

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE STATEMENT ON THE EXTENT
OF "HOMELESS ALCOHOLIC" PROBLEM

1. The national total for the estimated number of homeless alcoholics is between 250,000 and 500,000.

2. The vast majority of homeless alcoholics are located in the larger American cities.

3. Estimates for the number of homeless alcoholics in some major cities are given below:

- (a) New York City—25,000–30,000
- (b) Chicago—15,000
- (c) Los Angeles—10,000
- (d) Philadelphia—7,000
- (e) Washington—6,000
- (f) Detroit—5,000
- (g) Houston—5,000
- (h) Cleveland—4,500
- (i) Baltimore—4,000
- (j) Atlanta—4,000
- (k) St. Louis—3,000
- (l) Pittsburgh—3,000
- (m) Seattle—3,000

EFFECTIVENESS OF VOLUNTARY TREATMENT WITH HOMELESS ALCOHOLICS

1. There now is increasing evidence that many homeless chronic alcoholics can be helped through voluntary treatment efforts. The development of new treatment approaches—and programs particularly attuned to the needs of these patients—are rapidly overcoming the past belief that homeless alcoholics could not be helped. Treatment programs for homeless alcoholics must deal with the interrelated medical, psychiatric, social and vocational problems of these men.

For example, Dr. William T. Hart, Director of the Monroe County Psychiatric Hospital Center (Rochester, New York), has recently written, "I had formerly believed that only a system involving physical restraint or threat of it would control the confirmed alcoholic. If, however, the reduction of admissions to the Penitentiary is due to increased use of treatment facilities, it is obvious that voluntary agencies have made significant inroads into the involuntary care provided by judicial commitment to the Penitentiary." In *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*—March 1968, Vol. 29, p. 100.

2. Below are listed five communities that have recently been pioneering in developing various treatment services for homeless alcoholics.

(a) *St. Louis*.—Alcoholics, formerly arrested for being drunk in public, are now brought to a special detoxification service in an abandoned general hospital. Without exception these men have been willing to come to this facility and the vast majority have remained in this hospital on a voluntary basis until such time as the staff felt they were ready to be discharged. The special training the police have received in handling these persons has made it completely unnecessary for them to use any force or physical restraint in bringing them in to this facility.

(b) *New York City*.—Through funds from the Vera Foundation, an entirely voluntary program of removing seriously intoxicated alcoholics from the street was recently initiated. As reported in the *New York Times* last month, the vast majority of persons offered assistance have voluntarily accompanied the treatment team to the rehabilitation facility. Furthermore, most of such persons have remained in the facility during the period of time designated for the program.

(c) *Philadelphia*.—Through a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, the Diagnostic and Relocation Center has been intensively studying and providing assistance to homeless alcoholics in a "Skid Row" part of Philadelphia. This program has been on an entirely voluntary basis and well over 2,000 men and women have been interviewed and provided assistance through this service. This agency has experimented with the use of former "Skid Row" men as a means of contacting other homeless alcoholics. This approach appears to have been extremely successful.