



AUGUST 10, 1998

REPORT 98-52(H)

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

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

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 2 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 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 that J-1 physicians perform primary care services in an Appalachian HPSA for 40 hours per week.

SCOPE

We performed unannounced visits to five medical facilities in Ohio on July 20 and 21, 1998, in order to determine if the doctors were practicing in their designated locations and if they were dedicating 40 hours per week to primary care activities. Our results and recommendations are based on those procedures.


RESULTS

Our visits disclosed no J-1 physician violations of J-1 Visa Waiver program requirements. In four instances, we contacted the physician directly; and in the other case, the physician was on duty at the clinic and we confirmed compliance with available staff and in a subsequent telephone conversation with the physician.

The physicians contacted indicated overall satisfaction with the program and, in several cases, indicated they would like to remain in the area after expiration of the J-1 Visa Waiver period. In all instances, it appeared that service was being provided to all patients, although a notice specifically indicating this policy was not posted in the waiting area at the offices visited. In one instance, a question was raised about apparent employer concerns that the J-1 physician was treating a high percentage of lower income patients with resulting lower fee collections. Our response was essentially that this was an issue between the physician and employer unless a restrictive policy was established with respect to providing service to all patients.

Recommendation

Since most of our recent visits have disclosed the absence of a notice specifying charges for service in line with ARC requirements, we recommend that participating J-1 physicians and applicable sponsors be reminded of this requirement and be provided a sample notice.


Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General



August 19, 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FEDERAL CO-CHAIRMAN


SUBJECT: OIG Reports 98-27(H), 98-37(H), 98-48(H), 98-51(H), and 98-52(H); Pikeville College of Osteopathic Medicine, University of Pittsburgh Manufacturing Assistance Center, Ohio Consolidated Technical Assistance, Ross County Interagency Child Care Center, and Ohio J-1 Visa Waiver Program

Enclosed are the reports dealing with the subject grants.

The review of the grant to assist with the development of a fully accredited college of osteopathic medicine identified the need to establish internal controls to improve accountability, especially if additional grants are approved for this project.

The review of the grant to support the University of Pittsburgh's Manufacturing Assistance Center identified an overcharge of \$1,300 that should be returned to ARC.

Although the compliance visits in connection with the J-1 Visa Waiver program did not identify any instances of noncompliance, we noted that the notice identifying patient charges was not posted at any of the five locations visited. This is consistent with observations during recent visits to J-1 physician locations in other states. Therefore, we have recommended that active sponsors and participating physicians be reminded of ARC requirements with respect to the posting of information regarding patient charges.


Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General

Enclosures



**APPALACHIAN
REGIONAL
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A New Vision*

Office of the Inspector General

August 19, 1998

Mr. Randall C. Hunt, Director
Governor's Office of Appalachia
P. O. Box 1001
Columbus, OH 43266-1001

re: OIG Reports 98-51(H) and 98-52(H), Ross County Interagency Child
 Care Center and Ohio J-1 Visa Waiver Program

Dear Mr. Hunt:

Enclosed is a copy of our reports dealing with the Ross County Interagency Child Care Center and compliance visits to five locations employing J-1 physicians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hubert N. Sparks".

Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General

Enclosures