



**APPALACHIAN
REGIONAL
COMMISSION**

*A Proud Past,
A New Vision*

Office of the Inspector General

April 6, 2000

REPORT 00-31(H)

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE FEDERAL CO-CHAIRMAN
ARC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ARC GENERAL COUNSEL

SUBJECT: Survey Report – Review of Selected Health Providers and
J-1 Visa Waiver Physicians in Alabama

BACKGROUND

This review was undertaken as part of a survey of J-1 Visa Waiver program operations in the Appalachian Region.

The J-1 Visa Waiver program provides a waiver of the requirement for a foreign physician to return to his/her home country after completion of medical training in the United States. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) participates as a Federal Entity sponsor to assist Appalachian Region communities in providing health care services to medically underserved areas. The applicable ARC policies and procedures require J-1 physicians to practice 40 hours of primary care per week in a designated Health Profession Shortage Area (HPSA) in the Appalachian Region. The ARC program requires the physician to serve at least 3 years (unless a state has a longer period). There is no prohibition on J-1 physicians working extra hours or practicing subspecialties after fulfilling primary care requirements.

Although primary responsibilities for reviewing J-1 Visa Waiver requests, including supporting documentation, justifications of need, program oversight, and reporting have been delegated to the state health agencies, ARC retains the authority to act on waiver requests and to ensure compliance with program objectives and requirements.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of our review was to determine the compliance with ARC J-1 Visa Waiver program requirements and J-1 physicians perform primary care services in an Appalachian HPSA for 40 hours per week.

SCOPE

During the period February 14, 2000 through February 25, 2000, while conducting several audits, unannounced visits to nine physicians located in Alabama were also performed. The purpose of the visits was to verify the practices and locations of the physicians with J-1 Visa Waivers.


RESULTS

Of the nine J-1 physicians we attempted to contact, eight were providing medical care in line with the approved practices. One had not started working yet as he was waiting for his paperwork to be processed, ARC had sent a letter to USIA on July 23, 1999.

One of the physicians was working part time at a nearby location due to his original clinic being destroyed by an explosion. He was splitting his time between a temporary office in Bridgeport and a clinic in Stevenson. The office in Bridgeport had been destroyed in 1999 by a gas explosion and temporary space was being used in an old bank building. Due to the circumstances we did not challenge the current schedule.

At one location a sign noting that a fee schedule was available for lower income patients was prominently displayed with the sign also noting that only income tax statements were acceptable to verify patients income. Although we recognize the rationale for verifying income, the practicality of other types of documentation being sufficient to establish income levels could be explored as a policy matter.

The physicians contacted were satisfied with the program and practices and they generally expressed interest in staying in the area upon completion of their waiver periods.


Hubert M. Sparks
Inspector General

Put on
control list

April 10, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR The Federal Co-Chairman
 ARC Executive Director

SUBJECT: OIG Reports

Enclosed are copies of the following reports for which our records do not indicate transmittal to your office. The reports were previously distributed to the grantees. In most instances, the reports were closed on issuance based on the absence of material findings.

- 00-13(H) Benton County, Mississippi, Head Start Facility
- 00-14(H) Team Pennsylvania Entrepreneurial Education Program
- 00-15(H) Team Pennsylvania Entrepreneurial Network Initiative
- 00-16(H) Northern Tier Pennsylvania RPDC Administrative Grant
- 00-17(H) New York State Technical Assistance
- 00-20(H) Kentucky Regional Diabetes Healthcare Delivery in Appalachia
- 00-21(H) Tennessee Technical Assistance
- 00-22(H) Clay County, Tennessee, Industrial Project
- 00-23(H) Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
- 00-24(H) Appalachian Rural Systemic Initiative, Kentucky
- 00-25(H) Dental Care, Cumberland Plateau Health District, Virginia
- 00-29(H) Carraway Life Saver Program, Alabama
- 00-31(H) Alabama J-1 Followup Visits

These reviews generally disclosed that grant funds were accounted for, controls were in place, and project tasks were completed.

Report 00-15(H), Team Pennsylvania Entrepreneurial Network Initiative, contains several open issues with respect to a small claim for costs incurred prior to grant start; \$3,185 in unsupported matching costs; and subrecipient monitoring.

Report 00-20(H), Regional Diabetes Healthcare Delivery in Appalachia, questions \$12,247 in personnel costs incurred outside the grant period. Report 00-21(H), Tennessee Technical Assistance, recommends improved identification of performance measures and results.

Several reports are awaiting auditee comments with a primary issue noted in these reports being limited grantee oversight or monitoring of subrecipients or subcontractors with the result being difficulty to assess whether the activities performed were commensurate with the costs incurred.

Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General

Enclosures

cc: Ms. Judy Rae



April 6, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR: ARC GENERAL COUNSEL

SUBJECT: Addendum to OIG Report 00-31(H)

The physicians contacted during our survey were:


<u>City/Town</u>	<u>Physician</u>	
Tuskegee	Wael Refai	1/
Elmore	Maher Farah	1/
Tallassee	Elias Doumit	1/
Wedowee	Shakil Ahmed	4/
Valley	Tania Morgan	3/
Scottsboro	Gwinder Doad	1/
Pisgah	Mohammud Khan	1/
Bridgeport	Siram Krishnasamy	2/
Bryant	Anupam Marwaha	3/

1/ physician on site

2/ physician practicing part time at nearby location due to destruction of office in Bridgeport

3/ physician not available at time of visit, but contacted by phone

4/ physician had not started yet, waiting for paperwork, ARC letter to USIA dated July 23, 1999.


Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General