

achieved by subtracting from the basic weekly benefit any other benefit payable. One exception might be desirable. Benefits received as compensation for loss of earning capacity—such as partial disability benefits and conceivably retirement benefits paid at very early ages to persons in hazardous occupations such as police or fire service—might be disregarded.

The general pattern of benefit rights under a unified and comprehensive social insurance system might thus involve the deduction from the current weekly benefits of the basic system of any other benefits currently received as compensation for wage loss (including the long-term benefits of the basic system), and the payment of the long-term benefits of the basic system without regard for any benefits received from special public retirement systems, and—according to the alternative preferred—with or without adjustment to

take account of workmen's compensation and veterans' service-connected payments.

Any patterns of relationship which were developed would need to be modified in detail to fit the special circumstances and the special characteristics of the different supplementary insurance systems. There would have to be special provisions also to protect the accumulated rights of persons now on the rolls of special contributory systems or nearing retirement age. Such details can be worked out. The essential feature of the structure is the comprehensive and inclusive basic protection furnished by the national social insurance system. Without this, the pattern will continue to be one of confusion and of unequal and patchwork security. With a comprehensive national system, special protections can be built upon the firm guarantee of basic social insurance rights for everyone.

Public Assistance as a Resource in the Mobilization and Utilization of Labor*

A RECOGNIZED RESPONSIBILITY of the public assistance agency is that of giving appropriate cooperation to other governmental undertakings that directly affect the welfare of individuals. The unprecedented wartime demand for manpower—for the armed forces, for the production of war materials and essential civilian supplies, and for agricultural production—is necessitating the recruitment of every available worker not already performing essential services outside the regular labor market. By enabling persons in need of employment to obtain or to accept work, the public assistance agency can implement the War Manpower Commission's objective of full employment, and at the same time can discharge a part of its own responsibility for helping individuals meet their financial requirements.

The major function of the public assistance agency—that of providing assistance and other services to persons in need—is basic to the welfare of the people and in itself constitutes the most appropriate service that the public assistance

agency can render to the Nation. In relating its activities to the objectives of the War Manpower Commission, the primary responsibility of the public assistance agency is that of defining and performing its own functions; within this framework the agency can then develop methods whereby the appropriate exercise of these functions may implement the operation of other governmental programs. It is through the provision of money payments and other services that the public assistance agency can help individuals to avail themselves of opportunities offered by other programs to the mutual advantage of both the individuals and the programs.

In an examination of methods whereby the agency can enable individuals to avail themselves of employment opportunities, it must first of all be recognized that work is neither possible nor suitable for many recipients of old-age assistance, aid to the blind, and aid to dependent children. Many aged and blind persons are too old or too severely handicapped in other ways to accept employment. Similarly, many recipients of aid to dependent children are not potential workers, since the personal care and supervision they are giving their children far outweigh the value of

*A statement prepared in the Division of Administrative Surveys, Bureau of Public Assistance. For statistics on the number of recipients of the special types of public assistance and on trends in case openings and closings, see pp. 24-31.

the services they might perform in the labor market. There are, however, some aged recipients who are both eager to obtain and able to perform various kinds of work. There are blind recipients who desire and can utilize opportunities for vocational training and subsequent employment that will enable them to maintain themselves. Although it is not intended that the mothers or other relatives caring for dependent children should be encouraged to get jobs outside the home, some of them can arrange suitable care for their children and may make independent decisions to work. Certain members of recipients' families, such as older children in households receiving aid to dependent children, will also welcome agency services that make employment possible for them.

Among recipients of general assistance there are usually many persons who can utilize agency services in obtaining work, and it is recommended that such services be made fully available by agencies providing general assistance.

The Bureau of Public Assistance is continually examining and discussing with State public assistance agencies policies and procedures that either limit or facilitate the cooperation that they can give to other governmental agencies such as the War Manpower Commission. The failure of agencies to meet the total requirements of recipients oftentimes limits the freedom with which recipients can avail themselves of opportunities, including those offered by other governmental agencies. Consequently, the Bureau gives serious consideration to policies and procedures that are more restrictive than those required by law and that can be modified to permit more realistic provision for the requirements of recipients. In determining the amount of the assistance payment, for example, some public assistance agencies limit the character and cost of requirements to a greater extent than legislation and available funds necessitate. Some public assistance agencies consider only the subsistence needs of families, even though rehabilitative services, less urgent and temporarily more expensive, might ultimately give more social and economic security to the individual, and be socially and financially economical for the community. Agencies legally able to continue assistance payments to recipients who have left the community sometimes fail to take full advantage of this permissive legislation and thereby

restrict the opportunities of recipients to make satisfactory adjustments in other communities.

In order to make all possible resources available to persons in need, as well as to give appropriate assistance in furthering the mobilization and utilization of manpower, the Bureau of Public Assistance recommends that State public assistance agencies reexamine their policies and procedures with these objectives in mind. Some State agencies have developed a number of policies and procedures that seem to be effective in accomplishing these objectives. The following suggestions based on their experience are offered for the consideration of other agencies:

A. Through the provision of money payments and other services, public assistance agencies can enable some people to accept employment that is actually or potentially available. Such measures may include the following:

1. The application process may be simplified and expedited to the end that agency services directed toward meeting individual requirements, including assistance in obtaining jobs when this is indicated, are made available to the applicant with the least possible delay.
2. The reapplication process may be simplified and expedited so that recipients can accept temporary or uncertain employment without fear that a period of want will intervene between the termination of employment and restoration of assistance payments.
3. Provision may be made in the assistance payment for the initial costs inherent in certain types of employment. Tools, work clothing, necessary dues, carfare, lunches, transportation to bona fide jobs in other communities, and living expenses until the first pay day are some of the initial costs that may force a recipient to refuse work unless the agency makes it financially possible for him to meet these and similar requirements.
4. Increased emphases may be placed on the long-range objective of rehabilitation, making it possible for recipients to obtain suitable social counseling, medical treatment, or retraining opportunities.

when such services would enable them to get work. It is not expected that public assistance agencies will themselves provide specialized rehabilitation services, but it is within their responsibility to make it financially possible for recipients to avail themselves of the services offered elsewhere. For instance, public assistance agencies may include in assistance payments the expenses incidental to obtaining vocational counseling or aptitude tests, when appropriate, or may make payments to cover living expenses while a recipient takes vocational training.

B. Through a realistic treatment of requirements and resources, public assistance agencies can make employment more satisfactory to many individuals who are working, and thereby encourage continuous employment.

1. Realistic consideration must be given to requirements connected with the job, such as increased food consumption, carfare and lunch money, appropriate clothing, recreational needs, or stated or implied obligations, such as the purchase of war bonds, which reduce income available for living needs. Failure to consider such expenses means that the requirements of the employed person are met only in part, and serves to discriminate against him as compared with the recipient who has no income but whose fewer requirements are met in full.
2. If agencies consider as a resource the earnings of working children and of other persons who may be living with a family, this resource must be evaluated in terms of existing family relationships. Employed persons who would not usually be considered responsible for the support of dependents have little incentive to work and continue or increase earnings that are arbitrarily assigned without their consent.

C. Through the purposeful direction of policies and practices, agencies may facilitate the constructive use of labor in terms of over-all manpower considerations.

1. Agency operation should be reviewed to ensure that current practices are not forcing recipients into unwise decisions with respect to employment. Waiting lists, restrictive eligibility requirements, and inadequate assistance payments frequently result in undirected migration, as families drift about the country in search of work, or they may oblige mothers to take unskilled employment and thereby necessitate the diversion of skilled and expensive services to their children for day care, medical treatment, the prevention and treatment of delinquency, and the like.
2. More liberal interpretations may be made of statutory residence requirements, thereby affording recipients and potential recipients greater freedom to work where their labor is most needed. Within the time limitations permitted by law, assistance payments may be continued while recipients who find work in other communities become self-maintaining; through cooperative interagency services, payments might be made to meet unanticipated needs of former recipients who have left their own communities. Agencies that administer general assistance and follow the practice of returning nonresidents to their place of legal residence may give serious consideration to the more constructive practice of continuing the assistance in their own community, thereby enabling recipients to avail themselves of full opportunities in that community.
3. A reevaluation may be made of policies relating to the responsibility of relatives, to determine whether these policies are impeding desirable mobility of labor. Individuals responsible for the support of aged parents, for instance, are not free to accept more essential, but often less secure, employment in other communities unless they have assurance that assistance will be provided to their dependents if their own contributions should fail.