



November 23, 2001


MEMORANDUM FOR The Federal Co-Chairman
ARC General Counsel

SUBJECT: OIG Report 02-13(H), J-1 Visa Waiver Program Compliance
Visits in Northeast Pennsylvania

The physicians contacted were:

- Dr. Hassan Khalil 1/
- Dr. Parul Krishnamurthy 2/
- Dr. Enrique M. Liraq 3/
- Dr. Ghadu Mitri 4/

- 1/ Physician had just completed his J-1 Visa Waiver period and intended to remain in the Montrose, Pennsylvania area. He had not been subject to any recriminations resulting from the September 11, 2001 attacks.
- 2/ Physician was practicing one day per week at Brodheadsville, Pennsylvania; and her remaining time was spent at the Leighton hospital. She indicated that the patient caseload at Brodheadsville was low but that marketing efforts were being undertaken to increase the workload. She had not experienced any negative reaction from the September 11, 2001 attacks. The physician will submit a revised work schedule.
- 3/ Physician was completing his J-1 Visa Waiver tour and intended to stay at the Shawnee, Pennsylvania facility. He had not experienced any negative reaction from the September 11, 2001 attacks.
- 4/ Physician was practicing in Greentown, Pennsylvania; and although some drop off in patients was noted after the September 11, 2001 attacks, she had not been subject to any recriminations.


 Hubert N. Sparks
 Inspector General



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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 requirements 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 healthcare 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 requirements.

OBJECTIVE

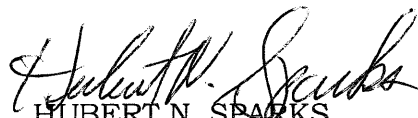
The objective of our review was to determine the compliance with ARC J-1 Visa Waiver program requirements that J-1 physicians performing primary care services in an Appalachian HPSA for 40 hours per week.

SCOPE AND RESULTS

On November 16, 2001, unannounced contacts were made with four J-1 physicians. These contacts and followup discussions with physicians who were not on site at the time of our visit disclosed that the physicians were generally complying with program provisions. In three cases, the physicians were providing services at the approved locations; and in one case, service was being provided at the approved location and at

a nearby location in an eligible area. In the latter case, the physician noted that the new practice in Brodheadsville, Pennsylvania, had not yet attracted sufficient workload and that service was provided one day per week. Her remaining time was spent at her employer's primary location at Lehighton, Pennsylvania. It was hoped that, with time and marketing, the patient caseload will increase at Brodheadsville and service will be expanded. The physician will provide a revised work schedule for program officials.

All the physicians expressed satisfaction with the J-1 program. In two cases, the physicians' J-1 tours of duty were completed simultaneous with our visit; and they indicated they were remaining in the areas served. Also, none of the physicians indicated any repercussions resulting from the September 11, 2001 attacks.


HUBERT N. SPARKS
INSPECTOR GENERAL