

cerning necessary action, and to develop, expand and foster research in public welfare.

THE VOICE OF THE POOR

The voices and opinions of welfare recipients, both individuals and organized groups, have proved to be most effective and useful in Board deliberations.

The Board has held public hearings and conferences as well as informal conversations with such persons and groups, and these methods will be continued by the Board as an aid in effecting improvements in the welfare system.

The Board is convinced of the wisdom of such participation of welfare recipients and will continue to look for new and imaginative ways to implement this conviction.

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICE CENTERS

The Board agrees with suggestions from a number of individuals and groups that welfare services should be brought to the people where they live, by means of neighborhood centers such as already exist in a few neighborhoods of a few cities in the state. These centers could also be open evenings and on weekends, for the convenience of the people they are intended to serve.

Moreover, the Board urges that city and county governments consider the establishment of neighborhood service centers that include, in addition to welfare services, such other information and referral services as health, employment, law, housing and family counselling. This would be an effective means of bringing the services of government to the people who need them most, and a further demonstration of the flexibility of democratic society.

LEGAL SERVICES FOR NEEDY PERSONS

For several years the Board has urged the passage of legislation to assure that legal representation is available to applicants and recipients of public assistance in the establishment of their welfare rights. To this end the Board urges the passage by the State Legislature of Senate Intro 5731 and Assembly 7058, now pending.

This legislation is a response to the growing recognition of the need for legal services for the poor as a matter of justice and right.

Federal financial participation is available for this program, and the Board strongly urges its enactment into law.

FLAT GRANTS

The State Board directed that the budgetary method be simplified last year to establish basic amounts of public assistance allowance based on family size and the age of the oldest child. This basic money amount includes food, clothing, personal incidentals, household supplies, school expenses, laundry for recipients of Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled, fuel, utilities and sales taxes. The only item which must be added for basic maintenance is the amount for rent.

Since we allow for special needs in certain circumstances such as special diets or moving expenses, which are not common to all recipients, additional money amounts must be added in such situations.

Nevertheless, we are convinced that a flat payment of assistance based upon family size is the most efficient and effective method of aiding poor people within the present welfare system. To this end we urge the Department to continue to achieve this goal.

USE OF VOLUNTEERS

The Board, which is itself composed of citizens who are not professionals in the field of social work, is deeply committed to the use of volunteers wherever possible in furnishing needed supporting services to welfare recipients.

Since 1965 the State Department of Social Services has had a Senior Welfare Consultant on Volunteer Services, the first such post in a Department of Welfare in any state. The primary functions of the Consultant are to organize volunteer services in local agencies, plan volunteer programs, and train supervisors directly responsible for the work of volunteers.

The Board hopes that there will be ever wider use of this consultative service for a broader and more effective involvement of volunteers in helping the needy.