

The Department of National Health and Welfare administers the universal programmes of family allowances; youth allowances (except in Quebec), and old age security pensions; retirement, survivors, and disability pensions under the Canada Pension Plan (except in Quebec); and the programmes under which costs are shared with the provinces for health and welfare programmes which they administer. These include the hospital insurance programme; the medical care insurance programme; the Canada Assistance Plan, which covers cost sharing for social assistance and child maintenance, health care for needy persons, and extension of welfare services within the province; the categorical programmes of old age assistance, blind persons allowances, and disabled persons allowances. Some provinces are now integrating the latter three categorical programmes with their general programmes, as they are encouraged to do under the Canada Assistance Plan, which is intended to provide a comprehensive framework for all cost-shared welfare programmes.

Provincial welfare departments are responsible for social assistance programmes, including aid to unemployed persons, needy mothers and other dependent groups. They are responsible also for the provision and regulation and support of institutional care, the protection of neglected and dependent children, foster care and adoption services and services for delinquent children. Some or all of these services may be administered by the provincial department of welfare, but in most provinces there is some delegation of responsibility to the municipalities and, in some provinces, to voluntary agencies. The Province of Quebec also operates the Quebec Pension Plan, and a youth allowances programme.

Private or voluntary (non-governmental) agencies are important community resources in almost every area of welfare, and many receive financial grants from public departments. Children's aid societies are, for example, an integral part of the public child welfare programme. Other important welfare services include family counselling, after-care of prisoners, visiting homemakers, agencies for the rehabilitation of the handicapped, neighbourhood centres, counselling agencies and clubs for older people, and various services under the auspices of church and ethnic groups. Organized recreational programmes assume a multiplicity of forms under the auspices of boys' and girls' clubs, Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations and service clubs, and other groups.

Community organization is encouraged locally by association of voluntary and public welfare agencies and interested individuals organized into welfare councils or social planning councils. Their work is carried on through professional staff and committees representing welfare and other community interests. A national voluntary association, the Canadian Welfare Council, co-ordinates planning nationally.

Coverage Under Social Welfare Programmes

The complex of social welfare programmes provides for income support through one or more measures, for the major exigencies of illness, old age, unemployment, disability and industrial accident, costs of child rearing, widowhood and orphanhood. Protective and other services for children deprived of a normal home life are available in all areas of the country. Other important services to strengthen family life, such as day-care services, homemaker services and the services of specialized voluntary welfare agencies, are concentrated for the most part in the larger areas of population.