

CHILDREN'S BUREAU—MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH SERVICES

(Title V, pt. 1, of the Social Security Act)

PART I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

1. Objectives

To encourage and assist in the extension and improvement of health services for mothers and children, especially in rural areas and in areas suffering from severe economic distress.

2. Operation

Grants-in-aid to State health agencies. The States must provide matching funds for one-half of the amount appropriated; the remainder is not matched and is distributed to the States on the basis of the financial need of each State for assistance in carrying out its plan. State plans for the use of maternal and child health funds are made by State health agencies. The services are largely provided by local health departments.

States use the funds to pay the costs of conducting prenatal clinics where mothers are examined by physicians and get medical advice; for visits by public health nurses to homes before and after babies are born to help mothers care for their babies; for well-child clinics where mothers can bring their babies and young children for examination and immunizations, where they can get competent advice on how to prevent illnesses, and where their many questions about care of babies can be answered. Such measures have been instrumental in the reduction of maternal and infant mortality. The funds are also used to make available doctors, dentists, and nurses to the schools for health examinations and immunizations of schoolchildren and advice to parents on where to get needed medical or dental care. Some States also provide for the medical and hospital care of premature babies in special hospital centers that meet certain standards and for mothers with complications of pregnancy.

Practically all States use some of the funds for improving the quality of services to mothers and children by providing special training opportunities to physicians, nurses, nutritionists, medical social workers and other professional personnel. In addition, States have demonstration programs of various kinds, the most prominent of which are the mental retardation programs.

3. History

The basic purposes of the grant have remained unchanged since its inception. However the amount authorized for annual appropriation was increased in 1939, 1946, 1950, 1958, 1960, 1963, and 1965. In 1943, there was established under the general purposes of part 1 of title V, through congressional appropriations, the emergency maternity and infant care program. Under this program, the Children's Bureau made grants to State health departments to provide maternity care for wives of enlisted men in the four lowest pay grades of the Armed Forces and of aviation cadets, and to provide medical, nursing, and hospital care for their infants during the first year of life. This was a medical care program of major proportions, in which about 1.5 million mothers and children received care at an expenditure of more