

6.5 Provincial welfare programs

Provincial departments of social services are responsible for the administration of welfare programs, although they may share their administration in certain fields with their municipalities (see Section 6.4). Voluntary agencies whose interests include the welfare of families and children and of groups with special needs, such as the aged, recent immigrants, youth groups and released prisoners, complement provincial programs. Social planning councils contribute to the planning and co-ordination of local welfare services. Local voluntary agencies and institutions may receive public grants, depending on the nature and standard of their services, although their main support is usually from United Appeal funds or from sponsoring organizations.

6.5.1 Social assistance

All provinces make legislative provision for assistance to persons in need and their dependents. Need is determined by the budget deficit method, that is, the needs of the applicant and his dependents are calculated according to a prescribed schedule or budget in which specific amounts are allocated to various items of need. The difference between the amount needed, thus calculated, and the income available to meet that need is the budget deficit, or the amount of the allowance, subject to any ceilings which may be imposed. In addition to allowances to cover items of basic need such as food, clothing, shelter, fuel and utilities, all provinces make provision for such special items as rehabilitation services, expenses incidental to education or to obtaining employment, counselling, homemaker services and institutional care. All provinces permit certain income or earnings exemptions and, under special circumstances, some provinces provide assistance to fully employed persons.

The provincial departments of welfare set rates of assistance and conditions of eligibility; they have regulatory and supervisory powers over municipal administration of assistance, and require certain standards as a condition of provincial aid. Municipal residence may determine the financially responsible authority within a province. The provincial authority takes responsibility for aid to persons residing outside municipal boundaries and for those who lack municipal residence. The administration of assistance varies. In Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta, allowances to persons with long-term need, such as needy mothers with dependent children, disabled persons and the aged, are administered by the province, other allowances being administered by the municipalities. In Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, all assistance is administered by the provincial authority. In Quebec, the province administers assistance through regional and local offices, except in Montreal where the municipality administers assistance on behalf of the province. In Saskatchewan, social assistance is administered by the province except in two municipalities. In British Columbia, social allowances are administered through regional and district offices of the provincial government and, in some municipalities, by municipal departments of welfare. In the seven provinces where the municipalities have some administrative responsibility, the proportion of the costs incurred by the municipality borne by the province varies from 40% to 100% of assistance paid.

6.5.2 Child welfare services

The term "child welfare services" refers particularly to statutory services for the protection and care of children who are neglected or who are temporarily or permanently without parental care. These include protection for children in their own homes; care in foster boarding homes or, when necessary, in institutions; adoption services; and services to unmarried parents. Child welfare services are available in all provinces under provincial legislation.

The programs are administered by the provincial authority or by local children's aid societies (voluntary agencies with boards of directors operating under charter and under the general supervision of provincial departments). In Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Alberta, child welfare services are administered by the province; in Quebec, they are administered by recognized voluntary agencies and institutions, religious and secular; in Ontario, a network of local children's aid societies is responsible for the services; in Nova Scotia and Manitoba, services are administered by local children's aid societies in the heavily populated areas and by the province elsewhere; in British Columbia, services are administered on a regional basis by the province, and in two cities by local welfare departments. Children's aid societies and the recognized agencies in Quebec receive substantial provincial grants and sometimes municipal grants, and some receive support from private