

MEMO: To all COFO Project Directors

From The Medical Committee for Human Rights

DATE: May 25, 1965

From now on, our office in Jackson, 507½ No. Farish Street, will be covered on a full-time basis. Office hours will be maintained daily-- call 355-6466 at any time and we will do our best to assist you.

Our staff at present consists of our Mississippi Medical Consultant, Dr. Robert Smith (Jackson); and 4 nurses: Jo Disparti (Holmes County), Phyllis Cunningham (Hattiesburg), Linda Dugan (Issaquena County), and Ruth Steiner (Jackson office).

At this time it might be well to review some of the structure and functions of our organization:

1. We are now 'officially' a nationwide group with a constitution, governing council, and affiliated chapters in about 11 states throughout the country. Our national offices and executive director, Mr. Johnny Parham, Jr., are located in New York City, 211 West 56th Street.
2. One of our vital concerns, of course, is still the health and welfare of all COFO workers. Our doctors, however, except for Dr. Smith, come from out-of-state, do not have a Mississippi license, and therefore cannot legally treat patients in this state. Also, our funds are limited and authorizations for COFO medical bills cannot be picked up automatically. We necessarily need to limit payment of care to emergency situations only, and authorization must first be obtained specifically through our Jackson office, or if necessary, through one of the above-mentioned staff people. Unless a

bill is properly authorized, it will not be paid for.

We will always be available to help facilitate medical care by making referrals, and suggestions for use of local resources as sources of treatment without our assuming financial responsibility which will have to remain with COFO. Also our nurses will continue to provide all possible direct services to COFO staff.

We realize there will be many difficult individual problems. We will deal with each as it comes along, and with mutual cooperation, try to achieve the best possible solution.

3. We shall continue to supply medical teams whenever requested and wherever possible during any demonstrations. If at all practicable, we would appreciate as much advance notice as possible, so that we can coordinate activities most effectively. During the summer we anticipate many health resource people coming to the state on a short-term basis. Projects desiring health education as part of their summer activity can make their needs known to our Jackson office.
4. The development of local community health programs which attempt to get at the roots of Mississippi's economic, social, and racial injustices is undoubtedly one of our most important projects. Toward this end we are hoping to recruit more long-term people from all health professions, i.e., doctors, nurses, social workers, dental hygienists, etc. Plans are to expand our operations into other southern states.

If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding our activity, we would like to hear from you. Again we want to express our feeling of respect and appreciation for the work you have done and continue to do.