

## History of Social Services in Nebraska

The Nebraska Department of Social Services offers many financial assistance programs for people in need including Aid to Dependent Children, Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled, Medical Services, Food Programs, Low Income Energy Assistance, Services for Crippled Children and Child Support Enforcement. It also provides support service programs for aged, blind and disabled adults and for families, children and youth as well as operates the Nebraska Center for Children and Youth.

In 1865 and 1866, medical needs of indigent persons and institutional care for the blind, deaf children and "for insane persons" were the only services provided for by the territorial Legislature. With statehood in 1867, the Legislature continued to appropriate funds nearly every session for some sort of institution to provide care for "indigent or defective persons of one class or another".

The Home for the Friendless, which eventually became the Nebraska Center for Children and Youth, was established in 1887 as a semi-public home for dependent children and elderly women. Today, the Nebraska Center for Children and Youth (NCCY) receives children including those under 18 years of age who have been committed to it by a juvenile court for evaluation, treatment, and/or residential care.

In 1905, state regulations for boarding and maternity homes were enacted and the Orthopedic Hospital in Lincoln was established.

### State Department of Public Welfare

The first State Department of Public Welfare was established in 1919. It encompassed the Bureau of Child Welfare and absorbed the duties of the Board of Charities and Corrections, Department of Health, and Bureau of Pardons and Paroles. Interestingly, responsibilities for the Racing Commission and for the licensing of boxing were also placed under the Department.

Just 12 years later, in 1931, the Department of Welfare was abolished. The Legislature struggled for the next four years with a variety of measures to try to cope with the difficulties Nebraskans faced due to the Great Depression.

In 1935, Congress passed the Federal Social Security Act. From this, the State Legislature established three programs of assistance during a special session. The three programs were Old-Age Assistance, Blind Assistance, and Aid to Dependent Children. Working in these programs were 36 workers as compared to the 1,700+ people working today in social service programs in Nebraska. Jobs for those early workers as today were to work with families and individuals, determine their eligibility for assistance, and help them in any way possible during that time of great national need.

The first Aid to Dependent Children payments were only \$18 a month for a mother and one child plus a maximum of \$12 for each additional child. Old-Age Assistance and Blind Assistance had \$30 a month ceilings.

In 1969, Nebraska started their first WIN projects in Lancaster and Douglas Counties. This program (Work Incentive Program) was established by Congress as an amendment to the Social Security Act in 1967. Its purpose was to prepare appropriate ADC recipients for paid employment through a comprehensive program of work experience and training coupled with supportive social services.

The Social Security Administration through the Supplemental Security Income Program took over payment of federal public assistance to aged persons and blind and disabled adults in 1974. This, in effect, replaced the State's AABD Program but it remained as a supplement to certain SSI recipients and to provide payments to certain adults in need of assistance but not eligible for SSI.

In the next year, 1976, the Child Support Enforcement Program became effective statewide with the purpose of locating absent parents, establishing paternity of children, and collecting child support payments. A program of state aid to the disabled was also enacted by the Legislature providing assistance to persons who are disabled for a short period but not permanently.

The 1978 Legislature passed bills setting up two new programs within the Department of Public Welfare. The first was designed to deal comprehensively with the problem of Domestic Abuse, particularly spouse abuse. The second provided assistance and services to children who are judicially determined to be status offenders.

#### Nebraska Department of Social Services

Another major organizational change occurred in 1982 when the Legislature enacted bills that transferred total responsibility for social services programs to the State effective July 1, 1983. (Prior to that, each county was responsible for administering the programs and the State only supervised.) Shortly after, the name of the Department was changed to the Nebraska Department of Social Services.

The Volunteer Services Program was implemented in 1984. This was not a new concept or practice as volunteers have contributed to the care of people in need even before State supported social services existed. This program, however, offers some structure for matching the time and talents of Nebraska citizens with the needs of people receiving public assistance. You, as a volunteer, are now a part of the history of the social services in Nebraska...

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