



FEBRUARY 4, 1998

REPORT 99-6(H)

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

SUBJECT: Memorandum Survey Report--Review of Selected Health Providers
 and J-1 Visa Waiver Physicians in South Carolina

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 requires the physicians 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 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

On January 27, 1999, unannounced visits were made to three locations in western South Carolina for the purpose of verifying the practices and locations of five physicians with J-1 Visa Waivers.

RESULTS

The five J-1 physicians were contacted, and all were providing medical care in line with the approved practices—three in family practice and two in psychiatry. With respect to the three physicians employed by Shanbhag Medical Associates, PA, the practice location was different in one instance from the intended location because the employer had not been able to open a rural clinic. However, the physician was practicing full-time at the provider's primary clinic in Woodruff, South Carolina, which was only 8 miles from the intended site at Enoree, South Carolina; and this practice appeared to meet the intent of the program. In another case, a physician, approved for the Woodruff location, noted that he provided primary care service at Greer, South Carolina, 2 days per week.

All of the physicians were enthusiastic and noted they were very satisfied with the program and practices. They expressed interest in staying in the area upon completion of their waiver periods.

We provided a transfer form to the physician impacted by the absence of a clinic in Enoree and noted that he and the employer, who was not available, should complete the form. Also, we will notify the employer to confirm current work locations to ARC.

RECOMMENDATION

ARC should ensure updated information is received from the employer and verify the eligibility of the locations utilized by Shanbhag Medical Associates, PA.


Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General



February 5, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL COUNSEL

SUBJECT: Addendum to OIG Report 99-6(H)—
J-1 Visa Waiver Program in South Carolina

The physicians contacted during our survey were:

Shanbhag Medical Associates, Woodruff, South Carolina


--Santosh Bijoor ^{1/}
--Moreshwar Desai ^{1/}
--Balasubramanyam Krishnian ^{2/}

Harris Psychiatric Hospital, Anderson, South Carolina

--Kashfia Hussain
--Edward Zuzarte

Notes:

- 1/ One of the physicians practices in Greer, South Carolina, 2 days per week.
- 2/ B. Krishniah had been approved for Enoree, South Carolina; but this office was not opened by the employer.


Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General



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Office of the Inspector General


February 17, 1999

Mr. Mark Jordan, Director
Office of Primary Care
Department of Health and
Environmental Control
P. O. Box 101106
Columbia, SC 29211-0106

Dear Mr. Jordan:

Enclosed is a copy of our report dealing with unannounced visits in connection with the J-1 Visa
Waiver program.

Sincerely,


Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General

Enclosure