



DECEMBER 22, 1999

REPORT 00-18(H)

MEMORANDUM FOR      The Federal Co-Chairman  
                                 ARC Executive Director  
                                 ARC General Counsel

SUBJECT:                      Memorandum Survey Report—Review of Selected Health Care  
                                 Providers and J-1 Visa Waiver Physicians in Mississippi

### BACKGROUND

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 physicians to serve at least 3 years (unless a state has a longer period). The Mississippi program requires 4 years of service. 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 compliance with ARC J-1 Visa Waiver program requirements and to followup on our previous field survey with respect to several providers and physicians.

### SCOPE

On December 15 and 16, 1999, unannounced visits were made to 9 locations in the Appalachian Region of Mississippi for the purpose of verifying information with respect to 12 physicians with J-1 Visa Waivers. In 3 cases, the physicians had completed the ARC waiver period and were in the fourth year of the Mississippi program.

## RESULTS

During our unannounced visits, we contacted 8 physicians on site, including 3 that were completing their fourth year in the Mississippi program. In 2 cases, the physicians were not available at the clinic visited and we contacted one of them by phone; and in one case, a physician was unavailable due to family illness but confirmation of service was obtained through discussion with a spouse, who was completing the Mississippi program. In these cases, we considered the physicians to be complying with program requirements. The only issues identified were the need, in 2 instances, for notices in the patient waiting area with respect to service and a need for a transfer notification form, in one instance, to support the physician's transfer to a nearby eligible location due to closure of the initial approved facility. The facilities and/or physicians were provided with a sample notice and transfer form. We will followup on the case where the office was apparently closed for the holidays.

In one case, the physician was not available at the Shuqualak location visited; and staff said the physician was on site at the approved location on Wednesday and Friday mornings. According to staff, the physician practiced the remaining time at Meridian, Mississippi. Although Meridian is generally noted as being in a Health Professional Shortage Area, it is not part of the Appalachian Region; and ARC files did not contain any information pertaining to the physician's actual work schedule. Telephone contact with the physician and the Mississippi program manager indicated that the practice in Meridian was a temporary assignment to alleviate a physician shortage in Meridian. The physician said he had been practicing about half time in Meridian for the past year; and it was intended he would return to full-time practice in Shuqualak effective January 1, 2000.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

ARC, in coordination with the Mississippi Department of Health, should review the case of the J-1 physician with substantial practice time outside the Appalachian Region to determine the eligibility of this service toward the 3-year commitment and ensure that full-time service at an approved location within the Appalachian Region is resumed as intended.

  
Hubert N. Sparks  
Inspector General



December 22, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR The Federal Co-Chairman  
 ARC General Counsel


SUBJECT: J-1 Visits to Mississippi

The following listing summarizes the Mississippi contacts made in connection with J-1 Visa Waiver program compliance visits.

PHYSICIAN	APPROVED LOCATION	NOTES
N. Haider	Macon	<u>1/</u>
G. Lim	Aberdeen	<u>2/</u>
A. Muyot	Ripley	<u>1/</u>
R. Muyot	Ripley	<u>3/</u>
K. Ologunja	DeKalb	<u>4/</u>
S. Petra	Holly Springs	<u>5/</u>
O. Ransome-Kuti	Shuqualak	<u>6/</u>
A. Robertson	Macon	<u>4/ 7/</u>
D. Robertson	Macon	<u>1/</u>
D. Skaricic	Byhalia	<u>4/ 7/</u>
G. Tan	Tremont	<u>4/</u>
J. Ungo	Houlka	<u>4/</u>

**Notes:**

- 1/ Completing last year of State program.
- 2/ Office at approved location. Physician out sick per note on door December 15, 1999; and apparently, office was closed the week of December 20. Will followup with physician.
- 3/ Physician unavailable due to family illness but availability and service confirmed with spouse.
- 4/ Physicians contacted directly and service confirmed.
- 5/ Physician transferred from Holly Springs to Byhalia and Mt. Pleasant in late 1999; contacted by phone and transfer notification requested.
- 6/ Physician practicing primarily at a Meridian, Mississippi location that is outside of the Appalachian Region.
- 7/ Service provided to all, but notice reflecting this service to all not posted in patient waiting area. Notice provided for posting.

  
 Hubert N. Sparks  
 Inspector General