

# Social Security Bulletin

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## SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE SOCIAL SERVICES

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The Social Security Act is justly regarded as a landmark in the social history of this country because of the development it has made possible in social insurance. That aspect of the law has overshadowed all others in the past year, during which the foundation has been laid for the two Nation-wide insurance systems which will provide income during periods of unemployment and in old age to large numbers of those who have worked in industry and commerce. These far-reaching developments, however, should be regarded in turn as a part of the fundamental contribution to social progress implicit in the social security program as a whole.

In this act, Congress envisaged "social security" as a goal to which effort is directed through several approaches. The Social Security Board is charged with the administration of five programs which have one factor in common in that all of them result, under specified circumstances, in the payment of money to individuals. These are the Federal program of old-age insurance, the Federal-State program of unemployment compensation, and the Federal-State programs of public assistance to the needy aged, needy blind, and dependent children. A second group of programs, administered by Federal agencies other than the Social Security Board, results not in the payment of money to individuals but in the establishment and extension of services for welfare and health. The third important area of service defined in the act is the responsibility, delegated to the Board, for study and recommendation as to "methods of providing economic security through social insurance, and as to legislation and matters of administrative policy concerning old-age pensions, unemployment compensation, accident compensation, and related subjects."

Thus, from the start, "social security" has been regarded not as an isolated goal but as an advance

through a series of interrelated social services essential to the well-being of a modern people. The act's provisions for public assistance to the needy and for the extension of community services for health and welfare are rooted in the history of past effort on the part of local communities, the States, and the Federal Government. Through the authority granted in the law, Federal funds have been made available for these programs to complement those provided in the States, and national recognition has been given to needs with which localities and even States could not cope alone. A Nation-wide framework has been established in which the States are encouraged to participate according to their special needs, capacities, and desires. The extent to which this opportunity has been accepted by the States indicates national acceptance of the fundamental objectives of the Social Security Act, and a degree of progress made possible only because of the collaboration of agencies of government at the various levels—Federal, State, and local.

The two insurance programs represent an extension of the area of the social services within the United States. A century ago a bitter controversy raged as to the place of government in the field of education. It was then necessary to argue that government alone could provide the opportunity inherent in public education. It was necessary to point out that the well-being of families, of communities, and of the people as a whole required that access to education be assured to all children.

Now the insurance programs represent a similar recognition of the place of other social services in a Nation whose economic life is bound together by the strands of commerce. Here, as in the older countries, it has become evident that the welfare of the Nation, as well as the welfare of individuals,

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suffers when income is interrupted or cut short for large groups of the population. Agriculture, industry, trade, and the professions all depend on an unimpeded flow of purchasing power. The progress of a whole people depends upon the assurance of opportunity not only to those who are helpless by reason of personal adversity but also to those whose chance to gain a living is blocked by social forces which they, as individuals, cannot control.

Basically, all 10 programs inaugurated under the Social Security Act have a common aim in safeguarding the opportunity of American families to participate in the economic life of their times. This opportunity is furthered by the services to give children a chance for a fair start in life, to prevent sickness and the dependency resulting from sickness, and to help handicapped workers to regain a place in productive activity. It is safeguarded by the provision of income to groups of the needy who are unable to earn for themselves—children deprived of parental support, the blind, and the aged. As the two insurance programs get fully under way, opportunity will be further sustained by these methods of steadying the livelihood of a great army of the Nation's wage earners during periods of temporary unemployment and in old age. The protections afforded under the Social Security Act are still by no means complete. It is important to realize, on the other hand, that a substantial ground work has been laid for an integrated development of the social services demanded by the circumstances of modern life.

It is the conviction of the Social Security Board that the responsibilities with which the Board is charged can be met only by continuing consideration of its activities in their relationship to the whole area of the social services. The meaning of the programs administered by the Board is to be understood only by reference to those of other agencies which also are concerned with efforts to prevent, offset, or abolish forces which make for insecurity. An outstanding example of this interdependence appears in the relationship between the State unemployment compensation administrations and the State employment services. When a qualified worker cannot get a suitable job within the period of time set by the law of his State, he has a right to benefits. From the mo-

ment, however, when he first reports himself out of work, the employment service endeavors to provide what is better than benefits from the standpoint of both morale and money—the chance to work and to earn a living. If that chance is lacking, his benefits help to tide over the period of his involuntary unemployment.

Assistance to the needy under the Social Security Act is bound up with other measures of government directed to the same end. At the request of other Federal agencies and with their collaboration, the Board has therefore instituted the collection or compilation of regular reports to indicate the total extent of public aid to the needy in the United States. Within the States there has been progress toward the coordination or integration of efforts under the three public-assistance programs, and in some instances under general relief programs also, to promote economical and efficient administration and well-rounded consideration of families whose needs entitle them to aid. Within the programs administered by the Board, the system of Federal old-age insurance, which is to provide future annuities for qualified workers, is hardly to be understood except in association with the complementary Federal-State program of old-age assistance, which provides help for those who have been unable to secure their livelihood in old age by this or other means.

It is with the aim of fulfilling its own responsibilities for study and administration and of facilitating the efforts of other agencies concerned with the social services that the Board has started publication of the Social Security Bulletin. The Bulletin will record developments in the fields for which the Board carries responsibility and, in certain instances, through the collaboration of other agencies, will summarize closely related developments essential to the measurement of the present progress and future potentialities of the social security program. As occasion offers, the results of research will be presented. Designed primarily as a link between members of the Board's Nation-wide organization and between the Board and the large number of Federal and State agencies directly concerned with administration of the program, it is hoped that the Bulletin also will promote a general understanding of the contribution of the social services to progress in the United States.