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State of New Jersey

Department of Institutions and Agencies

Publication 20

Trenton

March, 1931

The County Welfare Board

**An Effective Instrument for the
Administration of Local Public Social Work
in New Jersey**

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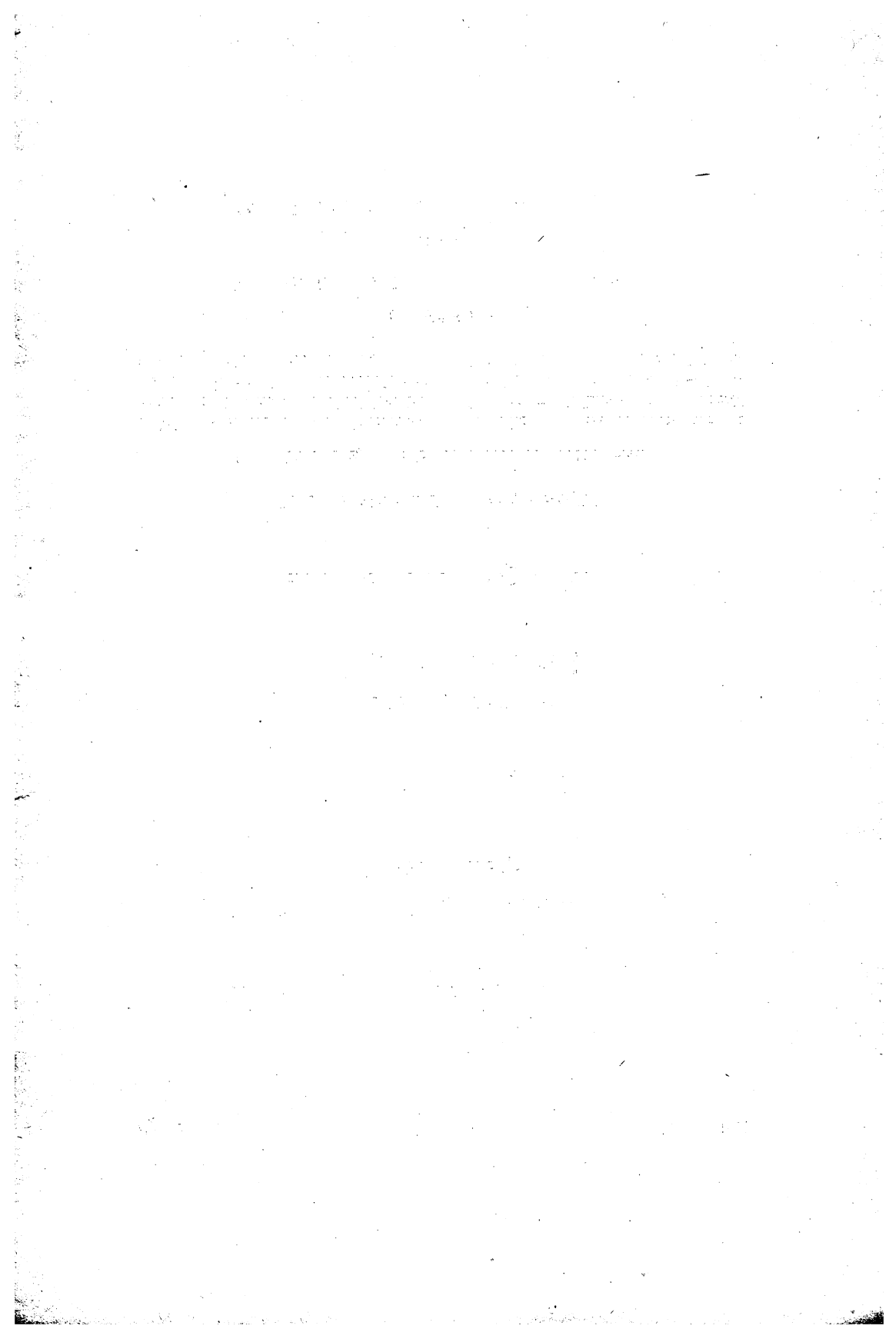
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THE COUNTY WELFARE BOARD
An Effective Instrument for the
Administration of Local Public Social Work in
New Jersey

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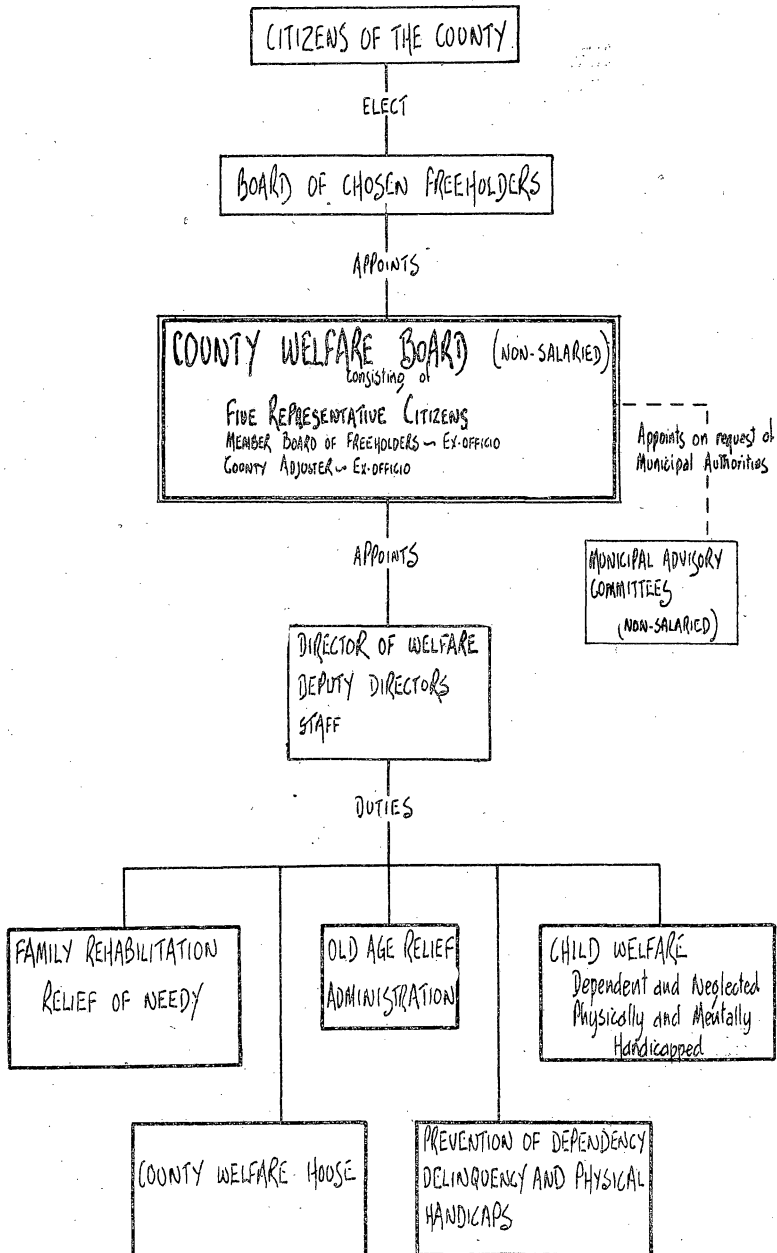


Foreword

It is in response to many inquiries in regard to the work of the proposed County Welfare Boards that this Bulletin has been prepared.

WILLIAM J. ELLIS, Commissioner
State Department of Institutions
and Agencies

ORGANIZATION CHART OF COUNTY WELFARE BOARDS



THE OUTSTANDING FEATURES OF COUNTY WELFARE BOARDS

The Logical and Adequate Local Unit for the Care of the Dependent and the Handicapped

A County Welfare Board is the most effective form of community organization to care for dependent, neglected, delinquent, physically and mentally handicapped adults and children. It provides the prompt, near-at-hand service essential to good social work. By co-ordinating the several types of welfare service given in a county it not only can work more efficiently in a united welfare program but is able to study local causes of dependency and delinquency and to formulate plans for their prevention. It derives its support from public funds, thus putting upon the government the responsibility of caring for such persons as are public charges.

A County Welfare Board provides for active participation on the part of philanthropic interested citizens in determining policies and methods for meeting the problem of human need and human welfare.

It provides for representative action in this field of human engineering; it joins the experience and common-sense of the lay person to the professional skill and activity of the trained worker.

Such a County Board establishes the possibility for continuity in planning and policy making.

It lifts welfare work out of the realm of partisan politics or the vagaries of individual bias and gives it the vitalizing energy of a planful, understanding, unselfish administrative supervision.

Through the County Welfare Board the work with dependent and handicapped persons can be fully developed within the nearest, logical and adequate local unit. The township is too small to perform work adequately. The county is the logical unit for co-ordination of activity in this field. The County Board can link its work to the various municipalities of the county through district offices and district workers co-operating with local private agencies.

The County Welfare Board may appoint municipal advisory committees at the request of municipal authorities, and through the central County Board and directors there will be a unity of function and program.

In New Jersey, 562 incorporated municipalities are dealing with important social work problems, as for example, poor relief. These small units are unable to cope effectively either socially or financially with the varied situations that arise. Part-time workers must usually be employed as "Overseers of the Poor" who, along with their private business or other official jobs, cannot be expected to have the skill to handle intricate social problems and family reconstruction. Mere palliative treatment of poor relief is possible; prevention of poverty is a neglected field.

In County Welfare Boards there can be united all public agencies for the dependent which may be co-ordinated with the private agencies through a well-organized and trained and experienced staff of workers.

The functions of a County Welfare Board are essentially these:

1. Family welfare work relating to individual and family rehabilitation, including the pecuniary relief of the needy.
2. Old Age Relief administration.
3. Child welfare administration, including the care of dependent and neglected children and needy widows with dependent children, and care of the physically and mentally handicapped children.
4. Administration of the county welfare house or almshouse.
5. Co-operation with state departments in carrying out social work functions in the local community and in developing programs of prevention.

A number of other related social services in the counties are closely linked to the major functions of the County Welfare Board, and co-operation in these fields is important.

County Welfare Boards are in line with present-day tendencies for effective and efficient administration. They are largely the modernizing of the services of the administrators of poor relief, charged with the care of public dependents. They are functioning satisfactorily in many states. In other states individual counties are making successful demonstrations of county boards. New

Jersey now has the permissive legislation for the creation of County Welfare Boards. It would vastly accelerate the work of public welfare in New Jersey if County Welfare Boards were actively at work in all twenty-one counties.

WILLIAM J. ELLIS, Commissioner
State Department of Institutions
and Agencies

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS THAT ARGUE FOR COUNTY WELFARE UNITS

Population Increase Demands Change in Relief Systems

New Jersey, one of the three States in which no counties lost population between 1920 and 1930, has an ever-increasing problem before it in its administrative problems of caring for its dependents. The very size of the dependency problem requires a new method of approach. New Jersey, in union with other commonwealths, must give major emphasis to the prevention of dependency.

With the population as a whole increasing 28 per cent in the last ten years, and with large counties like Bergen and Union increasing 73 and 52 per cent respectively, it can no longer leave the administration of poor relief in the hands of overseers of the poor, nor can it neglect to provide adequate county hospitals for the chronically ill. This it can best do on a county basis, for the county is large enough to permit of adequate financing and small enough to permit of effective organization and a correlated program covering a wide range of services.

According to the 1930 census, eleven counties have populations over 100,000; eight, populations between 30,000 and 100,000; and two with less than 30,000. Seven counties show increases of from 40 per cent to 73 per cent; five from 20 per cent to 40 per cent; and nine, less than 20 per cent.

POPULATION OF COUNTIES OF NEW JERSEY, 1930, AND
PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN TEN-YEAR PERIOD

County	Population	
	1930	Per Cent Increase 1929-1930
New Jersey	4,041,334	28.1
Atlantic	124,823	48.8
Bergen	364,977	73.2
Burlington	93,541	14.4
Camden	252,312	32.4
Cape May	29,486	51.5
Cumberland	69,895	13.9
Essex	833,513	27.8
Gloucester	70,802	46.8
Hudson	690,730	9.8
Hunterdon	34,728	5.6
Mercer	187,143	17.1
Middlesex	212,208	30.7
Monmouth	147,209	40.3
Morris	110,445	33.6
Ocean	33,069	49.3
Passaic	302,129	16.6
Salem	36,834	0.7
Somerset	65,132	35.7
Sussex	27,830	11.7
Union	305,209	52.5
Warren	49,319	9.5

New Jersey is becoming more and more an urban state. Practically 90 per cent of the population lives in the territory suburban to New York or Philadelphia, in the metropolitan areas of Trenton or Atlantic City or in the many shore resorts along the east coast from Sandy Hook to Cape May. Nearly two-thirds of New Jersey's population growth between 1920 and 1930 occurred in urban communities while seven-eighths of the remaining increase was in communities of distinctly urban characteristics which experienced heavy suburban growth, but were classed as rural territory by the census because they still remained unincorporated townships.

This concentration of population in certain sections means an increase in the type and number of social problems. The county welfare board can provide a trained staff to serve these densely populated urban counties and can also in the rural sections provide at least one well-trained social worker, who may give that capable leadership which may enable the rural community to secure adequate service in the welfare field.

Expenditures for Local Welfare Activities

The large amounts spent annually by the county and the municipal governments for welfare and charities (a group which includes the care of the poor, the sick, the physically and mentally handicapped or diseased, disease prevention and the like) point to a need for effective control and supervision that the best results may be obtained from the expenditures. There is adequate state or county supervision in some of these fields, but there is little check on the value received from the expenditures of the municipalities.

A County Welfare Board might so co-ordinate the welfare activities of the county and municipalities within the county as to cut out all duplication of staff and finances and aid in securing the maximum results for a minimum of expenditure.

Expenditures¹ for welfare and charities in New Jersey in 1928 constituted 21.1 per cent of all county costs and amounted to \$11,067,614 excluding the capital outlay of \$2,585,328. The municipalities during the same period spent \$6,840,531 excluding a capital outlay of \$252,738. The care of the poor amounted to 21 per cent of the total municipal expenditures for welfare and charities. The amount for poor relief has practically doubled since 1928.

County Welfare Functions at Present

The government of the counties of New Jersey is vested in boards of chosen freeholders, either large boards of 20 to 33 members elected by districts or small boards of three to nine members elected at large, all members serving three years. To these boards are responsible the superintendents of county almshouses or welfare houses, tuberculosis sanatoria, hospitals for mental disease and other public county hospitals, and wardens of county penal institutions. The county physician and in special counties, the medical examiner, are under the board's direction, as well as a number of other county offices and commissions not in welfare

¹The Commission to Investigate County and Municipal Taxation and Expenditures: Report 1.

fields. It is the board of freeholders that determines the county budget and passes upon the amounts to be given by the county for the support of its charitable institutions, the needy blind, dependent children, the hospitalization of the indigent in general hospitals, and the like.

The county adjuster, appointed by the judge of the court of common pleas, with the approval of the board of freeholders, is at present the principal official social worker in the county. Applications for the care of dependent children under the Widows' Pension Act, or under the Child Welfare Act committing to the State Board of Children's Guardians, for relief for the needy blind, for admission to the state charitable institutions (hospitals for the insane, institutions for the feeble-minded or epileptic, old soldiers' homes) are made to the county courts through the county adjuster, who investigates the finances and circumstances of the applicant to determine whether he or she is a proper public charge.

The probation officer may be termed a county welfare worker in that it is in his province to investigate the social family histories and home life of the juveniles who come before the court and to assist any probationer committed by the judge to his care, in his efforts at reformation. Through his court contacts, he is able to locate the home and community conditions which may contribute to juvenile delinquency and to contact other public or private agencies which may prevent a spread of the delinquency. In too many counties in New Jersey the probation officer is a part-time official, being given neither time, salary, nor staff sufficient to do anything but the routine of collecting fines and the like.

These organizations or individuals in the municipalities and counties have been in most instances working separately, each making, or sometimes failing to make, his own investigations, each attempting to do his own particular job or to solve his own problems without a forward-looking plan for future community and state development. This has been due, not to the individual official, but to the lack of a county co-operative program or any other means for bringing about co-operative action.

The counties have recognized their responsibilities in providing for the support of the insane and the tuberculous in state or county institutions, the mentally deficient and the aged soldiers in

state institutions. County funds have also provided for dependent and neglected children and the needy blind.

The aged dependents and the chronically ill have been rather in the neglected group. Outdoor relief and the placing of the aged in boarding homes has been on a municipal basis, affording care not comparable in most cases to the care given other types of dependents on a county basis. County almshouses have been generally inadequate in number, in capacity, and in the service offered, and municipal almshouses have been even more deficient.

Outdoor Dependency Relief

The Poor Law of New Jersey, as that of other states, is substantially the one handed down by our English ancestors based on the laws in force at the time of Elizabeth, which provided that overseers of the poor in each parish should raise by taxation such sums as were necessary for the relief of the poor; that the impotent poor were to be maintained in almshouses; the able-bodied provided with work in the houses of correction; and dependent children apprenticed.

The old poor law had as its basis the idea that no one should be allowed to be hungry and without shelter. Due to uncomprehending administration and small appropriations much of poor relief stopped right there. The emphasis on the social causation of poverty and the study of practical factors to rehabilitate a family or an individual for self-support are comparatively recent developments among private case working agencies with trained staff members and have not as yet been applied by many local overseers of the poor, who must handle the problems of a vast group of families who are the responsibility of the public rather than of the specialized private group or who do not reside in the comparatively few municipalities that support an adequate private agency.

People are realizing that the public agency, just as the private agency, should have as its objectives the development of the capacity of the family for satisfactory and self-supporting family life and the keeping of the family together whenever possible to foster and develop in the home a favorable environment for the

growth and development of the child. The passage of the act granting aid to widows¹ with dependent children in their own homes and the further provision of boarding children in their own homes or with relatives according to the welfare act,² is an example of the better form of poor relief. County funds provide the care for the children, but the State Board of Children's Guardians administers the funds after careful investigation and supervision of the children. The needy blind³ also receive aid in their homes, provided by the county and administered by the State Commission for the Blind.

Investigations of the State Pension Survey Committee indicate relief expenditures by municipalities in New Jersey in 1930 of about \$5,000,000, exclusive of amounts used for the maintenance and operation of municipal almshouses. When it is considered that this large sum is distributed in most cases for general relief, for "alms giving", according to outworn practice, rather than for constructive service planned intelligently for the permanent relief of the dependent, it becomes increasingly evident that a modern program of outdoor relief, in keeping with our industrial, educational, medical and social progress, must be developed.

Almshouses

Almshouses formerly housed the derelicts of society; the harmless insane, the feeble-minded, and the diseased were housed and mingled freely with those normal physically and mentally who in their old age frequently through no fault of their own were unable to support themselves. Today the welfare houses are attempting to give hospital care to the chronically ill and to provide homes for the dependent and aged who cannot live in homes of their own or in homes of relatives. Old age relief acts will make it possible for many of the aged to live with relatives or in boarding homes, but there will always be dependent persons, both under and within the age limit for old age relief, who will need definite institutional care.

¹ Chap. 281, P. L. 1913. Amended by Chap. 105, P. L. 1922.

² Chap. 246, P. L. 1915.

³ Chap. 83, P. L. 1922.

Welfare houses are today maintained by thirteen counties¹ and nine municipalities.² Many of these welfare houses are too crowded to permit proper classification of the indigents and active overseers of the poor frequently have much difficulty in placing their charges who are desperately in need of care.

County welfare houses, under the direction of county welfare boards, are being developed in accordance with the Poor Law (Chapter 132, P. L. 1924), which permits the establishment of modern institutions which seek to provide a real home, not only for indigents, but for persons who can contribute toward their own support, to give adequate hospital care to the temporarily and chronically ill, and to classify their people so that each group will have the care that will most benefit it physically and the living conditions that will best meet its social needs.

Modern sanitary, properly equipped, staffed and supervised homes are too expensive to be justified by the smaller municipalities for a few aged. The capital investment and overhead costs are almost as great with 15 inmates as with 50.

The Experience in Monmouth County

Monmouth County, which through the Monmouth County Organization for Social Service was largely instrumental in bringing about the enactment of the modern poor relief act, opened a welfare house in January, 1931, after a complete survey of the needs of the county for scientific care of the aged. Accommodations for 133 men and women (which may be expanded to 200) include single and double rooms and small wards, a library, recreation rooms, dining rooms, a modern clinic for minor treatment and examination of patients, besides the regular maintenance and utility rooms for running the institution.

¹ Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Hudson, Monmouth, Morris, Salem, Sussex and Warren.

² Newark and Orange in Essex County; Trenton in Mercer County; Passaic and Paterson in Passaic County; Elizabeth and Plainfield in Union County; New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Piscataway and South Amboy in Middlesex County (although the two latter have only four and six persons, respectively). There is no institutional provision for the poor and aged in Hunterdon, Ocean, and Somerset Counties.

Monmouth County became one of the pioneers in the development of county welfare work in the United States through the establishment of the Monmouth County Organization for Social Service in 1912, and early demonstrated the value of bringing together the activities of the public and private welfare agencies in the county and of working with local and state-wide agencies. The Monmouth County Organization has taken the leadership in developing co-operation among all welfare organizations in the county, particularly among the schools and health agencies of all types. It has initiated and supported movements for supplying such services as that of a county school-attendance officer, a district health officer, a county advisory nurse, a visiting teacher, a public-school and child-study division, special classes for poorly adjusted children, child-study groups, habit and health clinics, a county tuberculosis hospital, and a county-wide tuberculosis nursing service. It is responsible for the general promotion and extension of all types of health and recreational organizations.

Municipal Public Welfare Administration

The municipality at the present time is the administrative unit in the granting of poor relief. Relief funds are provided by the municipality, administered by a municipal official, the overseer of the poor, and used primarily for the relief of persons with a legal settlement in the municipality.

There are over five hundred overseers of the poor in the state, most of whom give part-time service for a few hundred dollars annually. Many of the part-time workers receive no salary. In the larger cities there are full-time workers whose salaries usually range from \$2,000 to \$3,000. Although the present permissive law sets certain standards for overseers and provides for civil service examinations for their appointment, few if any municipalities have taken advantage of this legislation.

In many small municipalities there is no officially designated overseer of the poor and frequently no appropriation for poor relief which can be drawn upon in case of necessity. Most of the overseers, except in the larger cities, are on a part-time basis, and have other important official responsibilities or are engaged in

private business. Retired public officials and business men and a considerable number of public-spirited women are also serving as overseers. Occasionally the trained staff of a private social work agency investigates and supervises the cases receiving public aid. Usually, however, a family's dependency relief problem must be handled by part-time officials without special training in the technique of solving such problems.¹

It is due to this that aid is sometimes denied to people in real need because the seriousness of their condition is not known; aid is granted to some who do not need it; cash payments are too small to be of any real benefit and thus have only a pauperizing effect; allowances are continued too long.

¹ Report of the New Jersey Pension Survey Commission.

FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATION OF COUNTY WELFARE BOARDS

Functions

The essential functions of a county welfare board are as follows:

1. Poor relief administration is one of the major problems of county government from the point of view of public welfare and of cost. This includes the giving of outdoor relief, the rehabilitation of family life, and the supervision of a welfare house. It eliminates the multiplicity of municipal almshouses and substitutes a single modern welfare house which may be managed on a more economical scale. It insures that the dependent aged, the disabled, the chronically ill and the otherwise socially handicapped may be assisted by advice and material help on an equally intelligent and helpful basis everywhere in the state.

By rendering assistance to those who otherwise are likely to become public charges later, the director of public welfare can do preventive relief work. Many temporarily in distress will escape becoming paupers in their old age if their efforts are directed in the right channels during their productive years. Guidance and encouragement may be given to the many of low mentality who never can become adjusted without assistance. Economic situations may be adjusted if the wage earner is handicapped by sickness of himself or family, by a large number of dependents, or by irregular employment.

2. The County Welfare Board acts as the county bureau of old age relief. It receives applications for old age relief, investigates the circumstances of the applicant, and, if he proves eligible, determines the amount and nature of the relief to be provided for him in his own or some other suitable family home.

3. Full and complete responsibility for child care within the county rests upon the welfare board that there may be assured to all dependent, defective, and delinquent children in the state, protection and help in their own homes, in foster homes, and if necessary, in institutions. Thus the County Welfare Board would act as a county department of child welfare (a) investigating the

cases of dependent and neglected children within the county, (b) acting in co-operation especially with the State Board of Children's Guardians in the administration of widows' pensions and the supervision of children placed by the State Board of Children's Guardians.

4. The County Welfare Board also acts as a bureau of social service for the county, performing various types of social service for the county courts, especially for the probation officer and juvenile court, for the county school systems and the several state departments.

5. A number of additional social welfare functions may be undertaken or co-ordinated with the work of the county welfare board.

The state is now divided into health districts made up of several counties or sections of counties for the purpose of effectively carrying out the State's program of disease prevention and of giving some more definite supervision than that formerly afforded by the strictly local health units in towns and villages. It would be a duty of county welfare boards to co-operate with the district health agents.

Organization

The County Welfare Board proposed for New Jersey consists of five to seven members appointed by the board of chosen freeholders. The county adjuster and a designated member of the board of freeholders are ex-officio members. The term of office is five years, with the term of only one member expiring each year in order to insure a continuity of program and policy.

The members, two of whom are women, are representative citizens of the county intelligently interested in performing a public welfare service.

The County Welfare Board appoints the director of welfare who is technically trained and qualified in the field of social service, who has had successful executive experience along such lines.

A deputy director of welfare, with the same qualifications, will be necessary in some of the larger counties and a staff trained for the special work required of them or having had such preliminary

education as would make it possible for them to profit by training for social service.

Under the law ample provision is made through Civil Service for the selection of this professional and clerical personnel and in addition it is possible that in co-operation with the educational institutions of the state and the trained personnel of the departments of state government supplemental training may be provided.

The County Welfare Boards will also appoint resident helpers and municipal advisory committees who without pay or fees would aid in the temporary relief of poor persons under their direction. These local assistants will be valuable in co-operating with the county board in ascertaining the causes of dependency, in obtaining employment for poor persons, in carrying out the board's program for the relief of the poor, and assisting those who seek admission to any institution or agency provided for mental or physical disability or otherwise.

The ebb and flow of economic and social changes indicates that a service which in one generation may best be rendered by local government units may require later a different internal structure calling for a different supervisory relationship and a new type of framework. The proposed county unit of poor relief makes possible a view of the dependency situation of the county as a whole in such a way that adequate methods for dealing with it may be found. The centralization of poor affairs in the county does away with the numerous small administrations of overseers, cuts down to a minimum the litigations regarding legal settlement now existent between municipalities in a county and provides funds which can be administered by a trained and competent superintendent of welfare for outdoor relief and rehabilitative work and for the erection and maintenance of a modern welfare house with standard physical equipment for the care of the chronically ill and infirm and such other facilities as make for the happiness of the aged dependents.

10/10/1917

Dear Mr. [Name] [Address] [City] [State] [Country]
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