

SERVICE TO MIGRANTS

A Statement of
Principles and Procedures

THE SOCIAL CASE WORK COUNCIL
of the
NATIONAL SOCIAL WELFARE ASSEMBLY
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FOREWORD

The post-war increase in the numbers of migrants, or persons away from home and in need, and the serious nature of their problems have caused concern to social agencies. This concern has led to the decision by the Social Case Work Council of the National Social Welfare Assembly to revise and reaffirm an earlier statement of procedures designed to prevent the "passing on" of persons from community to community, without proper regard for sound case work practices.

The earlier statement, known as the "Transportation Agreement," was formulated in 1903 by a committee appointed by the National Conference of Charities and Corrections (now the National Conference of Social Work), which was disturbed by the unsound procedures then current.

This Transportation Agreement was signed by agencies throughout the country, both publicly and privately supported, which agreed to follow the procedure set down before providing transportation for a person to move from one community to another. It had wide circulation.

After some eight years of experience the committee decided that a permanent administrative committee should be established "to interpret the rules through decisions in cases presented to it, and to suggest amendments or additions."

By 1920 strong national agencies had developed in each of the larger fields which dealt with the problems of migrants, and the responsibility for the plan passed from the National Conference of Social Work to a committee of representatives of these national agencies. The four original agencies were the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work (now the Family Service Association of America); the Child Welfare League of America; the National Association of Travelers Aid Societies (now the National Travelers Aid Association); and the National Tuberculosis Association. Three others were subsequently added—in 1925 the National Council of the Church Mission of Help; in 1931 the Salvation Army; and in 1932 the American Public Welfare Association.

Three members of the committee were designated as a decisions committee which considered disputed cases referred to it by signatory agencies.

During this period when social case work was developing, the Transportation Agreement performed an important service as an administrative tool in pointing out these principles which had come to be accepted as an integral part of social case work practice as related to the movement of people from one community to another.

By 1934 the national committee believed that these principles had become inherent in the practice of case workers, and that the use of a mechanical device such as signing the Transportation Agreement was no

longer advisable. The committee therefore disbanded, and the practice of signing the agreement was discontinued.

Now, however, with the confused practices that have been part of the war's aftermath, agencies themselves feel that it would be valuable to reaffirm in terms of present day philosophy and practice the sound basic procedures which were embodied in the former Transportation Agreement.

The following statement, prepared by a committee of the Social Case Work Council and approved by that body, is designed for this purpose.

THE COMMITTEE:

Sterling Johnson, *chairman*
Margaret Creech
Elizabeth H. Dexter
Eileen M. Kinsella

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PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

Fundamental in the case work approach to service to migrants is acceptance of the right of the American citizen to the free movement which is basic in the agricultural and industrial economy of the United States. The desire of the moving person to better his condition is a primary cause of migration.

Good case work by community agencies, both publicly and privately financed, presupposes clearly defined intake policies on the part of each agency, with understanding of these on the part of all others. This will avoid the passing around between local agencies of the migrant in need of assistance. In addition it is important that workers be familiar with the residence and settlement laws of the state and community in which they are operating, in order to avoid "passing on" migrants from community to community and from state to state.

Each Migrant Is an Individual

The first principle of case work is individualization of the person in need. Each migrant should be thought of as an individual whose presence in a community away from his former home is but one factor to be considered. As is true of long-time residents, many of his needs can be met or not met because resources exist or are limited in the community. He may have special problems due to his lack of ties in the community, but these are problems individually his, not those common to all migrants.

The status of migrants as individuals in the community where they find themselves in need of help may be considered from several aspects:

- (1) those who become stranded or ill in a community en route to a planned destination;
- (2) those who arrive in a community with a job or other expected resources but who need service temporarily;
- (3) those who arrive in a community after a period of wandering, or those who are in danger of establishing such a pattern.

Only skilled interviewing can determine the individual needs within such groups. The case worker needs to consider with each applicant what he is seeking by the move, and why he left the previous community. The worker will help the individual explore his potentialities for resolving his problem. The client should be helped to determine for himself whether the best opportunities for adjustment may lie in the community in which he finds himself in need, whether he should return to the community from which he came, or whether he should go to a different community.

The intake policy of the agency, and its decision as to whether its service is to be available should be based, for a public agency, on the legal provisions under which the agency operates, and for a private agency, upon the program and policy of that agency. In all instances it is the case worker's responsibility to make clear to the client the conditions under which assistance can be given. When the client is not eligible for assistance, the reasons for this limitation should be explained and referral made to appropriate resources.

The decision which will be reached by client and worker should be based upon the best chance of social adjustment for the individual and not alone upon the fact that he has lived for a period of time in a particular community. Acceptance of this principle will mean that emphasis will be placed on the client and his needs rather than on where he has legal settlement.

Experience of case workers with migrants who do not wish to plan thoughtfully and soundly should not deter a worker from attempting to explore with each client his situation and the resources available to him.

Immediate Needs and Long Range Planning

Inasmuch as some time may be required for a decision to be reached as to whether it is best for the client to remain in the community or to go elsewhere, immediate assistance may be needed until a plan can be worked out. Such assistance may involve provision of information about local resources such as social agency services, medical care or housing, or it may in-

volve financial assistance or shelter care for a temporary period. Emergency assistance in itself can meet only an individual's immediate need unless it is given in close relation to his objectives and a thoughtful consideration with him of the soundness of those objectives.

If he is remaining in the community there should be consideration by client and case worker of the wisdom of the plan and his potentiality for self-maintenance. A client remaining in the community may be one who has come with the expectation of staying there indefinitely or for a specific or limited time; or he may be one who applied for assistance in moving to another community but, as a result of the consideration with the case worker, decided to remain in the community. In the latter case, service should be given on a basis comparable to that of residents.

If he is going to another community there should be similar consideration of the wisdom of the move, including obtaining adequate and reliable evidence that the client's prospects for normal adjustment are not decreased by his going. This should include evidence from the client and from a social agency or other reliable source at the point of destination that he will have his own resources for maintenance, or that employment is actually available, or that relatives will be willing to receive and able to assist him, or that a social agency will be responsible for such financial assistance as may be needed after arrival.

It is socially destructive practice to encourage moving on to another community, either through help with cash, arrangements for transportation or by advice, unless evidence of the wisdom of the plan has been obtained from reliable sources in advance.

An increasing number of public welfare officials accept the principle that receipt of public assistance should not be conditioned upon a client's remaining in his home community when his health, his opportunity for employment or his maintenance of family ties require his removal. As a result, some states are reducing or eliminating residence and settlement

requirements, and working out with other states reciprocal agreements for providing assistance and service to migrants who cross state lines. Advance planning, whether for temporary visit or for permanent change of residence, is always preferable and may prevent hardship. Public welfare laws in many states authorize public welfare officials to move migrants to a state or county where they have settlement or residence, or where they have relatives or friends willing to support them. Such removal can be constructive only if (1) the move appears socially sound; (2) the migrant requests or consents to the removal; (3) the district of proposed residence accepts responsibility or authorizes removal.

Travel Arrangements

When the decision has been made by the client and case worker that movement to another location is wise, the case worker should see to it that provision is made to meet needs through to the final destination. This should be true whether the expenses are met from the client's or the agency's funds. The planning should include consideration of the best means of transportation for the individual, and all items of expense from the point of departure to the destination. It may be necessary in some situations to provide an attendant.

a. Transportation

The best mode of travel to assure the individual client's welfare should be the primary factor, rather than a difference in cost between bus and train fare or between train and plane. Usually a bus trip takes longer than a train so that additional expenses, such as food costs, reduce the difference in cost of fare. For some clients, such as children, elderly persons or runaways, the informality of bus travel, frequent change points, longer travel time and irregularity of schedules are arguments against using bus transportation.

b. Food en route

Sufficient money for food expenses en route should be carefully planned in relation to the number of meals needed to destination, and in relation to the cost per meal, depending on the source of the food. If meals in a Pullman diner are necessary, the cost will be more than if box lunches are purchased on a coach, or if meals on a bus trip are to be purchased in a restaurant at a bus stop. In some instances

it may even be desirable to provide a box lunch for the traveler to carry on the journey. Food expense money should also include enough to purchase milk or coffee on the journey.

c. Other travel expenses

Other travel expenses include money for such incidentals as (1) local transportation by bus, trolley, or taxi, depending on the circumstances, to get to the terminal at change points and in some instances at destination; (2) porter tips as may be needed in such cases as that of a parent traveling with small children and several pieces of luggage.

d. Assistance at transfer points

While the main planning will be done between the agencies at the points of departure and destination, it is well to emphasize that in some instances there may be one or more changes en route which should be carefully considered in the planning both for items of expense and for services during the period of waiting. Such services might include provision of a wheel chair, ambulance or care of children. Among the items of expense for this period should be food, extra tips for porters, transfer between stations, storage of luggage, payment to a matron who might be needed to provide or arrange rest accommodations, or to prepare formulas, or to meet emergencies. If the wait is overnight, money for lodging should be budgeted.

The social agency making the plan at the point of departure will be expected to notify the other agencies at the change point and the point of destination, of arrangements made and services to be needed. This should include authorization on their behalf for expenditure of money to meet unforeseen emergencies at the change point.

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The Social Case Work Council of the National Social Welfare Assembly hopes that the foregoing statement will give some practical guidance to case workers in their service to people "on the move."

As an indication of their concern about the problems and their desire to help meet them more effectively, the 22 national organizations listed on the following page have given their official endorsement to the principles included in this statement.

ENDORSING ORGANIZATIONS

- *American Association of Medical Social Workers
- *American Federation of International Institutes
- *American National Red Cross
- *Bureau of Public Assistance, Social Security Administration,
Federal Security Agency
- *Child Welfare League of America
 - Committee on Displaced Persons, Church World Service
 - Committee on Health and Welfare Planning, *Community
Chests and Councils, Inc.
 - Committee on Migrant Work, Home Missions Council
- *Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds
 - Department of Christian Social Relations of the National
Council, Protestant Episcopal Church
 - Disabled American Veterans
 - Episcopal Service for Youth
- *Family Service Association of America
- *International Social Service
- *National Board of the Young Women's Christian Associations
- *National Conference of Catholic Charities
- *National Jewish Welfare Board
- *National Organization for Public Health Nursing
- *National Travelers Aid Association
- *National Tuberculosis Association
- *National Urban League
- *The Salvation Army

*Affiliated with the National Social Welfare Assembly