



**Minister Announces Funding For Research Projects On
Information Needs Of Irish Emigrants**

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., has announced funding of almost €30,000 towards research projects into the information needs of returning Irish emigrants and a practical guide to the array of services and supports available to the Irish living in the USA.

A funding award of over €20,000 (\$25,000) goes to the Irish Immigration and Pastoral Centre (IIPC) in Philadelphia for an information guide covering an array of services and supports that are available to Irish immigrants. It will contain practical information on health care and social services and will include information on resources to treat the mental and physical health of Irish immigrants.

An award of €6,250 has been made to the Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants (IECE) for a study to establish the facts and look at trends and projections for the potential Irish returnees. According to IECE, the study will be of value to Church and State linked bodies in Ireland, and will also inform migration agencies in Ireland and the USA. IECE is responsible for the co-ordination of emigrant services across Europe, the USA and Australia. IECE works closely with all Irish Immigration Centres abroad and is a founder member of EAN, the Emigrant Advice Network.

Minister Brennan announced details of the funding awards during an official visit to the Irish Immigration and Pastoral Centre in Philadelphia which provides information, advice, counselling and assistance for vulnerable Irish immigrants. (IIPC) was founded in 2000 when several young Irish immigrants were jailed and deported from Philadelphia without benefit of counsel and without notifying their loved ones. Since then, several thousand Irish immigrants have used the Centre's supportive services.



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Minister Brennan said: "With some 20,000 Irish emigrants returning home annually in recent years, it is very important that we fully research the experiences, good and bad, of those who have made the transition, so that we can decide how best to shape and strengthen information services, advice routes and general supports so that they best meet the needs of returning emigrants. For example, the research being undertaken by the Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants will provide us with the timely opportunity of reviewing the effectiveness of the 'Returning to Ireland Guide' which is published by my own Department and the updated edition of which has now been launched in the US".

"Many Irish emigrants naturally cherish a deep aspiration to return to the land of their birth to work or retire", Minister Brennan said. "However, the Ireland of today is often a very different country to the one they left, maybe decades ago. Ireland is now an attractive employment location, offering new opportunities and the prospect of a good quality of life for both returning emigrants and for others from all corners of the globe. Before our emigrants finally decide if this aspiration to return to Ireland is the right option for them they need to be in a position to make informed decisions. To do this it is essential that they have available to them good quality, up-to-date information covering a wide range of topics such as social welfare supports, health, pensions, taxation, education and, of course, accommodation. Equally, it is important that Irish people coming to the US have access to information on the services and supports they can avail of. The planned guide by the Irish Immigration and Pastoral Centre will make a valuable contribution in this area."

Minister Brennan said he was also acutely aware of the major concerns there are in Philadelphia and other areas of the US over the number of undocumented Irish and the problems they are currently encountering. "While it is difficult to estimate the numbers of undocumented Irish people, the essential problem of the undocumented population is not its size but rather the burden of stress which their uncertain status causes them and their families in Ireland. I can assure all involved that this issue has the highest priority for the Irish Government and is also being constantly pursued at the highest diplomatic levels", Minister Brennan said.

Press Release Ends