

Legal services

The Legal Services Program is named by slightly over a third of the community leaders as one of the most valuable CAC projects.

A senior staff member of the agency states: "This program has transformed the Legal Aid Society from an agency serving only middle class to one that also helps the poor. The salary of the director was increased from \$8,000 to \$13,000 a year, so that a better man could be obtained for the job, and the staff lawyers now devote full time to the agency, taking no outside clients. Representatives of the poverty population sit on the board of the agency."

The prevention of exploitation is considered the major value of the program by most of the respondents. "Now the poor have weapons to fight injustice." "Now poor people can find out what their rights are" were some of the comments. "We should have had this program before OEO—we didn't recognize the needs of our brothers," a businessman declares. He places particular stress on the value of having Legal Services offices in the target areas. "This enables poor people to get advice on a wide range of problems right in their own neighborhoods instead of having to go to a plush office downtown."

A notable achievement of the program to this respondent is persuading the city courts to accept recognizance bonds from defendants who thus escape paying high bail fees to professional bondsmen. "This not only means a saving for a poor person but improves his attitude toward the community by giving him the feeling he is trusted," the respondent states. "If local government doesn't trust these people, they won't trust the government."

A leading attorney views the program as beneficial, but comments that it could have been carried out for less money. A school official declares "the program is still new and its value is just being recognized. If its successes are seen it will boom—it's just a matter of promotion."

One respondent hopefully notes that the program might decrease the need for the private social agencies, by helping poor people to keep out of trouble. For the same reason, he believes it might decrease the community's expenditures for crime and delinquency.

Asked whether there is a need for expanding the program, an elected official sees this as impossible to judge without a general evaluation of CAC projects. Others are less cautious. A journalist urges expansion into more areas—"People are unlikely to get on a bus and start off to find a Legal Aid office. Many don't have the money to do so." A businessman declares that "there should be six more Legal Aid offices in addition to the four present ones. There should be one in each Neighborhood Center."

The same respondent predicts that curtailment of the program would bring "the shyster right back in there with high interest rates and all the other evils." He adds, however, that the recognizance bond might survive the end of the program as a permanent reform.

Should curtailment come, some respondents believe, the Legal Aid Society might try to carry on with the help of the Cincinnati Bar Association—"but they couldn't continue the program in the same manner."

Foster Grandparents

Only two respondents—both businessmen—single out the Foster Grandparents program as highly beneficial but they are enthusiastic advocates. On the other hand, three other respondents list the program as one of the less valuable CAC projects.

"The Foster Grandparent program simultaneously helps both children and the elderly," one of its supporters declares. "The foster grandparent, an elderly person, fills a gap in the life of a child by providing parental love. The child—anywhere from 1 to 5 years old, lives in an orphanage, a hospital, an infant home. Five days a week his 'grandparent' visits the child, holds him, feeds him, plays with him—and loves him. Human beings are born with a need for parental love and these children have no parents to give it to them."

The "grandparents" are paid \$1.25 an hour, the respondent explains: this small income is enough to keep some of them off relief. "But the thing the grandparents talk about is not the income, but their happiness. Before they were lonely. Now the grandparents have a light in their eyes because they feel that somebody needs them after all."

The respondent believes strongly that the program should be enlarged to cover every parentless child in the eligible age group. "Other social agencies will want to enter the program when they see that it works," he declares.