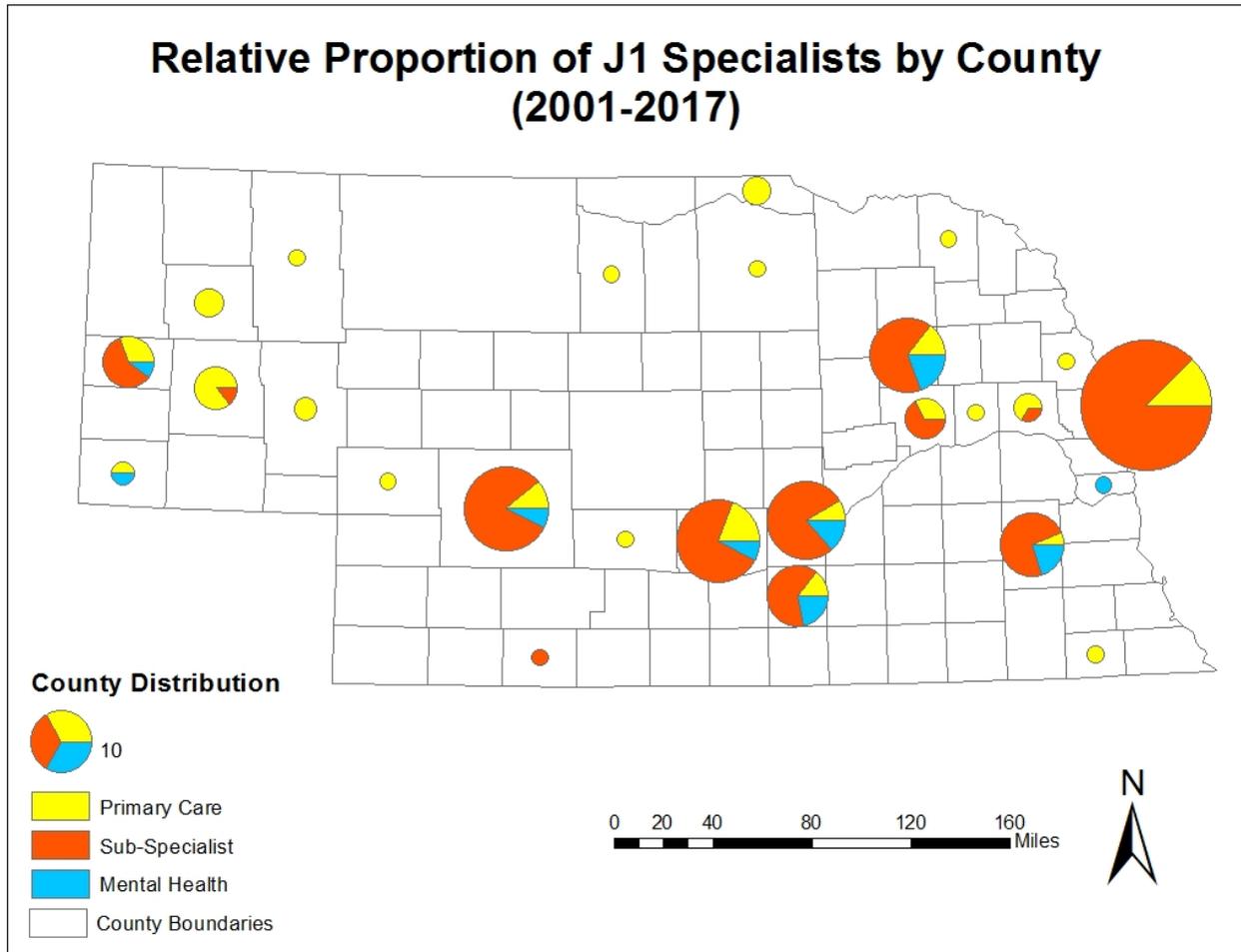


Figure 4

Listing of physicians by specialty and number of each:

Table 1 shows a count of J1 visa waiver approvals organized by sub-specialty of provider for the 217 physicians sponsored by Nebraska for the years 2001 through 2017. The top ten specialties are Internal Medicine (28), Hospitalist (26), Neurology (20), Pulmonology (18), Psychiatry (17), Family Medicine (14), Oncology/Hematology (10), Cardiology (9), Nephrology (7), and Pediatrics (6). The remaining specialties had five or fewer physicians attributed to any one specific specialty.

PHYSICIAN SPECIALTY:	NUMBER SPONSORED:
INTERNAL MEDICINE	28
HOSPITALIST	26
NEUROLOGY	20
PULMONOLOGY	18
PSYCHIATRY	17
FAMILY MEDICINE	14
HEMATOLOGY/ONCOLOGY	10
CARDIOLOGY	9
NEPHROLOGY	7
PEDIATRICS	6
INFECTIOUS DISEASE	5
PEDIATRIC GASTROENTEROLOGY	5
GENERAL SURGERY	3
PATHOLOGY	3
INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGY	3
PAIN MANAGEMENT	2
PEDIATRIC ENDOCRINOLOGIST	2
INTERVENTIONAL RADIOLOGY	2
ANESTHESIOLOGY	2
VASCULAR SURGEON	2
PEDIATRIC RADIOLOGY	2
ONCOLOGY	2
NEUROSURGERY	2
GASTROENTEROLOGY	2

Table 1

The geographic distribution of specialties approved each year:

The distribution of specialties has been broken down into the categories of rural and urban using the definition of non-metro (rural) and metro (urban). The US Census classifies the counties in Nebraska as metropolitan statistical areas (population greater than 50,000), micropolitan statistical areas (population 10,000 to 49,999), or neither (population less than 10,000). Non-metro areas are those that have less than 50,000 people, according to the Office of Business Management. As a result, any clinic in a county that is defined as a metropolitan statistical area is a metro area, and counties defined as a micropolitan statistical area or neither is a non-metro area.

Data in figure 5A indicate that over the past 17 years the number of both metro and non-metro J1 visa waivers has increased in Nebraska. Non-metro areas comprise the majority of sponsored J1 visa physicians. From 2001 the percent of J1 sponsored physicians is 65% in non-metro areas versus 35% in metro areas.

Of the sponsored J1 physicians in Nebraska, 35% (77/217) were sponsored in metro (urban) communities and 65% (140/217) were sponsored in non-metro (rural) communities.

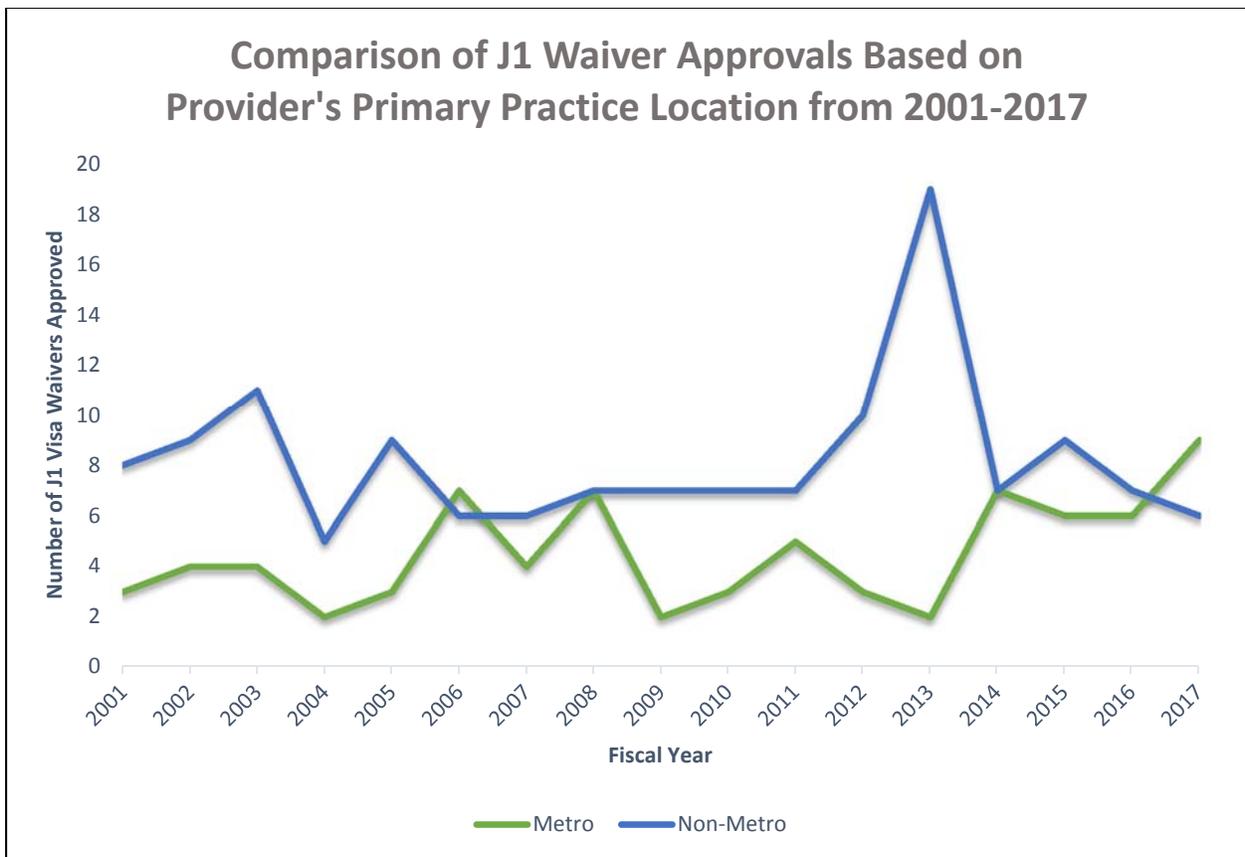


Figure 5A

Figure 5B shows that physicians with a sub-specialty have always comprised the largest number of those sponsored in non-metro and metro areas of Nebraska. The increase in rural sponsored J1 physicians and the increase in the number of sub-specialty physicians indicates that larger rural communities are also finding the program to be a better fit for sub-specialists.

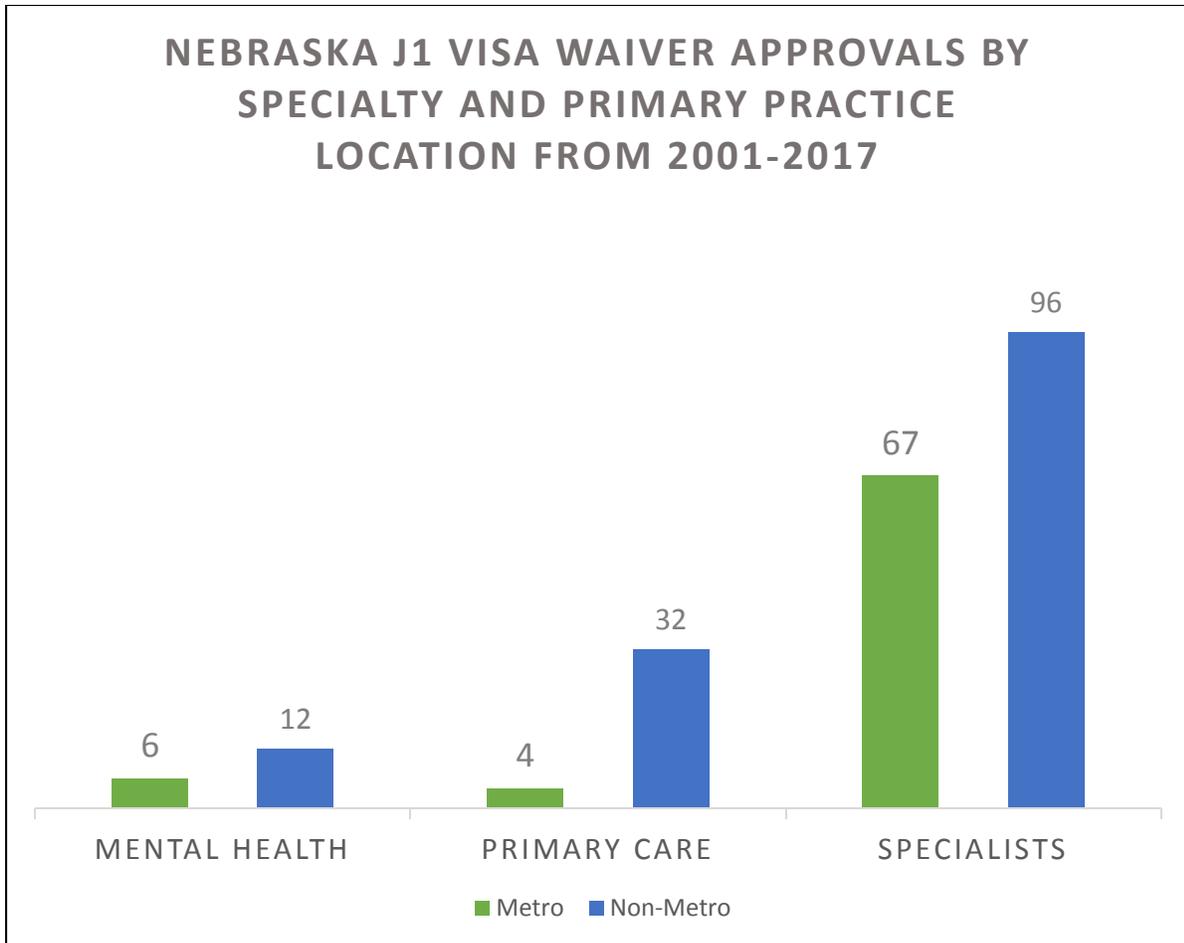


Figure 5B

Practice status of those approved over the past 17 years:

For this report we are focused on the average tenure and the number of years served after completion of the obligation of all of the J1 sponsored physicians since 2001. Figure 7 shows the number of J1 providers and the average tenure for those providers by county. The total number of physicians totals more than 217 here due physicians that served in more than one county during their tenure. **The average length of tenure for all J1 providers sponsored since 2001 is 5.24 years. With the current number of 217 sponsored J1 physicians, this means that 1,138 years of service have been provided in Nebraska by J1 sponsored physicians.** This number includes those who have not yet completed their obligation and therefore is a very conservative method of measuring average length of tenure.

The longer one’s practice status is monitored, there is a greater likelihood change will occur from the original placement location. The practice status of a provider is always a point in time observation and is provided to give a general sense of one’s current primary location in relation to their primary location at the start of their three year obligation.

From 2001 to 2018, there have been 1,138 total years of service provided to Nebraska from J1 visa physicians. These years of service can be traced to physicians that upon the completion of their obligation left the state, moved to another practice location in the state, or stayed at the same clinic. For the table below (Table 2), all years of service for a physician were included with their outcome. So for a physician who served all three years of their obligation and left the state, their three years of service is included in the left state years of service total.

	TOTAL PHYSICIANS:	TOTAL YEARS OF SERVICE:	AVERAGE YEARS OF SERVICE:
LEFT STATE	114	531	4.7
IN STATE CHANGED LOCATION	13	110	8.5
SAME LOCATION	90	497	5.5

Table 2

Additional retention measures are being reviewed and pursued:

The process of measuring retention may be compared by a number of methods to help identify program or service area issues. There is a desire to conduct more in-depth analysis and comparisons of various program types to determine where and how program improvements may be made. A potentially promising effort is to expand the Practice Sights Retention Management System to incorporate those physicians granted a J1 visa waiver. This could aid in monitoring and providing feedback to sites and providers on issue to help address enhanced retention. Currently, funding for this effort is needed.

The State of Nebraska will continue to monitor the practice location(s) of sponsored J1 visa physicians through the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Health Professions Tracking Service.

Process used by Nebraska to review J1 sponsorship requests:

[Nebraska program guidelines](#) are used for reviewing and approving submitted applications as many factors may be involved. Each application is reviewed on its own merits and priorities are used in the assessment. In addition to the rationale provided by the applicant sponsor, some factors that are given higher or lower priority are listed below. There is no specific weight assigned to these priorities, rather they are provided as general information regarding the assessment and sponsorship of an application and are therefore considered on a case-by-case basis.

FACTORS:	HIGH PRIORITY:	LOW PRIORITY:
GEOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATION	Rural/In-State	Urban/Out of State
PROVIDER SPECIALTY	Primary Care/Psychiatry	Sub-Specialty
INSURANCE ACCESS	Sliding Fee/Medicare/Medicaid	Primarily Private Insurance
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	Community Based/Non-Profit	For-Profit

Table 3

The state sponsorship process for J1 visa waivers is voluntary and the State of Nebraska has established some basic guidelines which are used to access, evaluate and sponsor submitted applications. Nebraska has used general guidelines for the program as they are more amenable to changes in the federal legislative process.

The administration and efficiency of the program is affected by the cooperation and collaboration of those participating in the process. There are many factors that impact the overall process of applications which aid in the review of an application. The Nebraska State 30 Program provides this guidance to ensure a timely and efficient process for those considering sponsorship of J1 visa physicians.

General Description of the J1 Visa Waiver Application Process Steps*

* Generally, the State of Nebraska reviews and submits applications received within two weeks of receiving them. The application and letter of support are sent to the Department of State and generally takes 30 – 120 days for approval by both the Department of State and Homeland Security.

