

Introduction

The City Welfare Department is one component of a large and complex welfare system which operates at every level of government. Its relationships with other welfare agencies and programs and the scope of its responsibilities are complicated. Briefly, two basic subsystems of public welfare are in operation in New Hampshire - (1) categorical assistance programs, which are federally funded in part and are administered by a central State agency, and (2) general assistance programs, such as that operated by the City Welfare Department, which are locally funded and administered.

In general, the City Welfare Department provides assistance to needy people who require temporary help whether or not they have a residence as defined under New Hampshire law RSA 165. People are found to be in need when they are poor and unable to support themselves. This is defined by when someone lacks the resources to provide themselves with the basic requirements of life in our society, such as food, shelter, heat and electricity. In the language of the field, welfare provided by the City Welfare Department is known as General Assistance.

The Department's responsibilities are of a dual nature. On one hand, it is responsible to those members of the community who need assistance to see that they receive it. On the other hand, it is responsible to the citizens who pay for that assistance, through taxes, to ensure that it goes only to those who are truly needy. The Department's responsibility is to expend as much money as is necessary on the one hand and to expend as little as is necessary on the other. In effect, the Department succeeds in

fulfilling its ethical and legal obligations to the extent that these two interests are made to coincide.

The Department has an additional responsibility to both welfare recipients and the community as a whole to try to overcome the causes of the need for General Assistance to the point that it is no longer required. The steps needed to help individuals/families reestablish themselves financially vary and different approaches are dictated in different instances. Case management therefore becomes an integral part of assisting families in once again becoming more independent financially. Each applicant/recipient needs are considered. Then recommendations and requirements are made based on the needs.

However, the Department must adhere to practices which ensure that all applications for assistance are treated according to the same objective standards and that the legal and constitutional rights of all applicants and recipients are protected. Therefore, each general assistance office is required to have written guidelines as a standard for determining its decisions. Central to the prescriptions of fairness and equal treatment is the right of all applicants and recipients to appeal any decision of the Department with which they are dissatisfied.

These guidelines for the administration of general assistance by the City Welfare Department delineate responsibilities to be met by the Department and by applicants and recipients in the general assistance process and establish a policy and procedure for hearing appeals of departmental decisions. They are not to be construed as superseding any laws of the State of New Hampshire or the United States.