



APRIL 22, 1999

REPORT 99-16(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 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 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

During the period April 4-6, 1999, unannounced visits were made to 14 locations in central and northeast Alabama for the purpose of verifying the practices and locations of eighteen physicians with J-1 Visa Waivers.

RESULTS


Ten of the physicians were on duty at the approved sites at the time of our visit, and observations and discussions indicated that the provisions of the J-1 Visa Waiver were being implemented. In five instances, the physicians were temporarily unavailable; but discussions with staff and/or employers disclosed that the physicians were complying with program requirements. With respect to the other three J-1 physicians, we noted one instance where the physician was not presently located in an eligible area and two instances where the physicians had not started their employment pending completion of clinic facilities by the employers.

We noted two instances where the verification of employment form had not been completed, as required; three instances where revised schedules or short distance relocations were not reported; and several instances where the notice pertaining to charges for health care services was not posted in a visible area. The physicians were notified of program requirements in these areas.

Followup will be initiated with respect to the physician not presently assigned to an eligible area. The physician and the employer noted that space had been obtained at an eligible location but that delays in obtaining necessary practice approvals had resulted in the space being relinquished. Efforts are in process to locate space in an eligible area, and the physician and the employer noted an interest in complying with program requirements.

RECOMMENDATION

ARC should ensure required and/or updated information is received from employers and physicians and should followup to ensure that placements in eligible areas are finalized where necessary.


Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General



April 22, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR The Federal Co-Chairman
ARC General Counsel

SUBJECT: J-1 Visits to Alabama

The following listing summarizes the Alabama contacts made in connection with J-1 visits noted in OIG Report 99-16(H).

<u>Physician</u>	<u>Result</u>
A. Aldana	1, 3
J. Alele	2
N. Ambalavanan	2, 3
C. Cho	1
G. Doad	2
C. Emanuel	2, 4
M. Garg	1, 4
M. Khan	2
N. Khan	2
U. Khan	2, 3
E. Lim	1
C. Oliveras-Crespo	5
A. Quizon	1, 3
M. Rabin	1, 3
M. Siddique	6
N. Sinha	6
A. Umar	1
A. Umar	1

Notes:

1. Physician contacted directly.
2. Staff and/or employer contacted.
3. Employment verification form not available.
4. Revised schedule or transfer form needed.
5. Physician not currently practicing at an eligible site.
6. Physicians have not started practice.

Hubery N. Sparks
Inspector General



April 26, 1999

Mr. Charles Lail
Alabama J-1 Program Manager
Department of Public Health
P. O. Box 303017
Montgomery, AL 36130-3017

Dear Mr. Lail:

Enclosed is our summary report on recent visits to Alabama J-1 Visa Waiver physicians. As noted, followup is most appropriate with respect to the one physician for which relocation to an eligible area is necessary and the two physicians for which the facilities were not available. In one case, the facility is under construction and should be available shortly. In the other case involving Dr. Siddique, the employer is apparently Florida based; and there were problems with finalizing a lease at the initial site. The employer/physician's representative noted that a lease had been obtained at another facility in Pell City; and it was anticipated the physician would start his practice in May 1999.

The transfer of Dr. Garg from North Main Street in Boaz involves about a one-mile relocation to a clinic near the local hospital. With respect to the physicians with subspecialties, e.g., Drs. Aldana, Alele, Emanuel, and M. Khan, it appeared that sufficient time was being devoted to primary care although we will touch base on these cases when in the area again.

Also, we will followup at a later date with several of the physicians that were not included in this survey.

The physicians for which employment verification forms or revised schedules are needed will be formally notified to provide this information.

Sincerely,


Hubert N. Sparks
Inspector General

Enclosure