

3812 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1967

WORK EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS

Position statement and recommendations to the New England Governors' Conference on the proposed transfer from Public Welfare Departments to the U.S. Department of Labor: Adopted by the New England Public Welfare Administrators on March 10, 1967, Boston, Mass.

BACKGROUND

In 1964 Congress passed Title V of the Economic Opportunity Act (entitled the Work Experience Program) to enable State welfare departments to develop experimental job training programs for public assistance recipients. The unique feature of these programs is that they combine essential social services such as family casework, remedial medical care, adult education, and child care, and work experience with the traditional techniques of on-the-job training and formal skill training. In the last two years, all six New England States have successfully demonstrated—in both rural and urban areas—that such a program can reach the so-called “unemployables” and can significantly reduce state and local welfare costs. Welfare departments in all six States have indicated an interest in adopting work experience programs on a permanent basis, under the authority of Section 409 of the Social Security Act (entitled Community Work and Training).

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS

(1) Congress amended Title V (EOA) to provide for the transfer as of July 1, 1967, of certain activities pertaining to manpower training to the Department of Labor. We have been disturbed, however, to learn that the Labor Department is interpreting these amendments so as to transfer *full* administrative authority for conducting Title V Projects.

(2) HR 5710—Amendments to the Social Security Act introduced by Representative Wilbur Mills in the 90th Congress—would amend Sec. 409 of the Act. It extends Labor's authority to include the administration of Community Work and Training Programs, the real heart of public welfare's successful effort to return state aid and local relief recipients to self-support.

EFFECT OF THE LABOR DEPARTMENT'S INTERPRETATION OF TITLE V AMENDMENTS AND THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO COMMUNITY WORK AND TRAINING (SEC. 409)—SOCIAL SECURITY ACT)

The New England Commissioners of Welfare endorse any steps which would streamline the administration of Federal programs. Congress and the Executive Branch are justifiably concerned with lack of coordination. However, steps (1) and (2) taken together will have consequences that we are certain neither Congress nor the Labor Department intends. Specifically, it would mean—

Welfare recipients will not be reached for some time to come. This is so because problems of dependency, low motivation, alcoholism, addiction, illiteracy, broken and unstable homes, immaturity, poor work history and poor physical and mental health—problems not uncommon in the public welfare caseload—are factors that disqualify public assistance recipients for Labor training programs. Moreover, Labor training programs have not reached rural areas in any significant degree. Title V projects have served these groups and areas successfully.

Fragmentation of efforts to rehabilitate public assistance recipients. Responsibility for Title V and CW&T would be divided among—Public Welfare, Office of Education, local non-profit organizations, the Department of Labor and the Office of Economic Opportunity. The effectiveness of existing programs has been due to the ability of State welfare departments to coordinate many needed services under a unified administrative structure.

Public Welfare would be left with statutory responsibility and accountability for services leading to self-support without authority and means to provide those services that are not available from other sources.

Any self-support activity undertaken by public welfare involving placement on a job or with a prospective employer would be subject to veto by the Labor Department or face loss of federal matching funds.