

Subsection 2.—Provincial and Local Welfare Services

General assistance or relief and the various welfare services associated with this form of aid, as well as the care of the aged and the protection and care of neglected and dependent children, are governed by provincial welfare legislation. Administrative and financial responsibility is shared by the province and its municipalities. Provincial administration of welfare, as of other provincial assistance, is carried out through the department of public welfare or of health and welfare in each province. Several provincial welfare departments have established regional offices for administrative purposes and to provide consultative services to the municipalities.

Significant changes have taken place in provincial programs in the past few years. New or revised legislation or new procedures in a number of provinces have laid the foundation for improved standards of service and administration, and re-appraisal of services is continuing.

Notable program changes in the field of general assistance or residual aid have been accompanied in several provinces by redistribution of costs between the province and the municipalities, and progress has been made in setting up minimum standards of administration and encouraging uniform rates of assistance throughout the province. The financial contribution of the Federal Government to the provinces for unemployment assistance (see p. 276) has doubtless been an important contributing factor in the realignment of provincial-municipal responsibilities.

All provinces are giving some consideration to the need for integrated planning on behalf of older citizens. A number have increased their capital or maintenance grants to municipalities and to voluntary groups for homes for the aged and are also assisting in the construction of low-rental housing projects.

The main efforts in child welfare have been directed toward improvement of standards and greater flexibility of services, with particular emphasis on preventive casework services for children in their own homes, development of specialized children's institutions and the finding of adoption homes for all children in need of them.

An impressive number of voluntary agencies also contribute to community welfare including the welfare of families and children and of groups with special needs, such as the aged, recent immigrants, youth groups, and released prisoners. Family welfare agencies or combined family and child welfare agencies in urban centres, for example, offer case-work services to families in need of counselling on such problems as marital relations, parent-child relations and family budgeting. Counselling and recreational services for older or retired people are being developed by many agencies and child and youth organizations with recreational and character-building programs offer group participation in physical education, camping, the development of special skills and other opportunities for healthful activity. Welfare councils and community planning councils contribute to the planning and co-ordinating of local welfare services.

Local voluntary agencies and institutions are usually incorporated under provincial law. They may receive public grants, depending on the nature and standard of the services they render, although, with the exception of the semi-public children's aid societies, their main support may be from united funds or community chests, or from sponsoring organizations.

Welfare services, public and private, are hampered by the continued shortage of qualified social workers. Short university courses in social work, periodic study institutes, and a more formal approach than in the past to in-service training are being developed to improve staff qualifications. A number of provincial departments are granting education leave with pay or bursaries to enable selected staff to attend schools of social work.

General Assistance.—All provinces make legislative provision for general assistance on a means-test basis to needy persons and their dependants who cannot qualify for other forms of aid, and some provinces include those whose benefits under other programs are