

One of these projects was set up to provide a comprehensive employment program for the poor. To date over 1,000 adults have been employed in various established service agencies and in service centers in poverty neighborhoods. During the first few months of operation the program was operated directly by the CAA through a coordinating staff and center personnel, and a rather stormy relationship developed between the CAA and the program coordinators. This was due to basic philosophical differences between the two groups over the scope of activities under the program. The CAA exhibited a reluctance to see the program extend beyond that of a manpower and employment service, while personnel closer to the program wished it to be extended to include community action. The problem was resolved by OEO by placing the program under a Settlement House Federation which has expressed a philosophy more compatible with that of the program coordinators.

2. Center Programs

The activities of two neighborhood centers participating in this program were the focus of study in this city. The placement program is of foremost importance at both Centers. Each Center acts as an employment bureau to recruit neighborhood personnel for placement as nonprofessional workers or aides in the more established service agencies. It is also the function of each Center to work with the agencies to evaluate the on-the-job performance of these aides. Resident aides have been placed in the schools, Senior Citizens Agencies, Probation Department, Consumer Education, State Employment Service, and the libraries. Each aide so employed is to work for a period of no longer than 18 months at which time he is, theoretically, to be ready for employment outside the scope of the poverty programs. Each aide spends 35 hours per week in the offices of the receiving agency and five hours at the Center. At the Center, aides are to participate in feed-back sessions with their counterparts from other agencies and with the Center personnel.

The placement program has been established with the following goals in mind: (1) to provide for upgrading of skills of some of the poor and their subsequent preparation for entry to the job market, (2) to bring about changes in agency perception of resident needs, and (3) to give the poor an opportunity to pinpoint area problems, to discuss them with their peers, and make program suggestions at feed-back sessions.

The program does meet one of the primary needs of the people of these poverty areas—that of providing immediate employment for a great number of people. However, the emergence of many problems has led to questions as to the long-term effectiveness of such a program. For example, the aides employed away from the Center have been subjected to supervision from two Directors—the director of the particular agency involved and the director of the Center. Thus, the aides experience a dual loyalty and aides do not feel themselves to be an integral part of either staff. Several of the aides said that since they were to return to the Center and report on agency activities, they were made to feel more like “spies” than agency personnel. It was also observed that in many cases skills were being upgraded as aides were relegated to routine clerical or janitorial duties with no effort on the part of the agencies to instruct them in the scope of agency activities. Some agencies showed a complete lack of concern over the performances of the aides assigned to them, the nature of their duties, or even their whereabouts at a particular time.

A second benefit of this program is supposed to be reflected in changes in the agencies as a result of exposure to the viewpoint of the poor. However, this was based on misconceptions about how traditional agencies operate. It appears to our field researchers that the aides were so far down in the structure of the agencies that very little of their influence was percolating up to the decision-makers.

In addition to the adult employment placement function, personnel at the Centers carry out programs to provide emergency and referral services for area residents. Special temporary projects (e.g., voter registration drives) and a minimal number of community action activities complete the list of Center programs.

3. Organization Arrangements

CAA Board of Directors

The Board of Directors forms the top echelon of decision-making and program determination; it hires the staff which coordinates all anti-poverty component