



OCTOBER 6, 1998

OIG REPORT 98-47(H)

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

SUBJECT: Memorandum Survey Report--Review of Selected Health Care  
Providers in Pennsylvania

### 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 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 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

We made unannounced visits to ten medical facilities in Pennsylvania from June 29 to July 1, 1998, to review the status of eleven J-1 physicians. We located two of the eleven physicians at their approved locations and they indicated they were complying with the requirements of their ARC agreements. Five of the remaining 9 physicians were either on vacation or temporarily out of the office at the time of our visit. We obtained information from office staff indicating they were all providing a minimum of 40 hours of primary care per week at their approved locations. Another physician had an extremely heavy

patient workload at the time of our visit and was unable to meet with us timely; however, his office staff indicated he was complying with the requirements of his ARC agreement at his approved location.

We obtained information about another physician from a staff member at his primary approved location; however, she indicated that he also works at other locations and could not confirm the number of hours he works at each site. We telephoned the physician at a later date and he confirmed that he works at his approved office site as well as at another newly acquired office a few blocks away and also sees patients at several nursing and personal care homes. He indicated he sees mostly poor patients and delivers primary care a minimum of 40 hours per week. We noted that the physician's proposed work schedule was provided to ARC and included visits to nursing and personal care homes.

We went to the approved location of another J-1 physician but it was closed at the time of our visit and there was no information posted indicating the physician practiced there or his whereabouts. Subsequently, we contacted the physician by telephone and he indicated he was on vacation at the time of our on-site visit and that he provides a minimum of 40 hours per week of primary care at his approved location.

We went to the office of another J-1 physician in Vandergrift, PA but it was closed. We tried to reach the physician by telephone at that time and learned that she was on vacation. We received conflicting information from two people about where the physician practices. Subsequent to our visit, we tried to contact the physician by telephone and again received conflicting information from two people. One person in Penn Hills, PA told us the physician was not there on that day but would be in the following day. When asked where we could reach the physician that day, we were given a phone number for the Irwin, PA office. When we called the Irwin office someone told us they'd see if the doctor was free to speak with us and then the office manager told us the physician was not there. She indicated the physician was pregnant and had gone to see her own physician. The office manager told us the physician works full time at her approved location in Vandergrift, does not work in the Penn Hills office, and is only in Irwin to fill in for another physician. A short time later, the physician called us and confirmed what the office manager told us. She said she didn't know why someone in the Penn Hills office told me she'd be there the following day. In view of the conflicting information, we intend to followup with this physician at a later date to verify that she is complying with the ARC requirements.

## CONCLUSION

Based on our field visits and followup telephone calls, we determined that 10 of the 11 physicians we reviewed were generally performing in accordance with the provisions of the J-1 waiver program. We noted that one physician is working at locations other than his approved location but he indicated he is providing primary care to mostly poor people in underserved areas of Appalachian Pennsylvania. We received conflicting information about the practice location of one physician and will initiate follow up contacts at a later date to verify compliance.

  
Hubert N. Sparks  
Inspector General



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October 7, 1998

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

SUBJECT:                      OIG Memorandum Report 98-47(H)--J-1 Visa Waiver Program in  
                                 Pennsylvania

The attached report indicates contacts to verify the status of 11 J-1 visa waiver physicians confirmed that in 10 cases the physician was meeting program requirements. Follow-up will be made to resolve some conflicting information in one case.

For information purposes, attached is a listing of the physicians visited.

  
Hubert N. Sparks  
Inspector General

Attachment

## PENNSYLVANIA J-1 PHYSICIANS REVIEWED

	<u>Physician</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Practice City</u>	<u>Interviewed</u>
1.	Seema Guglani	Shadyside Medical Assoc.	Apollo	Yes
2.	Sarfraz Ahmad	McKeesport Hospital	McKeesport	Yes
3.	Pablo Tirado	The Medical Center	Punxsutawney Big Run Mahaffey	No 1/
4.	Samina Yunus	The Medical Center	Punxsutawney Big Run Mahaffey	No 1/
5.	Genevive Cachuela	Drs. Fatula and Orris Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine	Punxsutawney	No 1/
6.	Vishnu Mohan	Alliance Medical, Inc.	New Bethlehem	No 1/
7.	Ameena Jabir	Shafic Twal, M.D.	Rural Valley	No 1/
8.	Antonio Hardan	University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine	Punxsutawney	No 2/
9.	Amar Pohwani	Mohan Patel, M. D.	Vandergrift	Yes 5/
10.	Kalpana Rajashekar	Irwin Family Care	Vandergrift	Yes 4/
11.	Rizwan Jabir	Family Health Council, Inc	Marion Center	No 3/

1/ Physician was not available but information obtained from office staff was sufficient to conclude that program provisions were being met.

2/ The physician was in his office but his patient workload was too heavy to allow him to see us on a timely basis. Accepted staff input about compliance with requirements.

3/ The physician's office was closed at time of visit and we conducted interview by telephone at a later date.

4/ Conflicting information will be verified with a follow-up contact.

5/ Physician working at several locatons but no exception noted.