



JUNE 18, 1998

REPORT 98-45(H)

MEMORANDUM FOR: ARC Federal Co-Chairman
 Director, Alabama Office of Rural Health

SUBJECT: Memorandum Survey Report--Review of Selected Health Care
 Providers 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 initially required the physicians to serve at least two years; however, in August 1995 the minimum was changed to three 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 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 that J-1 physicians perform primary care services in an Appalachian HPSA for 40 hours per week.

RESULTS

In a joint effort between the ARC Office of Inspector General and the Alabama Department of Public Health, we made unannounced visits to 17 medical facilities in Alabama to review the status of 23 J-1 physicians. A representative of the ARC Office of Inspector General and another from the Alabama Rural Health Program visited some of the sites together and some independently.

We obtained information about 20 of the 23 physicians during our review and concluded that 18 of the 20 physicians were complying with program provisions that require at least 40 hours of primary care per week at their office or clinic location. In 18 cases, we contacted the J-1 physician at the approved locations and verified, primarily through discussion with the physician, that primary care service was being provided as required. In one case, the physician was unavailable at the time of our visit and was subsequently contacted by telephone. In another case, the physician was not on-site at the time of our visit; but the physician's compliance with program requirements was identified by the physician's office staff.

In 2 cases, J-1 physicians indicated that they were caring for patients at least 40 hours per week, including hospital admissions and rounds. Subsequent to our visits, the Alabama Office of Rural Health notified all J-1 physicians in Alabama that the 40 hours of primary care per week requirement did not include hospital rounds, hospital on-call, or emergency room service.

We were unable to contact 3 physicians, and followup will be initiated in these cases to verify compliance with program provisions. In 2 cases, the offices were closed at the time of our visit; and in the other case, the on-site office staff person was not aware of the physician's schedule due to not being directly involved with the J-1 physician's practice.

All of the physicians we contacted reported satisfaction with their employers and their medical practices. Some of the physicians were not aware of the pay status of their patients, but most told us their practices included substantial numbers of Medicaid and/or Medicare patients as well as patients with limited or no resources to pay for medical care. All told us that no one needing medical care is turned away.

CONCLUSION

Our field visits concluded that the J-1 physicians we interviewed were generally performing in accordance with the provisions of the J-1 waiver program. Two physicians included hospital rounds and emergency admissions as part of their 40 hours of primary care per week, and the Alabama Office of Rural Health notified these and other J-1 physicians of their responsibilities for providing 40 hours of primary care service per week. Followup contacts will be initiated with respect to 3 physicians not contacted during this survey.



HUBERT N. SPARKS

Inspector General
Appalachian Regional Commission



CHARLES S. LAIL
Rural Health Programs Manager
Alabama Department of Public Health

Attachment

ALABAMA J-1 PHYSICIANS REVIEWED

Attachment
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	<u>Physician</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Practice City</u>	<u>Interviewed</u>
1.	Maria Velazquez	St. Clair Regional Hospital	Pell City	Yes
2.	Lilian Lim	St. Clair Regional Hospital	Pell City	No 1/
3.	Sanjiv Chatterji	Blount Memorial	Oneonta	Yes
4.	Ranilo Vasquez	Blount Memorial	Oneonta	Yes
5.	Carmenc Molina	Blount Memorial	Cleveland	Yes
6.	Maria Salazar	Blount Memorial	Oneonta	Yes
7.	Barbara Kucewicz	First Care Family	Boaz	No 2/
8.	Adriana Stroe	Mountain View Hospital	Gadsden	Yes
9.	Muzaffar Piracha	Quality of Life Healthcare	Gadsden	Yes
10.	Aditya Samal	Internal Medicine Assoc.	Birmingham	Yes
11.	Mary Blankson	Jefferson Co. Health Dept	Birmingham	Yes
12.	Zia Hassan	Southern Rural Health	Decatur	Yes
13.	Henry Yu	Mallard Primary Care	Decatur	Yes
14.	Brijendra Gupta	Mallard Primary Care	Decatur	Yes
15.	Jacqueli Crespo	Decatur General Hospital	Decatur	No 1/
16.	Sonia Sood	West Alabama Health	Tuscaloosa	Yes
17.	Urmil Patel	Family Health Care	Eclectic	Yes
18.	Sylvania Trinidad	Family Health Care	Clanton	Yes
19.	Dimtcho Popov	Family Health Care	West Blocton	Yes 3/

	<u>Physician</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Practice City</u>	<u>Interviewed</u>
20.	Tomasz Rodkiewicz	Jackson Hospital	Wetumpka	Yes
21.	Carlos Emanuel	Cardiovascular Specialists	Centre	No 1/
22.	Igor Bidikov	Cleburne Ctr for Healthcare	Heflin	Yes
23.	Roumen Ivanov	Cleburne Ctr for Healthcare	Heflin	Yes

Notes:

- 1/ Information was not obtained during our unannounced on-site visit because the office was closed and/or physician was unavailable and office staff on-site was not aware of the physician's schedule. Follow-up will be initiated for these cases.
- 2/ Physician was not available but information obtained from office staff was sufficient to conclude that program provisions were being met.
- 3/ Physician interviewed by telephone.



STATE OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

Donald E. Williamson, MD

State Health Officer

June 24, 1998

Mr. Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General
Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20235

Subject: Signed Survey Report Dated June 18, 1998

Dear Mr. Sparks:

Enclosed is the original, signed survey report as per your request.

We appreciate the fine support provided on the J-1 program by your agency and staff and look forward to seeing you on your next visit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chuck".

Charles S. Lail
Alabama J-1 Program Coordinator

CL:cl

Enclosure



APPALACHIAN
REGIONAL
COMMISSION

*A Proud Past,
A New Vision*

Office of the Inspector General


June 30, 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FEDERAL CO-CHAIRMAN

SUBJECT: J-1 Visa Waiver Program Survey in Alabama

Enclosed is a copy of our survey report dealing with physicians participating in the J-1 Visa Waiver program in Alabama.

The review was conducted in conjunction with the Alabama Department of Public Health, and I believe such a cooperative effort is beneficial for all parties.


Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General

Enclosure

1666 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, NW WASHINGTON, DC 20235 (202) 884-7675 FAX (202) 884-7691

Alabama Kentucky Mississippi North Carolina Pennsylvania Tennessee West Virginia
Georgia Maryland New York Ohio South Carolina Virginia



STATE OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

Donald E. Williamson, MD
State Health Officer

June 15, 1998

Mr. Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General
Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20235

Subject: Draft Survey Report Dated June 18, 1998

Dear Mr. Sparks:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft survey report included under your June 11, 1998, cover letter.

The June 18, 1998, report provides a concise, accurate overview of the survey findings of which I was a part; I will be happy to endorse it as written.

I would be remiss not to mention what a distinct pleasure it was to participate in this survey process. Your representative, Ms. Joann Brenner, was very knowledgeable about the J-1 program and had the unique skill of putting the physicians at ease while being very thorough in her interviews. I would like to personally thank both of you for allowing me to participate in this year's survey.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review this draft.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles S. Lail".

Charles S. Lail
Rural Health Programs Manager

CL:cl

We obtained information about 20 of the 23 physicians during our review and concluded that 18 of the 20 physicians were complying with program provisions that require at least 40 hours of primary care per week at their office or clinic location. In 18 cases, we contacted the J-1 physician at the approved locations and verified, primarily through discussion with the physician, that primary care service was being provided as required. In one case, the physician was unavailable at the time of our visit and was subsequently contacted by telephone. In another case, the physician was not on-site at the time of our visit; but the physician's compliance with program requirements was identified by the physician's office staff.

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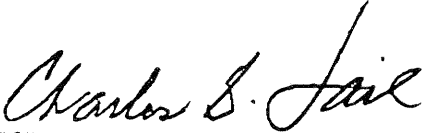
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HUBERT N. SPARKS
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Appalachain Regional Commission


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Rural Health Programs Manager
Alabama Department of Public Health

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