

Public Assistance Employees: Their Salaries

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How much a State pays its public assistance workers seems to be greatly influenced by the general salary level for public employment in the State and by attitudes within the State toward the public assistance programs and the workers who administer them. On the other hand, salaries paid by a State apparently have little, if any, relation to the general educational level of the public assistance workers or to the State's relative wealth. This article discusses differences among types of social work positions and among States in the average salaries paid public assistance employees and offers some possible explanations as to why they are among the lowest-paid professional workers. The education of public assistance employees was discussed in the February Bulletin.

SALARIES paid social workers suggest that the public considers that the virtue of "doing good" is its own reward. In mid-1950, persons in social work positions—relatively few of whom had full professional training—earned a median salary of \$2,960.¹ This amount was among the lowest in the Nation paid to workers in professional jobs. As a group, for example, the 75,000 workers in all types of public and private social work² earned about the same as teachers and less than librarians and hospital dietitians. Total compensation of hospital dietitians, which included the value of meals furnished to them by hospitals as well

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¹ Unless otherwise specified, averages used throughout this report are medians; in other words, half the workers earned more than the amount specified and the other half less.

² Information on salaries of social work employees was obtained in the Nationwide survey of all social work employees conducted in mid-1950 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Information for employees in full-time social work positions in the State and local agencies administering the federally aided public assistance and public child welfare programs was obtained in a study, also conducted in mid-1950, made jointly by the Bureau of Public Assistance and the Children's Bureau of the Social Security Administration, Federal Security Agency, as part of the BLS survey. For further details, see Elizabeth G. Epler, "Public Assistance Employees: Their Education," *Social Security Bulletin*, February 1952.

as their average cash earnings of \$2,820, cannot be determined but undoubtedly was higher than total earnings of persons in social work jobs. Librarians averaged \$3,050 a year, and teachers averaged \$2,980 for the school year.³

Among the several groups of low-paid social workers, the 30,000 public assistance employees, who averaged \$2,710 a year, were next to the lowest paid (table 1); the only group earning less in cash were workers with the aged in institutions. With this exception, others of their social work colleagues did much better than the public assistance workers. Social work educators made the most (\$4,710 annually, on the average); workers in community organization came second, with an annual average of \$4,360; and psychiatric social workers in clinics were next in order, with a median of \$3,920.

In the article on education of public assistance employees published in the February BULLETIN, two points were made that may be worth considering in relation to salaries paid workers in social work positions: (1) There are not enough workers with graduate social work education to fill all social work positions; and (2) the public assistance programs have not at-

³ Information on salaries of librarians (1950), teachers (1948-49), and hospital dietitians (1949) from the BLS report, *Social Workers in 1950* (American Association of Social Workers, 1952), p. 21.

tracted even their share of the workers with some graduate social work training. These facts on the training of available social workers, combined with data on the low salaries paid in the field, can lead to an argument on their interrelationship in the vein of the old query concerning the priority of the hen or the egg. Some persons will argue that more of the better-trained workers would be attracted to employment in public assistance agencies if the field were more rewarding financially, while others will claim salaries would be higher if most of the workers available for employment were better trained. The fact that salaries tend generally to be higher in fields with larger proportions of employees with social work training may be used to support either side of the debate.

Salaries of Employees

Usually, within any individual State, public assistance employees in social work positions in the State office earn a higher average salary than

Table 1.—Employees in social work positions: Median salaries and percent of workers with graduate social work education, by social work field, 1950

Social work field	Median salaries	Percent with graduate social work education
Teaching social work	\$4,710	88
Community organization	4,360	50
Work with the mentally ill in clinics	3,920	96
Work with the physically handicapped	3,870	31
School social work	3,730	63
Work with adult offenders	3,730	32
General medical social work	3,370	80
Work with the mentally ill in hospitals	3,350	73
Group work	3,210	37
Family services	3,170	69
Court services for children	3,120	44
Other services to individuals	3,060	43
Noninstitutional child welfare work	3,030	66
Institutional child welfare work	3,030	47
Public assistance	2,710	22
Work with the aged in institutions	2,490	17

Source: *Social Workers in 1950* (American Association of Social Workers, 1952), pp. 15 and 48.

those who work for the localities because State employees, being supervisors of State and local operations or consultants, are required to have more specialized training or experience for their jobs than are local employees. The average salary also tends to be higher in the larger local offices because only these offices have administrative operations that are sufficiently varied to warrant the employment of specialists and consultants.

In 1950, executives other than the agency heads and field representatives—both predominantly supervisory in function—earned more than any other group of public assistance employees in social work positions. "Other social workers," most of whom were specialists and consultants in social work, had higher average earnings than caseworkers and director-workers, who head small local offices; the "other social worker" group also earned more than supervisors in local agencies. Among the employees in positions most generally found only in local offices, salaries followed the expected pattern, reflecting the degree of responsibility, training, and social work experience required for the job. Directors, who headed local offices with enough staff so that the executive head himself did not carry a caseload, earned the most; casework supervisors were second; director-workers, who head small local offices and carry caseloads, came third; and caseworkers earned the least (table 2).

Executive heads of local offices.—Generally speaking, the larger the local office headed by a director or director-worker the more salary he makes (table 4). Director-workers in one-man offices averaged only \$2,649;

on the other hand, director-workers heading offices with six or more employees earned \$2,821. The lowest salary paid directors was for heads of offices with five or fewer workers (\$3,098, on the average) while their colleagues directing larger agencies earned proportionately more—up to an average of \$5,400 in the largest offices with 51 or more employees. Although salaries of directors and director-workers varied widely, for three-fourths of the executive heads the earnings fell within fairly narrow ranges—\$2,200 to \$3,400 for director-workers and \$2,600 to \$4,200 for directors (table 3).

Other executives.—The salaries of executives other than the heads of agencies cover a wide range—from less than \$1,400 to \$6,500—with two-thirds of the workers earning from \$3,800 to \$5,400. The greater diversity in salary for these positions compared with some of the others reflects the variety of functions represented. The group includes all employees in key executive positions of an administrative character with direct responsibility to the executive heads of State or local agencies, such as directors of major functional units of the agency.

Supervisors.—The median salary of \$3,383 for supervisors is based on earnings for 2,493 supervisors of caseworkers in local offices and for 390 supervisors of casework supervisors. If each group had been analyzed separately, probably the median salary for supervisors of supervisors would have been larger than \$3,383, while the median for supervisors of caseworkers would have been less. Almost 90 percent of the supervisors were paid between \$2,600 and \$4,200 annually. No

Table 3.—Public assistance workers: Number and percent receiving specified salary, by position, 1950

Position and salary	Number ¹	Percent
Directors, total.....	2 1,327	100.0
Less than \$2,600.....	92	6.9
2,600-2,999.....	241	18.2
3,000-3,399.....	222	16.7
3,400-3,799.....	286	21.6
3,800-4,199.....	203	15.3
4,200-4,599.....	115	8.7
4,600-4,999.....	76	5.7
5,000 and over.....	92	6.9
Director-workers, total....	3 1,738	100.0
Less than \$2,200.....	237	13.6
2,200-2,599.....	416	23.9
2,600-2,999.....	479	27.6
3,000-3,399.....	405	23.3
3,400-3,799.....	153	8.8
3,800 and over.....	48	2.8
Other executives, total....	651	100.0
Less than \$3,400.....	63	9.7
3,400-3,799.....	57	8.8
3,800-4,199.....	65	10.0
4,200-4,599.....	99	15.2
4,600-4,999.....	161	24.7
5,000-5,399.....	95	14.6
5,400-5,799.....	58	8.9
5,800 and over.....	53	8.1
Supervisors, total.....	2,871	100.0
Less than \$2,600.....	132	4.6
2,600-2,999.....	483	16.8
3,000-3,399.....	849	29.6
3,400-3,799.....	893	31.1
3,800-4,199.....	297	10.3
4,200-4,599.....	172	6.0
4,600 and over.....	45	1.6
Field representatives, total	492	100.0
Less than \$2,600.....	6	1.2
2,600-2,999.....	25	5.1
3,000-3,399.....	50	10.2
3,400-3,799.....	150	30.5
3,800-4,199.....	114	23.2
4,200-4,599.....	61	12.4
4,600 and over.....	86	17.5
Caseworkers, total.....	21,898	100.0
Less than \$2,000.....	1,514	6.9
2,000-2,199.....	3,096	14.1
2,200-2,399.....	2,594	11.8
2,400-2,599.....	4,435	20.3
2,600-2,799.....	4,490	20.5
2,800-2,999.....	2,502	11.4
3,000-3,199.....	1,345	6.1
3,200-3,399.....	388	1.8
3,400-3,599.....	1,169	5.3
3,600 and over.....	365	1.7
Other social workers, total.	1,024	100.0
Less than \$2,600.....	145	14.2
2,600-2,999.....	150	14.6
3,000-3,399.....	208	20.3
3,400-3,799.....	203	19.8
3,800-4,199.....	116	11.3
4,200-4,599.....	116	11.3
4,600 and over.....	86	8.4

¹ In each group, excluded a few workers who did not report salary information.

² Includes 43 directors working primarily on child welfare.

³ Includes 128 director-workers working primarily on child welfare.

tabulations were made of salaries according to the number of workers supervised, but a previous study⁴ showed no significant relationship.

Field representatives.—Variations

⁴ Vivian B. Norman and Dorothy R. Bucklin, *Personnel in Local Offices of State Public Assistance Agencies, 1946: Part I. Salaries*, Public Assistance Report No. 12, August 1947, p. 15.

Table 2.—Public assistance workers: Annual salaries, by position, 1950

Position	Number of social work employees	Annual salary			
		Median	Lowest	Highest	Middle range ¹
Executives heads of local offices: ²					
Directors.....	1,332	\$3,550	\$1,400	\$6,599	\$2,998-4,103
Director-workers.....	1,741	2,742	1,400	5,500	2,452-3,123
Other executives.....	654	4,719	1,400	6,500	4,097-5,140
Supervisors.....	2,883	3,383	1,900	5,100	3,041-3,702
Field representatives.....	500	3,836	2,100	5,100	3,568-4,320
Caseworkers.....	21,973	2,569	1,400	5,500	2,267-2,824
Other social workers.....	1,031	3,419	1,400	5,900	2,905-3,975

¹ Range within which half the salaries fell.

² Represents all executive heads of local offices, including a few working primarily on child welfare. Excludes data on salaries of heads of State agencies.

³ Salaries coded in \$200 intervals, from less than \$1,400 to \$6,599 and over. Salaries shown as \$1,400 represent salaries below that amount; salary shown as \$6,599, above that amount.

Table 4.—Executive heads of local public assistance offices:¹ Median salaries, by number of social workers in local offices, 1950

Number of workers (including executive head)	Median salary
Director-workers, all offices.....	\$2,742
1 worker.....	2,649
2 workers.....	2,742
3-5 workers.....	2,868
6 or more workers.....	2,821
Directors, all offices.....	3,550
Fewer than 6 workers.....	3,098
6-10 workers.....	3,463
11-25 workers.....	3,874
26-50 workers.....	4,400
51 or more workers.....	5,400

¹ Represents all executive heads of local offices, including a few working primarily on child welfare.

in the salaries of field representatives apparently reflect interagency differences in salary levels more than any other factor. Within most States, field representatives are all of the same salary grade, and intrastate differ-

ences usually reflect the periodic pay increases given to workers for completion of specified periods of employment in the same position. In the larger States with more complex administrative setups, field representatives may be employed at several different salary grades. Annual salaries for this group of employees ranged from \$2,100 to \$5,100, but more than four-fifths earned \$3,400 or more; the median was \$3,836.

Caseworkers.— The caseworkers, who have the important job of working directly with public assistance applicants and recipients, were the lowest paid of all public assistance workers, with a median salary for the United States of \$2,569. Although their salaries ranged from less than \$1,400 to about \$5,500, more than three-fourths of the caseworkers made between \$2,000 and \$3,000 a year. Three States—California, Michigan, and

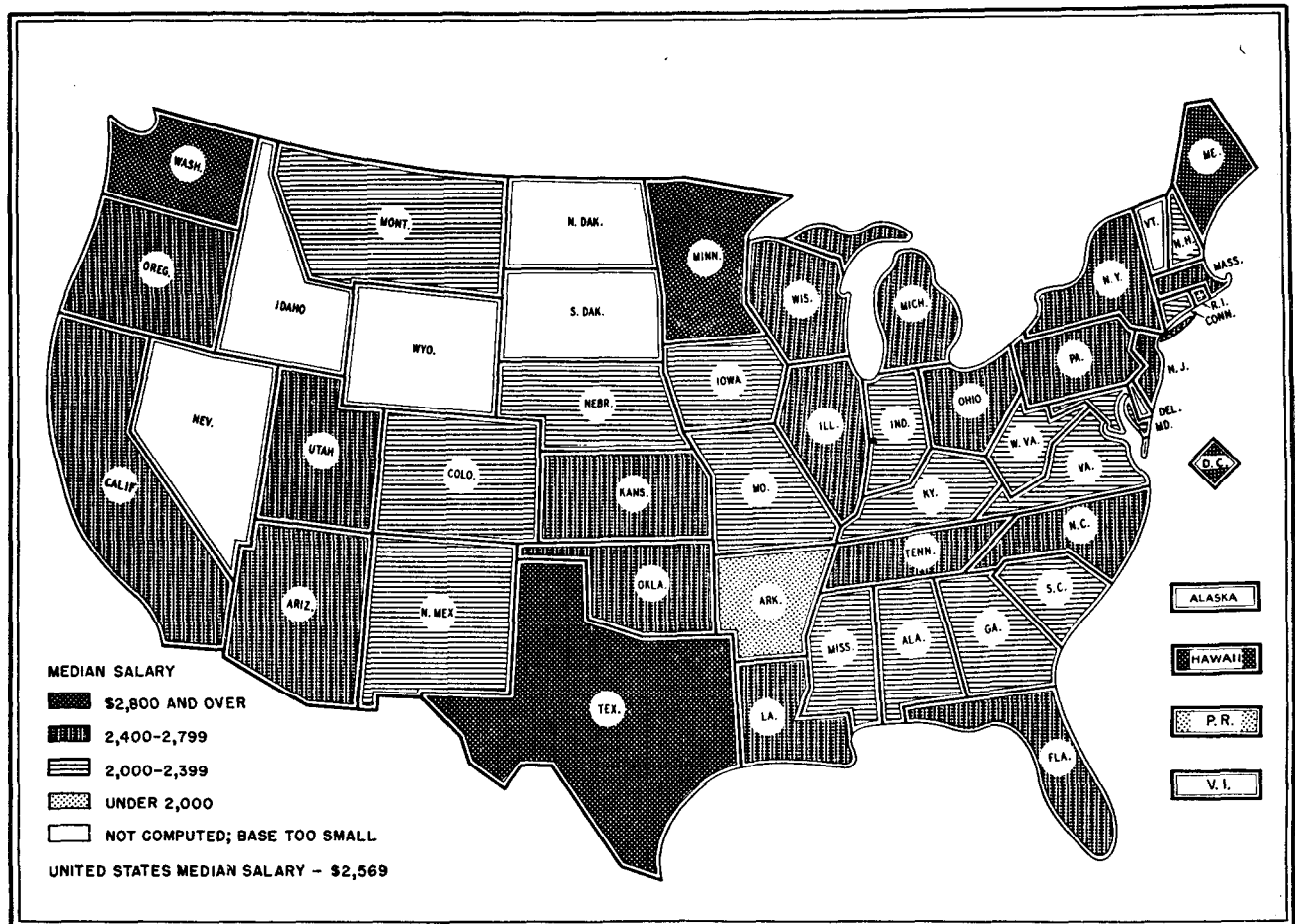
New York—which employed about a third of the country's public assistance caseworkers and paid relatively high salaries, pushed up the median for the Nation. The median salary, excluding these three States, was \$2,442.

Most public assistance agencies give periodic raises to workers who stay in the same position. These periodic increments explain much of the variation in the salaries of caseworkers. For the country as a whole, caseworkers' salaries and their length of employment with their present agency were directly related, as shown below.

Years with agency	Median annual salary
Less than 1.....	\$2,288
1-2.9.....	2,523
3-4.9.....	2,568
5-9.9.....	2,594
10-19.9.....	2,852
20 or more.....	3,414

If these increments were the only

Chart 1.—Public assistance caseworkers: Median salary, by State, 1950



explanation of the variations in salary by length of employment, a leveling off would be expected at 3 or 5 years of

employment, when employees reach the maximum of their salary range, but no increase for longer service

should be expected to occur. The larger average salaries for persons employed 10 years and longer reflect not a Nation-wide tendency to continue to increase salaries for service beyond 5 years but the influence of a few States—notably New York—with comparatively high salaries and a large number of long-time employees. Of the more than 4,500 workers in the country who had been with their present agency 10 years or more, more than one-fourth were employed in New York, where the salaries of more than two-fifths of all caseworkers were \$2,800 or more and where most of the lowest-paid workers earned as much as the average salary in other States.

"Other social workers."—The group classified as "other social workers," like that of "other executives," is heterogeneous in the functions represented, and their salaries vary widely as a result. Included in this group are the medical and psychiatric social workers, other special social work consultants, researchers, and other employees in social work positions who do not carry caseloads and are not in key executive or administrative positions. Like the "other executive" group, these employees were fairly evenly distributed over a wide salary range; their median annual pay was \$3,419.

State Variations

Salaries of public assistance workers in 1950, like almost everything else related to the assistance programs, varied widely among the States. Median salaries that are statistically reliable⁵ could be computed for 27 States for directors and director-workers combined. Salaries paid to all executive heads in these States ranged from a median of \$1,935 in Puerto Rico to \$4,425 in California; the median State was Oklahoma, where the average executive's salary was \$2,982 (table 5). When the 27 States are distributed by size of salaries earned by executive heads of local agencies, they fall in the following groups.

⁵ Medians were not computed for States with fewer than 50 employees in the specified groups (executive heads and caseworkers), since valid interstate comparisons cannot be made on small numbers.

Table 5.—Executive heads of local public assistance offices: Median salary and size of office, 1950

State	Median salary ¹	Number of social work employees in median-size office ¹	Total number of executive heads of local offices	Executive heads by number of social work employees in local offices ¹			
				1	2	3-5	6 or more
Total and percentage distribution ¹	\$3,033	4	3,073	18.6	17.7	31.9	31.9
States with 100 or more executive heads of local offices:				Percent			
Georgia	2,734	2	160	35.6	30.0	25.6	8.8
Illinois	3,515	7	103	1.0	11.7	34.0	53.4
Iowa	2,940	3	123	29.8	29.8	28.1	12.4
Kansas	2,818	3	100	29.0	24.0	29.0	18.0
Massachusetts ²	2,958	2	156	40.4	20.5	24.4	14.7
Michigan	3,164	4	140	17.9	18.6	30.0	33.6
Missouri	2,492	5	113	9.7	12.4	54.0	23.9
Ohio	2,697	4	246	22.4	16.3	30.1	31.3
Virginia	2,829	3	119	37.0	18.5	26.9	17.6
Wisconsin	3,569	4	101	11.0	13.0	55.0	21.0
States with 50-99 executive heads of local offices:				Number			
Alabama	3,260	5	65	0	2	40	23
Arkansas	2,274	3	74	2	34	36	2
California	4,425	19	64	2	6	8	44
Colorado	3,026	3	61	21	9	15	16
Indiana	3,071	5	91	1	44	51	35
Louisiana	4,029	10	60	0	0	6	54
Minnesota	3,567	4	90	12	19	40	16
Mississippi	2,508	5	82	3	10	50	19
Montana	2,846	2	50	29	11	5	5
Nebraska	2,497	3	82	17	35	24	6
New York	4,083	20	65	0	0	0	61
North Carolina	3,410	5	94	3	17	40	34
Oklahoma	2,982	9	74	2	5	17	50
Pennsylvania	4,200	12	82	1	6	18	57
Puerto Rico	1,935	3	71	2	34	27	7
South Dakota	3,096	2	59	30	15	8	3
Tennessee	2,700	4	92	9	20	39	24
States with fewer than 50 executive heads of local offices: ⁴							
Alaska			5	2	2	1	0
Arizona			14	0	2	7	5
Connecticut			13	0	0	0	13
Florida			12	0	0	0	12
Hawaii			3	0	0	0	3
Idaho			30	14	5	8	3
Kentucky			33	(⁶)	(⁶)	(⁶)	(⁶)
Maine			11	0	0	2	9
Maryland			20	1	2	4	13
New Hampshire			8	0	0	2	6
New Jersey			37	3	2	5	27
New Mexico			30	5	3	13	9
North Dakota			49	33	11	4	1
Oregon			32	7	2	10	13
Rhode Island			5	0	0	0	5
South Carolina			45	0	0	14	31
Texas			18	8	2	7	1
Utah			25	11	4	7	3
Vermont			5	0	0	0	5
Washington			29	0	1	6	22
West Virginia			8	0	0	0	8
Wyoming			23	13	5	5	0

¹ Medians and percentages based on data excluding a few employees who did not report salary or size of local office.

² Represents all executive heads of local offices, including a few working primarily on child welfare. Differs from total number of local offices administering public assistance and child welfare services in the United States. Some local-office heads did not submit data; some positions were vacant; and more than one head was reported for some local offices. No State data are shown for Nevada and the Virgin Islands, for which no heads of local offices were reported, and for Delaware and the District of

Columbia, which have no local offices. Includes one director reported for the agency in the District of Columbia. Includes also a few employees who did not report data on salary or size of office.

³ Excludes data for 166 local offices, 105 of which have no full-time executive head; the other 61 did not report data on executive head.

⁴ No computations made for States with fewer than 50 employees.

⁵ Includes only heads of local child welfare services offices. No local-office heads were reported for public assistance.

⁶ Data not reported.

Median salary of executive heads	Number	State
Less than \$2,500	4	Nebr., Mo., Ark., P. R.
2,500-2,999	10	Okla., Mass., Iowa, Mont., Va., Kans., Ga., Tenn., Ohio, Miss.
3,000-3,499	6	N. C., Ala., Mich., S. Dak., Ind., Colo.
3,500-3,999	3	Wis., Minn., Ill.
4,000 and over	4	Calif., Pa., N. Y., La.

The direct relation between the salary of an executive and the size of the office that he heads seems apparent in a State-by-State comparison, as it is for the Nation as a whole. Only a few States, however, had enough directors and director-workers to permit valid statistical conclusions. Still, the States with the lowest median salaries appear, by and large, to be those with more small offices, while those with the highest salaries seem to have a majority of large offices.

For caseworkers, median salaries could be computed reliably for 44 States. Caseworkers' earnings averaged from as little as \$1,380 a year in Puerto Rico and \$1,956 in Arkansas to \$3,279 in the District of Columbia and \$3,088 in Hawaii (table 6); the State paying the highest median was Washington (\$3,059). Average salaries for the other States fell between these amounts, as shown below.

Median salary of caseworkers	Number	State
Less than \$2,000	3	P. R., Ark., R. I.
2,000-2,399	17	Mo., Miss., Nebr., N. H., Md., Ga., W. Va., S. C., Va., Ky., Iowa, Ala., N. Mex., Colo., Conn., Ind., Mont.
2,400-2,799	18	Tenn., N. C., Kans., Okla., La., Pa., Ohio, Ill., Fla., Mass., N. J., Ariz., Utah, Oreg., Wis., Mich., N. Y., Calif.
2,800 and over	6	Maine, Minn., Texas, Wash., Hawaii, and D. C.

In general, salaries were comparatively low in New England, the Southeast, and the Northwest, about average in the Central States, and highest in the middle-eastern States, the Southwest, and the Far West (chart 1). Within some regions, however, there was great disparity in salary levels. In New England, for example, Maine paid caseworkers the sixth

highest average salary in the Nation, while Rhode Island paid an average below that for all other States except Arkansas and Puerto Rico. In the Southwest region, Texas had the fourth highest average salary for caseworkers in the Nation, while its neighbor, New Mexico, ranked twenty-ninth.

Reasons for State Variations

Presumably the considerable interstate variation that exists in salaries paid public assistance workers should be traceable to differences in the educational background of workers, in State fiscal ability, in general salary levels for public employment within a State, or in another important factor

Table 6.—Public assistance caseworkers: Annual salary, by amount, and median salary, 1950

State	Total number of caseworkers	Amount of annual salary				Median salary ¹
		Less than \$2,000	\$2,000-2,399	\$2,400-2,799	\$2,800 and over	
Total number and percentage distribution ¹	21,973	6.9	26.0	40.8	26.3	\$2,569
Percent with specified salary ¹						
States with more than 100 caseworkers:						
Alabama	287	72.8	27.2			2,273
Arkansas	156	64.1	35.9			1,956
California	2,068	5	9.3	42.9	47.3	2,784
Colorado	254	58.7	37.8		3.5	2,360
Connecticut	133	60.9	32.3		6.8	2,364
Florida	420	20.5	79.5			2,578
Georgia	300	33.0	34.0	31.7		2,170
Illinois	1,010	4.9	28.9	52.7	13.6	2,531
Indiana	416	12.7	38.5	29.6	19.2	2,382
Iowa	220	1.8	94.5	1.8		2,244
Kansas	295	23.4	18.0	58.6		2,420
Kentucky	262	.8	98.1	1.1		2,241
Louisiana	691	.1	46.2	24.7	28.9	2,438
Maryland	262	.8	72.1	25.2	1.9	2,160
Massachusetts	586	9.5	25.9	28.3	36.3	2,591
Michigan	1,054	2.0	2.9	60.7	34.4	2,726
Minnesota	343	7.6	36.3		56.1	2,872
Mississippi	225	34.2	63.1		2.7	2,051
Missouri	624	43.2	43.9	10.3	.6	2,029
Nebraska	181	36.5	55.2	7.7	.6	2,058
New Jersey	260	2.7	14.6	55.0	27.7	2,598
New Mexico	104		55.8	44.2		2,308
New York	4,343	1.8	9.9	44.9	43.5	2,767
North Carolina	377		48.7	49.2	2.2	2,407
Ohio	1,081	9.7	14.5	71.3	4.6	2,487
Oklahoma	623	10.1	29.2	60.7		2,435
Oregon	204		1.0	64.2	34.8	2,662
Pennsylvania	1,956		42.0	42.8	15.2	2,452
Puerto Rico	132	98.5	1.5			1,380
Rhode Island	135	61.5	22.2	16.3		1,963
South Carolina	255	1.2	97.6	1.2		2,202
Tennessee	326	.6	49.1	47.9	2.5	2,401
Texas	648			15.9	84.1	2,881
Virginia	214	24.3	38.8	33.2	3.7	2,213
Washington	361			26.3	73.7	3,059
West Virginia	206	37.4	33.0	29.6		2,193
Wisconsin	356	1.7	16.1	42.0	40.3	2,697
Number with specified salary						
States with 50-99 caseworkers:						
Arizona	62	0	23	38	1	2,606
District of Columbia	55	0	0	0	55	3,279
Hawaii	88	0	0	13	75	3,088
Maine	85	0	0	33	52	2,863
Montana	53	0	26	24	0	2,392
New Hampshire	30	17	34	1	1	2,146
Utah	60	0	12	48	0	2,646
States with fewer than 50 caseworkers: ²						
Alaska	0	0	0	0	0	
Delaware	25	3	11	9	2	
Idaho	44	0	0	29	15	
Nevada	13	0	0	0	13	
North Dakota	33	0	1	23	9	
South Dakota	42	0	3	39	0	
Vermont	23	0	2	18	3	
Virgin Islands	5	5	0	0	0	
Wyoming	17	0	0	4	13	

¹ Based on data excluding a few employees who did not report amount of salary.

² No computations made for States with fewer than

50 caseworkers; Alaska, which operates the public assistance program through fee agents, had no caseworkers.

Table 7.—Distribution of States by median salary and amount of education of public assistance caseworkers

Percent with bachelor's degree or better ¹	Number of States, by median salary				
	Total	Less than \$2,000	\$2,000-2,399	\$2,400-2,799	\$2,800 and over
Total.....	24	3	17	18	6
Less than 25.....	4	1	3	-----	-----
25-49.9.....	8	1	2	5	4
50-74.5.....	20	-----	7	9	-----
75 and over.....	12	1	5	4	2

¹ Data include caseworkers with bachelor's degree only, with bachelor's degree and some graduate social work study, and with graduate-level courses but no bachelor's degree.

² Medians not computed for States with fewer than 50 caseworkers.

less easily measured than the others—that is, public attitudes towards the work public assistance employees are doing. But exploration of these several factors affords no easy explanation of the State differences. Possibly the effects of all are so intermeshed that the relationship of any one to salary levels is difficult to isolate.

Interstate differences in the educational background of public assistance workers cannot be used to explain State salary differences. A distribution of States by caseworkers' salaries and education is given in table 7. In 19 of the 24 States paying a median salary of \$2,400 or more, at least half the caseworkers had a bachelor's degree or better.⁶ On the other hand, all but seven of the 20 States paying less than \$2,400 also had college graduates in half or more of their casework jobs, and one State, paying an average of less than \$2,000, had college-trained workers in 9 out of 10 jobs. Of the 12 States that had persons with a bachelor's degree in as many as 3 out of 4 jobs, six paid less than \$2,400 and six paid \$2,400 or more.

The relative fiscal ability of the State as reflected in per capita income also seems to have little controlling influence on State salary differences. States paying the larger salaries⁷ for caseworkers were almost equally di-

⁶ Data include caseworkers with bachelor's degree only, with bachelor's degree and some graduate social work study, and with graduate-level courses but no bachelor's degree.

⁷ The average used here is the median of the State median salaries.

vided between those above the national average in income and those below. Similarly, the number of poorer States paying above-average salaries to caseworkers was almost as large as the number paying comparatively low salaries.

While differences in the educational background of the workers and the relative fiscal ability of the States seem to give little help in explaining interstate differences in salaries, general salary levels for public employment within States and public attitudes appear to have an important influence on what States pay their public assistance workers.

In an attempt to determine the relationship between salary levels paid to public assistance workers and to persons in other similar public jobs, comparisons have been made, State by State, between salaries paid directors and school principals and between amounts paid caseworkers and teachers. In both comparisons, the public assistance workers—who have less professional training, as a group, than public school employees—came out second; that is, principals generally made more than directors, and teachers were, on the whole, better paid than caseworkers. Principals received higher average salaries than heads of local public assistance offices in about three-fourths of the States with roughly comparable salary data for both groups. Teachers did better financially in about two-thirds of the States with comparable data.

Although public assistance workers did less well in salary, relatively, than the school principals and teachers, there is enough relationship between the salaries paid the two groups to indicate that the salary level for public workers within the State is one factor affecting the earnings of public assistance workers. Of 36 States with roughly comparable data for salaries of teachers and caseworkers, two-thirds had the same general salary level for both groups; one-third of the States paid above-average⁸ salaries to both and another third paid below-average salaries.

It is difficult to measure the effect of public attitudes on salaries paid to

⁸ The average used here is the median of the State mean salaries.

public assistance employees. That they probably are an important factor in most States is shown by the fact that, in 25 of 42 States, those paying below-average salaries made below-average assistance payments and less-than-average fiscal effort to support the public assistance programs, as measured by the percent of income used for assistance payments. Similarly, those with above-average salaries were also above average in size of assistance payments and fiscal effort.

Of the 21 States that paid above-average salaries to their public assistance caseworkers, 15 also made payments to their aged assistance recipients that were greater than the national average; 13 of these 15 States had to give more-than-average financial support to their public assistance programs in order to maintain them at those levels. On the other hand, 14 of the 21 States paying less-than-average salaries also gave assistance at levels below the national average; in 12 of these 14 States the financial support given to the public assistance programs was less than average (table 8). Among the 21 States paying the lower salaries, only seven made more-than-average effort to support the public assistance programs, whereas all but six of the States paying above-average salaries had to exert relatively large fiscal effort to finance the programs.

It would be risky, on the basis of this comparison, to classify any State as to its attitude toward public assistance and the workers who administer it, since factors not immediately evident may be affecting the State's position in the Nation as to salaries, effort, and average payments. Roughly speaking, however, the pattern indicates that States are motivated more by what they want to do about public assistance than by their relative fiscal capacity.

This is not to say that all States could do equally well if they wanted to. Especially in States with limited income, there undoubtedly is not enough money to administer all State functions at adequate or nearly adequate levels. These States have to weigh an increase in one program against its cost to other public services. Although the problem is greatest in the lowest-income States, such

choices must be faced in varying degrees in all States.

Changes in Salaries, 1946-50

Public assistance salaries have increased recently, but the increases do not, on the whole, represent a tendency on the part of the public to put a higher premium on services rendered. Salaries paid to public assistance workers were higher in 1950 than in 1946,⁹ but in general the increases did little more than keep up with the increase in the cost of living, which went up 27.7 percent between the 2 years. Salaries for field representatives were increased 27.9 percent, and those for caseworkers, 29.7 percent. Salaries of directors and supervisors went up 36.6 and 34.2 percent, respectively—some-what more than living costs.

The practice of paying low salaries to public assistance workers may be rooted in the history of social work employment in public agencies and in the fact that the development and acceptance of social work as a profession is fairly recent and still continuing. Large-scale employment of persons in social work positions in public agencies dates back only to the 1930's, when the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Work Projects Administration were organized. Under the FERA and WPA, because there were not enough trained recruits, a large number of untrained people—later trained on the job—had to be hired to administer the huge public relief and work programs. Perhaps in part because they were untrained, but certainly because all salaries were low in that depression period, the WPA and FERA employees in social work positions earned relatively low salaries. Social work thus moved into public employment at a low salary scale.

It seems probable, also, that the low salaries are an indication that the

⁹ Vivian B. Norman and Dorothy R. Bucklin, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

Table 8.—Median salaries of public assistance caseworkers, June 1950; average old-age assistance payments, June 1950; and State fiscal effort, calendar year 1950¹

Item	Number	State
States with above-average salaries.....	21	
Above-average OAA payments.....	15	
Above-average fiscal effort.....	13	Ariz., Calif., Kans., La., Maine, Mass., Mich., Minn., N. Y., Okla., Oreg., Utah, Wash.
Below-average fiscal effort.....	2	N. J., Ohio
Below-average OAA payment.....	6	
Above-average fiscal effort.....	2	Fla., Wis.
Below-average fiscal effort.....	4	D. C., Ill., Pa., Texas
States with below-average salaries.....	21	
Above-average OAA payments.....	7	
Above-average fiscal effort.....	5	Colo., Conn., Mont., N. H., R. I.
Below-average fiscal effort.....	2	Iowa, Nebr.
Below-average OAA payment.....	14	
Above-average fiscal effort.....	2	Ark., Mo.
Below-average fiscal effort.....	12	Ala., Ga., Ind., Ky., Md., Miss., N. C., N. Mex., S. C., Tenn., Va., W. Va.

¹ Averages used are the median (\$2,418) of the State medians of salaries and the median of the State averages and percents, respectively, for average assistance payments and State fiscal effort (percent of income used for public assistance). Median salaries not computed for States with fewer than 50 caseworkers.

Per capita income data not available for Hawaii and Puerto Rico; Hawaii pays next to the highest average salary but makes a below-average payment to old-age assistance recipients; Puerto Rico pays the lowest average salary and makes a below-average payment to old-age assistance recipients.

public still does not entirely accept the fact that social work is a profession. This attitude, combined with the short supply of trained workers, probably accounts for the fact that in many States professional training in social work is not a prerequisite for employment in social work positions, except those obviously requiring special knowledge or skills.¹⁰

Each profession, as it has developed, has had to win public acceptance of the need for specialized training for the service provided. For centuries, for example, women nursed the sick in their families, but no special nursing techniques or skills, except those based on common sense and sympathetic interest, were recognized. With technical developments in medicine, the necessary nursing skills could be learned only through professional training, and nursing came to be ac-

cepted as a service to be provided by skilled practitioners. Similarly, the problems of the disadvantaged and the troubled were dealt with, until recently, only on the basis of common sense and sympathetic interest, and no other special skills for such work were recognized.

Social work is still a new profession—newer than all the others with which salary comparisons were made at the beginning of the article. It has been only within the last 50 years that special knowledge and skills have been delineated and taught in schools of social work. The profession is still in the process of formulating and gaining acceptance for agreed-upon standards for professional training and clearer identification of who is a "social worker." Higher compensation for social work services that are truly professional may come as (1) the social work profession develops a more universally accepted definition of the field; (2) commensurate professional standards are enforced; and (3) these standards are understood and supported by the public as necessary to protect the quality of the social services made available to the community.

¹⁰ The position held, for example, by medical-social consultants; by training or field supervisors, who carry certain kinds of supervisory or educational responsibility; or by child welfare workers, who provide certain special services and who in many States must, under present requirements for newly hired workers, have at least 1 year of social work training.