

STATE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE

IOWA'S PUBLIC WELFARE PROGRAMS

Child Welfare

Old Age Assistance

Aid to the Needy Blind

Aid to Dependent Children

Emergency Relief

Soldiers' Relief

By

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INTRODUCTION

The first concern for the common welfare in Iowa was with the physical safety and protection of widely scattered pioneers. As the big trek of families into Iowa began in 1838, the loneliness and danger of sparse settlements were a constant threat. To encourage rapid immigration, early officials advertised in America and western Europe for ambitious young people, offering "the richest farm land in the world", with no alkali in the soil or Indians within the borders. Those able and willing to work were promised security, independence, progress - the chance to become "princes of the soil."

A very minimal social welfare structure was needed in this simple setting of struggling pioneers, whose welfare and even survival was largely dependent on their own initiative and hard work. Provision was made only for emergencies - sickness and death, disability, complete loss of wage earner or of income, or for children who needed shelter, care, or correctional services which their own families could not supply. Three types of service were available. First, local officials were assigned the duty, along with a variety of other responsibilities, to look after the emergency needs of people who could remain in the community. Second, the State erected institutions to care for persons whose problems did not lend themselves to treatment locally under the existing set-up - the criminals, the insane, the feeble-minded, and the delinquent and dependent children. The State limited its services mainly to institutional populations. Third, private welfare agencies and institutions were established to give care, chiefly to aged persons and to young children separated from their own families. Personal counseling and guidance, and services to prevent or correct problems beyond those of physical care and protection did not develop until near the close of the first century of Iowa history. Some bright exceptions in both health and welfare were limited to a few areas.

Life became more complex as population grew, competition was keener, and economic and social life controlled more and more by forces over which an individual had little if any control. However, the impact of these forces was not clearly recognized until the "hungry 30's".

The depression years caught Iowa singularly unprepared for mass relief problems resulting from economic catastrophe. The traditional pattern of rigidly restricted statutory local poor relief and almshouse care proved entirely inadequate. Out of the emergency relief administration set up in 1933 to provide federal and state participation with county governments, grew the social security program. This was the greatest single stride forward in Iowa's public welfare services. In 1937, the Iowa legislature established the first permanent state welfare organization to share responsibility with local communities and the federal government on a coordinated basis for assistance to the needy, and for child welfare and other case work services to people in their own communities. At the same time, other social security legislation greatly extended public health and preventive services, and the physical treatment and education of handicapped children. The latter are administered by other state departments - Health, Board of Education, Public Instruction.

The needs created by sweeping social changes are not for financial assistance alone, although we are prone to think of them as such. They are far from it. The average, normal Iowa families have many problems now with which they cannot

cope single-handed, although they do their best to get along. Problems of personal and family adjustment, child-caring and training, juvenile delinquency, broken homes, divorce and desertion, adoption of children, housing, positive health protection, community protective measures to supplement what individuals can do, the problems of an increasingly industrial economy amalgamated with the basically rural structure of the state - all these confront persons now regardless of position or economic condition. All persons needing personal help and counseling should receive it through public or private agencies.

Private agencies exist in Iowa's larger cities to help with certain problems, mainly with family counseling and child-care. However, they cannot reach a large part of the population. Only 31% of Iowa's people live in cities of the first class (over 15,000 population), and some of those cities are essentially rural in character. Thus, more than two-thirds of our population living in towns and the open country have no access to the services of urban agencies. The only one available to them are the county public services and a few state-wide private agencies, chiefly for dependent and neglected children. Stimulated by the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth and the Iowa Commission on Children and Youth, public and private agencies surveyed the unmet needs of Iowa's children in 1950. They are planning together for the development of programs definitely required because of existing problems and a steadily increasing child population. The challenge to all professions working with children - welfare, health, education, delinquency control, etc. - will continue for years, for the birth rate remains unusually high and the death rate decreases. Children under 5 years of age are now the largest single group in Iowa's population.

The State Department of Social Welfare integrates and directs the general state-wide welfare program, including three assistance categories (old age assistance, aid to the blind, aid to dependent children), and child welfare services. It sets general standards, and through a field staff, keeps in touch with and helps the county welfare departments, which exist in every county for the purpose of giving direct service to people living within the county and receiving applications for assistance. Emphasis is placed on services which will prevent personal or family breakdowns, and restore those who have had serious difficulty to normal life as soon as possible.

CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM

Under the direction of the State Board, the Division of Child Welfare is responsible for the supervision of all child-caring and child-placing facilities in the state, except the institutions under the State Board of Control, and for development of services to children in all counties of the state consulting with all public and private agencies which have a stake in child welfare. It sets the basic standards for children's boarding homes, child-caring institutions, child placing agencies, and maternity homes which have social welfare programs. Evaluations are made at least twice a year of such services, and there is regular consultation, not only on standards, but also on more effective coverage and on developments to meet the changing needs of the children of the state. The physical standards of all the above facilities are evaluated jointly with the State Department of Health, so that safe housing conditions will prevail. Places which have met the minimum standards prescribed by the two departments are given licenses by the Department of Social Welfare.

The Division of Child Welfare is also responsible for protection of children being sent into, or out of, the state for care without their parents or guardians.

Standards relative to the adoption of children are set as an integral part of the supervision of placing agencies. At the request of courts, the Division of Child Welfare secures reports through county welfare departments on adoptive placements not already under the supervision of an approved agency, and submits to the courts its recommendations on petitions. Three hundred such reports were made in 1951.

The State Division has general legal responsibility for collecting adoption petitions and decrees from all courts of the state, for making reports about adoptions, for collecting annual reports from all juvenile courts, and for studying the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency.

The direct service is given by the county welfare departments. They assist local persons and agencies on request. When a problem such as the proposed placement in Iowa of a dependent child from another state, is reported to the State Division of Child Welfare, referrals are made to the county, in which case the county department acts as the agent of the state. The Division does not take care of individual children. Those who have been removed permanently from their homes and committed to the custody of the state are wards of the Board of Control. The Division does work directly with all private children's agencies and maternity homes in the state. Its district consultants advise with county departments on difficult case problems and procedures. A staff of psychologists is available to give examinations to children and make recommendations at the request of counties, courts, and child-caring agencies.

In 28 counties, there are especially assigned child welfare workers, and in the others, part-time service is given by members of the general county welfare staff. As of September 1, 1952, 2,700 children were receiving individualized service in their own communities from county welfare departments. This is exclusive of those receiving aid to dependent children.

Nearly sixty-four percent of these children were receiving service from the county staff in their own homes and nine percent were in the homes of relatives. In 1951, the child welfare services of only six other states had the same or a larger percent of the children under supervision living in their own or in relatives' homes. The focus of Iowa's child welfare services has always been on the child in his own home, and on preventive, protective, and rehabilitative work before it becomes necessary to separate the child completely from his family. County welfare departments have developed local boarding homes for care and treatment of children as part of their case work services. Seventeen percent of the children receiving supervision were in such boarding homes on September 1, 1952. The remaining ten percent of the 2,700 children were in various institutions, usually outside the immediate community, although the county worker retained responsibility for the plans, and for counseling with the family.

IOWA'S PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Under the direction of the State Board of Social Welfare, the Division of Public Assistance is responsible for planning, organizing and directing the programs provided for in the Iowa Old Age Assistance Act, the Aid to the Needy Blind Act, Aid to Dependent Children Act, and the Emergency Relief Administration Laws. In carrying out these responsibilities, the major activity of the Division of Public Assistance relates to the development and application of policies and procedures for determining original and continued eligibility to receive assistance. These programs are briefly summarized below:

Old Age Assistance

The old age assistance program is by far the most extensive in numbers aided, as well as expenditures involved. For those persons who apply for old age assistance, it is necessary that they meet the following generalized requirements:

- (1) Are 65 or more years of age.
- (2) Are citizens of United States or have 25 years continuous residence.
- (3) Have domicile in Iowa for nine years immediately preceding application (not considered continuous if interrupted by absence totaling more than four years), or have had five years residence in Iowa during the last nine years and one year being immediately preceding application.
- (4) Are not residents in a public institution or inmates of a jail, prison or insane asylum.
- (5) Have not sufficient income to provide subsistence compatible with decency and health.
- (6) Have no contract for complete support with a person, municipality, association, society or corporation able to support them.
- (7) Do not own real estate, the assessed value of which, less recorded liens, exceeds \$2,000 if single, or \$3,000 combined value of property of applicant and spouse if married.
- (8) Are not in possession of personal property in excess of \$300 if single or \$450 combined value of property of applicant and spouse if married. Household goods or heirlooms are excepted.
- (9) Have not transferred property to become eligible or to avoid lien.

- (10) Have not deserted or failed to support spouse or children.
- (11) Have proof of payment of the Iowa Old Age Assistance tax assessed against them in 1934, 1935 and 1936.

During the month of September, 1952, old age assistance in Iowa was paid to 47,472 persons, who received an average payment of \$52.08. This average payment represented the needs of those individuals after all other income available to them had been taken into consideration. The total payments in the form of grants of assistance in this program for the month of September, 1952, amounted to \$2,472,465. The funds to meet this expenditure were made available through appropriations from the State of Iowa and from Federal Social Security funds provided under Title I of the Social Security Act.

Since October 1, 1952, the Social Security Administration has matched payments in the old age assistance fund by paying four-fifths of the first \$25.00 of the average monthly payment for each recipient, plus one-half of the balance of the payments made in each grant up to and including a maximum of \$55.00 each month. Where the need of an individual exceeds \$55.00, all funds granted beyond that amount are provided from state appropriations.

Based on reliable statistics, it is estimated that Iowa had approximately 273,195 persons over sixty-five years of age in 1950. This age group of our population showed an increase of 45,428 persons since 1940. Studies indicate that the aged population will continue to increase. During this same period, the number receiving old age assistance decreased from 55,718 in September, 1940, to the present previously mentioned number of 47,472 recipients. As of December, 1951, the Social Security Administration's studies revealed that of every thousand persons over sixty-five years of age in the State of Iowa, 178 received old age assistance, as compared with the national average of 218 persons receiving old age assistance out of every thousand who had reached sixty-five years of age.

The national average payment of old age assistance for May, 1952, was \$45.15 as compared with Iowa's average of \$51.35 for the same month. During this same month, 16 states made average payments in this program that exceeded the average grants that were made available to recipients in Iowa. The average payments shown do not include income from earnings, responsible relatives, Federal and State Old Age and Survivors programs, Railroad Retirement, Veterans Administration and other resources that are available to an increasing number of cases.

Aid to the Needy Blind

By the nature of the eligibility requirements of the Needy Blind Act, this program is relatively small when compared with the old age assistance program. To be eligible for this type of assistance, a person must meet the following general requirements:

- (1) Have no vision, or vision with glasses prevents performance of ordinary activities where eyesight is essential.
- (2) Be at least 18 years of age.

- (3) Be citizens of the United States or have applied for citizenship.
- (4) Have residence in Iowa for five years of the last nine years and one being immediately preceding application or blindness incurred while resident of Iowa.
- (5) Are not inmates of a public institution.
- (6) Have not sufficient income or resources to provide a standard of living consistent with decency and health.
- (7) Have no contract for complete support with a person or persons able to support them.
- (8) Have not transferred property to become eligible.
- (9) Do not solicit alms.

During the month of September, 1952, 1294 persons received assistance under the Aid to the Needy Blind Act in Iowa. The payments averaged \$61.99 with a total expenditure for the month of \$80,220. An additional allowance is made quarterly to meet medical needs exclusive of expenses for surgery and hospitalization in Iowa's aid to the blind program.

Since October 1, 1952, the Social Security Administration has provided payments amounting to four-fifths of the first \$25.00 of the average monthly grant, plus one-half of the balance of all payments made each month that do not exceed \$55.00 per grant. The state and county governments share the remaining amounts of assistance paid to recipients of blind assistance in Iowa.

In addition to providing grants of assistance under the Aid to the Blind Law, Iowa has a statute which provides remedial care in the form of hospitalization, surgery and treatment, where such care can either prevent blindness or restore sight. To receive remedial care, age is eliminated as an eligibility requirement. The expense of meeting this phase of the program is shared by the state and county governments.

The national average payment of aid to the blind for May, 1952, was \$49.90, as compared with Iowa's average of \$61.62 for the same month. During this same month, 10 states made average payments in this program that exceeded the average grants provided in Iowa. The average payments shown do not include income from earnings, responsible relatives, Federal and State Old Age and Survivors programs, Railroad Retirement, Veterans Administration and other resources that are available to an increasing number of cases.

Aid to Dependent Children

Payments under the state program for aid to dependent children, which replaced the County Widows' Pension Law, became effective in January, 1944. The intent of the program, as set out by the Social Security Administration, is first, to make it possible for children to remain in, or return to, the custody and care of their parents or relatives who have a natural bond of affection and concern for their well being, and second, to provide for the unmet needs of

children and thereby permit them to take their place in the community with other children.

To be eligible for this type of assistance, the child must meet the following general requirements:

- (1) Be under 16 years of age, or under 18 years if regularly attending school.
- (2) Be deprived of parental support by reason of death, absence or incapacity of parent.
- (3) Have residence in Iowa for one year immediately preceding application or have been born within one year immediately preceding application, if the parent or other specified relative with whom the child is living has resided in the state for one year immediately preceding the birth of the child.
- (4) Be residing with a parent or other specified relative in a suitable family home.
- (5) Lack means of support to provide a standard of living consistent with decency and health.

As of September, 1952, 5,446 cases representing 19,137 persons received grants of assistance, which averaged \$30.04 per person or a total of \$574,852 for the month. An additional allowance is issued to the recipients quarterly to meet medical needs exclusive of expenses for surgery and hospitalization.

Iowa's aid to dependent children program since October 1, 1952, has received from the Social Security Administration four-fifths of the first \$15.00 of the average monthly payment made to each child, plus one-half of the remaining payment up to \$30.00 for the first eligible child and a similar amount for the dependent eligible relative with whom the child is living. For each additional child in the eligible group, the Social Security Administration provides four-fifths of the first \$15.00 of the average monthly payment made, plus one-half of the balance paid up to a maximum of \$21.00 per child. The state and county governments share in paying the remaining amounts of assistance paid through the aid to dependent children program in Iowa. In a study completed by the Social Security Administration as of December, 1951, it revealed that 17 children out of every thousand under the age of 18 received aid to dependent children in Iowa, as compared with 32 children out of every thousand under the age of 18 as a national average.

The national average per case of aid to dependent children for May, 1952, was \$76.06, as compared with Iowa's average of \$106.35 for the same month. During this same month, 8 states made average payments per case in this program that exceeded the grants provided in Iowa. The average payments shown do not include income from earnings, responsible relatives, Federal and State Old Age and Survivors programs, Railroad Retirement, Veterans Administration and other resources that are available to an increasing number of cases.

Emergency Relief

Since the early part of World War II, it has not been necessary for the State of Iowa, through the Emergency Relief Act, to provide funds to the various counties throughout the state for the purpose of helping them meet their requirements for general relief. The law provides that when it is found a county in the State of Iowa is unable to meet its direct relief responsibilities from local tax levies, the State Department of Social Welfare may provide funds, when appropriated, to assist counties in meeting these responsibilities. Present laws make it possible for counties to increase their poor fund tax levy. This increase has made it possible to meet current demands on almost all county poor funds without requiring them to seek assistance through the Emergency Relief Act.

The Social Security Administration's study of December, 1951, revealed 3 persons per thousand in Iowa received general assistance, as compared to a national average of 4.7 persons per thousand. Iowa's average in terms of payments per case for the same month was \$31.86, as compared with the national average of \$47.08. During this same period, 31 states made average payments in this program that exceeded the average payments made in Iowa. The average payments shown do not include income from earnings, responsible relatives, Federal and State Old Age and Survivors programs, Railroad Retirement, Veterans Administration and other resources that are available to an increasing number of cases.

Soldiers' Relief

The veterans and their dependents in Iowa, who do not have their needs met through laws administered by the Veterans Administration or the Public Assistance Titles of the Social Security Act, may seek financial help through the County Soldiers' Relief Commissions. Funds to meet these expenditures for soldiers' relief are raised by a tax limited to 1 mill against all property within the counties. Other funds are available from the World War I State Bonus fund on a 75% matching basis for veterans of World War I who were eligible to receive the Iowa Soldiers Bonus. The potential recipients under this program are almost three-fold as compared with the number eligible prior to World War II. Favorable economic conditions and other sources of income have made it possible for the 1 mill levy to meet the current demands of this program in almost all counties in the state. Figures on the comparative averages in terms of recipients and payments made under the soldiers' relief program are not available.

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