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# Training Mature Women for Employment



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
James P. Mitchell, Secretary

WOMEN'S BUREAU  
Mrs. Alice K. Leopold, Director

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# TRAINING MATURE WOMEN FOR EMPLOYMENT

*The Story of  
23 Local Programs*

Women's Bureau Bulletin No. 256

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

James P. Mitchell, *Secretary*

WOMEN'S BUREAU

Mrs. Alice K. Leopold, *Director*

Washington : 1955

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This report was prepared in the Division of Research  
of the Women's Bureau by Pearl C. Ravner with the  
assistance of Jean A. Wells and Annie Lefkowitz.

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The photographs used are by courtesy of the Emily Griffith Opportunity School, Denver, Colo. (figs. 1 and 4); the Chicago Department of Welfare (fig. 2); the New York City Department of Welfare (fig. 3).

## FOREWORD

This study was made in an effort to find answers to some of the problems met by middle-aged and older women in looking for work. The 23 training programs described show not only that mature women can learn a new skill but also that they can afterward secure a job doing the work for which they have been trained. To accomplish this, the women must be willing to learn; the community must be willing to supply training, counseling, and placement facilities; and employers must be willing to hire competent workers regardless of age.

All three conditions existed in the programs dealt with in this report; not because the particular women, communities, or employers were unique, but because the need was realized and interested people were able to work together.

***This Report Shows—***

That there are training programs which successfully prepare middle-aged and older women for paid employment.

That there are employment opportunities for mature women.

That mature women are an important labor resource for employers faced with a need for competent workers.

That much can be accomplished with the facilities at hand in every community.

# TRAINING MATURE WOMEN FOR EMPLOYMENT

## 1

### A WEALTH OF RESOURCES

A wealth of resources that can be used to meet the special counseling, training, and placement needs of mature women job seekers exists in almost every community. Most of these resources are found among established community organizations—the public schools, State employment services, the public welfare authorities, employers, and many other local groups. New facilities—on a large scale—are frequently unnecessary; what is always necessary, however, is new thinking and willingness to adapt existing facilities to meet newly recognized needs.

This report provides examples of projects established by community organizations to meet the training needs of women ranging in economic standing from those receiving public assistance to those able to pay tuition fees at private schools. The programs described were selected in an effort to show the variety of institutions and groups that can participate in developing such projects, the wide range of occupations for which mature women can be successfully trained, the facilities available in both large and small communities in different parts of the country, and the varied nature of the needs—on the part of mature women, employers, and the community—that can be met by such programs. No attempt was made either to survey all programs that train mature women for employment or to evaluate the programs visited. Information on a total of 23 training courses was secured by visiting the following 12 projects:

<i>Project visited</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Number of courses described</i>
Emily Griffith Opportunity School.....	Denver, Colo.....	6
Department of hospitals.....	New York City.....	3
Hannah Harrison School.....	Washington, D. C.....	3
Department of welfare.....	Chicago, Ill.....	3
Joint department of welfare and board of education project.....	New York City.....	1
Public aid commission.....	East St. Louis, Ill.....	1
Hotel training school.....	Washington, D. C.....	1
Joint restaurant association and board of education project.....	do.....	1
Community hand-sewing project.....	Scranton, Pa.....	1
Community power-sewing project.....	Hazleton, Pa.....	1
Electronics company 4-month program....	New York State.....	1
Electronics company 18-month program....	do.....	1

1

### **Role of Community Organizations**

Existing facilities in almost any city or town can be adapted to assist mature women in preparing for employment. There must, however, be evidence of a real need on the part of women job seekers for such services and, equally important, this need must be recognized by the community.

One of the chief resources in every locality is the public school system which has the physical equipment and, often, the trained personnel particularly suited to training women for paid employment. Although the training programs offered by local schools vary considerably from State to State and from town to town, a variety of courses are given free of cost in most communities. Many of these courses are designed primarily to meet the vocational needs of the young or the recreational needs of adults. In some school systems, however, considerable attention is given to preparing adult men and women for paid employment. The Emily Griffith Opportunity School, the adult-education branch of the Denver public school system, is included in this report as an example of intensive and varied vocational training that can be made available through a local public school system.

Another potential resource which exists in almost every community is the public employment service. In close touch with local employers, aware of the general labor market situation, staffed with trained counseling and placement personnel, the public employment service is equipped to stimulate community action and to provide advisory services. Two of the projects studied—the community hand-sewing project in Scranton and the community power-sewing project in Hazleton—were developed primarily by employment-service personnel who not only organized community-wide participation but also played a large part in operating the programs. In other programs, the employment service made major contributions by providing specialized recruitment, counseling, and placement services.

Private schools, especially in the larger communities, offer substantial vocational-training opportunities for women who can afford to pay tuition. In most instances, the courses offered by the private vocational, trade, or commercial school are attended almost wholly by young men and women interested in preparing for a career. Courses and recruitment programs, therefore, are usually planned with the young student in mind. That such schools can also play a significant role in preparing mature women for employment is shown by the activities of the hotel training school described in this report.

City and State agencies responsible for public assistance have, in a number of communities, developed training programs. Concerned with helping recipients of public assistance regain economic self-sufficiency and personal self-respect, public welfare agencies in Chicago, New York City, and East St. Louis established rounded programs that provide training in basic skills, counseling in work attitudes, and assistance in securing a job.

One of the chief methods by which workers in this country are taught specific job skills is on-the-job training. Employers, however, must be willing to hire on the basis of ability regardless of age and to open training programs to their mature women employees. Three of the projects visited—two electronics companies and the New York City Department of Hospitals—illustrate what employers can do in establishing training programs which permit mature women to “earn while they learn.”

Community groups, employer associations, unions, women’s organizations, and interested individuals can do much to stimulate the development in their community of services for the middle-aged or older woman who is looking for work. The programs studied clearly indicate the importance of such efforts both in creating an awareness of the need and in establishing functioning projects.

### **Occupations Taught**

The question of which job to learn is one of the most important confronting the mature woman who desires to prepare herself for employment. The question of which occupations should be taught is of equal importance to the organizations or groups concerned with meeting the needs of these women. In both cases, a major factor in selecting the occupations is the existence of job opportunities for mature women in that particular type of work.

In almost every program studied, the occupations taught were selected either wholly or in part because of local shortages of competent personnel. The degree of shortage ranged from a serious and continuous need—exemplified by the various programs to train nursing personnel—to a one-time local demand for more industrial hand-sewers.

The types of jobs covered by the training programs include:

- Industrial and commercial sewing (industrial handsewer, power sewing-machine operator, dressmaker and alteration worker).
- Institutional housekeeping (housekeeper, dining-room supervisor, hotel hostess, linen-room supervisor).
- Domestic work and related service jobs (maid, laundress, commercial and industrial cleaner).

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Food-service occupations (food supervisor, waitress, hostess, cashier, counter girl, bus girl).

Cosmetologist.

Saleswoman.

Nursing occupations (professional nurse—refresher course, practical nurse, nurse aide, hospital attendant).

Production work in the electronics industry (assembler, inspector, winder or assembler technician).

These occupations do not in any way reflect all the jobs mature women can learn successfully. They serve only as examples and specifically exclude office occupations dealt with in a previous report.<sup>1</sup>

Another factor frequently considered in establishing a training program is the length of time it takes to teach a specific skill. Because most mature women seeking work do not have the time to invest in a long training period, occupations were usually chosen that can be taught in short, intensive courses. In addition, in those instances where the students were to come from a specific group—such as public-assistance recipients—the general educational level of the group was taken into account.

The 23 training programs dealt with in this report have been grouped into chapters on the basis of the occupations or skills taught. All programs of one organization are not necessarily found in the same chapter but are reported in the appropriate occupational chapter. (See appendix table.)

The particular projects visited by the Women's Bureau representatives in late 1953 and early 1954 do not represent all those currently in operation; they serve only as examples of what some communities—made aware of the need—have been able to accomplish.

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<sup>1</sup> "Older" Women as Office Workers. Women's Bureau, Bull. 248. U. S. Department of Labor, Washington, D. C. 1953. 25¢.

## 2

### INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL SEWING

Industrial and commercial sewing is a field which can provide job opportunities for mature women, since it includes occupations employing large numbers of women 45 years or over. For example, in 1950, over one-half million women—655,000—were reported by the Bureau of the Census to be working as operatives and related workers in the apparel industry and over 130,000 women were reported as dressmakers and seamstresses outside of factories. Almost one-third of the operatives were 45 years or over, and two-thirds of the dressmakers and seamstresses were in this age group.

Four very different projects demonstrate the success with which mature women can be trained and placed as industrial and commercial sewers. One project, in Scranton, Pa., trained women for industrial hand-sewing; another program, in Washington, D. C., prepared women for work as dressmakers and alteration workers. Two programs—a public school adult-education course in Denver and a project initiated by the State Employment Service in Hazleton, Pa.—trained middle-aged and older women to be power sewing-machine operators. In all four instances, the classroom work of the mature women was satisfactory and high proportions of the “graduates” surveyed were placed in jobs—78 percent in Hazleton, 89 percent in Washington, and almost 100 percent in both Scranton and Denver. Subsequent reports from employers of many of the trainees indicated satisfaction with their on-the-job performance.

The success of the mature women in learning how to operate power sewing machines is of especial interest because of the belief prevalent among some employers, training authorities, and personnel officials that women over 35 years cannot be taught to operate a power sewing machine at the speed necessary for production work. In Hazleton, 37 of the 56 trainees attending the course during the period studied were women 35 or over, with the majority in the late forties. In Denver, 49 of the 67 women trainees were believed to be over 35 years and most of these women, it was judged, were in their forties or fifties.

#### **Community Hand-Sewing Project: Scranton**

A course to teach mature women the fundamental techniques of industrial hand-sewing was developed in 1952 by the Pennsylvania

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State Employment Service in cooperation with other community groups. Given only once, the course was organized at that time to meet a pending shortage of industrial hand sewers in the Scranton area.

A convenient location was found at the Jewish Community Center where sewing equipment was available, and free supplies were secured from a large local manufacturer who needed such workers. A home-economics representative was assigned by the Pennsylvania State College Extension Service as class instructor, while the Employment Service detailed a counseling staff member to act as both assistant instructor and as judge of the progress and employability of the trainees.

Trainees were selected by the Employment Service from their file of women job applicants. Of the 27 women chosen from the much larger number available, all were 35 or over and about half were 50 or over. Many of the women were widows; most had limited education and work experience; and all were in real economic need. At the time they were selected, these women were considered below acceptable standards for immediate employment but with an employability potential.

One 4-hour class was held each week for 13 weeks. Some of the essential aspects of industrial sewing covered in the course were: how to hold a garment while sewing; how to sew with a long thread still attached to a spool; how to sew a straight seam; and how to make blind stitches, chain stitches, and handmade buttonholes. Informal counseling was also available to the women, many of whom were lacking in self-confidence.

Of the 27 women who started, 26 completed the course. Almost all were placed. Those who did not work best under pressure were placed in jobs as alteration seamstresses in department stores or menders in laundries. The others secured work as production sewers in awning, trouser, and coat factories.

### **Community Power-Sewing Project: Hazleton**

A continuing community project which began in June 1953 prepares unemployed men and women for locally available jobs as power sewing-machine operators. A vacant schoolhouse is the training site, and rent, instruction, heat, and light are paid for by the State Department of Public Instruction. The industrial development committee of the Hazleton Chamber of Commerce contributed \$3,600 for the purchase of 11 power sewing machines, and 4 more machines were donated by a local machine distributor.

Major responsibility for operating this free program is divided between the Pennsylvania State Employment Service and the Hazleton School District. The Employment Service recruits and tests the applicants, selects the suitable ones for the class, and places the trainees. The local school authorities select the instructor, determine the teaching methods, and set the standards for completion of training.

Most of the trainees have been recruited from among job applicants at the Employment Service in Hazleton. Job seekers interested in the project are given aptitude tests for motor coordination, form perception, and manual and finger dexterity. The tests are considered valuable both because they save time and money by eliminating unsuitable applicants and because they can be used as an argument in encouraging employers to hire trained "test-selected" operators, regardless of age.

Trainees receive individual instruction and proceed at rates commensurate with their ability. The course requires, on the average, 4 weeks of daily attendance for 6 hours each day. The first week is devoted to developing familiarity with the use and maintenance of power sewing machines. During the second week, students start learning the basic sewing operations. When trainees complete the total list of basic operations, the teacher recommends that they practice further on those performed best. This is done to give the trainees certain fields of specialization that can be listed when applying for a job. Inexpensive material is supplied by the school district to allow the students to make simple garments which are then donated to charitable organizations. Trainees are also permitted to practice on their own material and keep the completed garment.

Criteria used by the instructor to determine whether a trainee is ready to be certified to the Employment Service as a graduate of the course are: ability to perform all the basic sewing operations; speed of performance at the machine; ability to get along with others; and her own opinion about the trainee's chance for competing successfully in a factory setting. Close communication is maintained between the instructor and the placement-interviewer at the Employment Service so that the characteristics and abilities of each individual are kept in mind when making specific job referrals.

During the first 6 months the program was in operation, two-thirds of the trainees were women over 35 years of age. Many of these trainees, discouraged at first, exhibited a marked improvement in their general outlook after completing the course. The Employment Service successfully placed over three-fourths of the graduates as power sewing-machine operators in the local needle-trades industry; information regarding most of the others was not available.

### **Power Sewing-Machine Operators: Denver**

In May 1951 the Emily Griffith Opportunity School in Denver responded to a request of the local apparel-manufacturing industry and reinstated in its curriculum a power sewing-machine course that had been given during World War II. In the 2½ years following resumption of this course, 150 women were trained and placed as sewing-machine operators. Most of these women were 35 years or over.

At first, there was a shortage of applicants since the school did not have the financial resources to publicize the new course. This problem



Members of an industrial sewing class concentrate on learning to operate power sewing machines at high speed.

was solved when local apparel manufacturers agreed to pay for classified advertisements in newspapers, to post announcements in their shops so that employees could spread the news, and to recommend the course to inexperienced workers applying for jobs. Since then the course has been filled to capacity and usually has a waiting list.

A major problem arose several months after the course was started when employers complained that the speed and output of the graduates were below production standards. Analysis indicated that their slowness stemmed from two factors: the sewing machines at the school were old, and the trainees were practicing on scraps of material instead of making whole garments. As the school could not buy new equipment, industry members on the school's advisory committee for

this course decided to lend the school modern machines. The school, in turn, made temporary arrangements with the Bureau of Public Welfare to make whole garments which could then be distributed to needy families or institutions. As a result, trainees were able to meet speed requirements.

Classes are held daily over a period of 6 to 8 weeks. As in the Hazleton program, trainees are given individual instruction and permitted to progress at their own pace. The subject matter is also similar. During the first 4 weeks, students learn the basic sewing operations; in the latter part of the training period, students are assigned to modern sewing machines and concentrate on attaining speed.

Placements have been relatively easy and are made chiefly by the instructor since she is familiar with each student's abilities. Women who are relatively slow are usually recommended to laundries or hotels for repairing linens or to department stores for altering clothing. Faster operators are sent to production shops. Because the local apparel industry was expanding in 1952-53, job interviews were speedily arranged for almost every student. Of the 35 women completing the course during the school year, 31 were placed as power sewing-machine operators; 1 became a power sewing-machine teacher; 1 was employed as a saleswoman; and 2 were not working.

The value of the course to the women students is illustrated by the following two examples:

*Mrs. A.*—A widow past 55 when she entered the class, Mrs. A had to support both herself and her 13-year-old son; her husband's death following a long illness had exhausted family savings. The only jobs she had been able to secure in the few intervening years were on a part-time basis as saleswoman or unskilled factory worker at a very low wage. As soon as she heard about the power sewing-machine course, Mrs. A applied for admission and, determined to succeed, learned quickly. Holding a part-time job throughout the training period, she completed the course in 8 weeks. Immediately placed as a power-machine operator in a curtain and drapery factory, she was subsequently reported to be a satisfactory worker by her employer.

*Mrs. B.*—Over 50, Mrs. B was a widow with no dependents. After her husband's death, she tried to make a living by doing both domestic work and home sewing. Preferring sewing, Mrs. B soon realized that she had to learn modern techniques to improve her speed. While taking the course, Mrs. B also studied dressmaking at night and continued to do part-time work. When a vacancy for a power sewing-machine teacher was reported by a local institution, she was recommended as an outstanding student and chosen for the job.

### **Dressmakers and Alteration Workers: Washington, D. C.**

A more comprehensive type of commercial-sewing course is offered by the Hannah Harrison School, a privately endowed organization in

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Washington, D. C. Designated as training for clothing construction and alterations, this course prepares women for employment as dressmakers or alteration workers in clothing or tailoring shops, sewing instructors in retail stores selling yard goods or sewing equipment, and for self-employment as dressmakers. The program is free, and includes full maintenance throughout the 5-month course.

To qualify for admission, women must know how to operate a sewing machine, read patterns, and have some knowledge of dressmaking. With this background, they are taught the special techniques used by commercial workers to alter and construct clothing for women. During the course, students must cut, sew, fit, and finish six garments. They start on a simple article such as a blouse and then advance to coats and suits. In addition, some training time is devoted to work on slipcovers and draperies.

Only nine women over 35 years of age had enrolled in this course from the date of the school's opening in 1950 to the time of the Women's Bureau study in late 1953. (Most of the mature women students at the Hannah Harrison School attended the institutional housekeeping course described in chapter 3.) These nine women, ranging in age from 40 to 59 years, all completed their training. Five started their own dressmaking businesses; one was planning to do so; two were placed by the school as alteration workers in department stores; and one became a sewing instructor in a store.

### 3

## INSTITUTIONAL HOUSEKEEPING

An occupational field in which maturity is generally recognized as an asset is that of institutional housekeeping. Covering a wide range of specific jobs and skill levels—from executive housekeeper to hotel maid—this type of work provides opportunities for women well past their youth and makes the most of their ability to deal with people, their familiarity with household duties, and their willingness to assume responsibility. In 1950, the decennial census reported over 80,000 women employed in public-housekeeping occupations. About 85 percent of these women were 35 years of age or over and approximately 40 percent were 55 or over.

The three institutional-housekeeping programs studied by the Women's Bureau varied considerably in origin and development. However, those in charge all stressed the fact that women are not considered older workers in these occupations until they are well over 50 years and that, provided health is good, opportunities for work continue past 65. Mature women formed the majority of students in all the courses although, in each case, the program was open to all age groups. At the privately endowed Hannah Harrison School many trainees were over 50 years; at the fee-charging hotel training school 104 of the 212 resident students enrolled during the period studied were women 40 years of age and over; and, at the two evening courses given by the Denver school, 18 of the 21 institutional-housekeeping students and 35 of the 40 hotel students were women 35 years or over.

In all the courses, the general opinion of the teaching staff was that progress depended on individual ability, regardless of age. Where there was thought to be an age-related difference in learning ability, it was usually in speed; younger persons tended to learn faster. This, it was believed, resulted from the fact that older women had been away from school longer and were not accustomed to studying. In classroom practice and on-the-job performance, however, it was thought that the mature women—because of their familiarity with related work in their own homes—did better than the younger women and were particularly well suited for the housekeeping occupations.

The placement records of the women trainees corroborate the general impression that institutional housekeeping offers good employ-

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ment opportunities for women over 35: At the Hannah Harrison School, 93 percent of the women who completed their training during the period studied were placed; at least 67 percent of the hotel training school graduates were placed; and most of the women completing the course at the Denver school either secured new jobs or were promoted.

### ***The Hannah Harrison School: Washington, D. C.***

Since 1950 this school, established under the will of a local merchant "for the purpose of providing for worthy women, under the necessity of earning their own livelihood," has supplied free tuition and maintenance for women selected to attend any one of the four training courses offered: Institutional housekeeping, clothing construction and alterations, commercial foods, and office work. Each course takes approximately 5 months and the cost is estimated at \$1,200 to \$1,500 for each trainee. The entire program is administered by the local Young Women's Christian Association, and the trainees live and are taught in a special building designed to accommodate 50 students.

At the time of the Women's Bureau study in the fall of 1953, 120 women had been enrolled at the school. The majority—73 women—were 35 years or over. Of this group, 47 women—almost two-thirds—selected the institutional housekeeping course which trains women for executive housekeeping positions in hospitals, hotels, private schools, college dormitories, and residential clubs and lodges. Of these 47 women, 41 completed their training.

The subjects covered in the course include: purchase, use, and care of institutional supplies and equipment; operation of an institutional laundry; care and control of linens; floor maintenance; sanitation; preparation of budgets; and employee training. Field trips are made by the group to various institutions so that the trainees may observe actual work situations. Throughout the training, the instructor emphasizes the importance of executive and organizational ability and the value of good attitudes and grooming in this type of work.

Thirty-eight of the 41 women who had completed the course were placed by the school—34 in housekeeping and related work. Exactly half of the 38 jobs were in hospitals; the others were in a variety of institutions. The occupations in which the 38 women were placed are as follows:

## institutional housekeeping

Total	<i>Number of women</i>
Housekeeper	38
Assistant housekeeper	14
Executive housekeeper	8
Supervisor: maintenance, dining, linen	4
Food preparation	3
Clerical	3
Housemother	1
Resident counselor	1
Weaving teacher	1

A general observation made about the older women was that, although many were good students, a considerable number had difficulty adjusting to a new situation. Chief among these were the women deprived of emotional, social, and financial security by recent widowhood or divorce. A large number of the mature women fell in this group. Of the 47 institutional-housekeeping trainees over 35 years of age, 4 were single and 4 married; but 21 were widowed, 14 divorced, and 4 separated. These women needed—and received from the staff—sympathy, encouragement, and the kind of counseling which inspired new hope and confidence in their own ability.

### **A Hotel Training School: Washington, D. C.**

A 4-month course offered by a private vocational school trains men and women for a wide variety of jobs in the hotel industry. The tuition fee is \$300 and includes instruction, textbooks, and demonstration materials. A permanent placement service is available to all students completing the course. While positions are not guaranteed, many graduates secure their first job through the school's employment register, and all graduates can call on the placement director at any time for assistance in finding a new job.

The course is divided almost equally into three parts which are taught in the following sequence: "front of house," "back of house," and "management and executive." Defined broadly, "front of house" operations are those concerned with the registration of guests and with their accommodations; "back of house" operations encompass the preparation and serving of foods and the maintenance of the premises; and "management and executive" functions include accounting, special services, and entertainment. The school building is arranged to simulate a hotel atmosphere and has demonstration rooms such as a lobby, kitchen, dining room, and other hotel rooms. Teaching methods include lectures, assigned reading, demonstrations, and visits to hotels, restaurants, and bakeries.

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Of 212 students enrolled between September 1951 and May 1953, 108 were women 35 years or over. Eighty-six of these women completed their training. Almost all were 40 or over, though ages ranged from 35 to 61 years. These women were willing to move to whatever locality offered the best employment opportunities. Widows predominated, as they had among the women attending the institutional housekeeping course at the Hannah Harrison School.

Information available on the placement of the 86 who completed training shows that more than two-thirds—58 women—were placed in hotel and related occupations; no information is available on the placement experience of the other 28 women. The following is a list of occupations in which the women were placed:

<i>Type of establishment and job title</i>	<i>Number of women</i>
Total .....	86
Hotel:	
Front-office clerk .....	18
Housekeeper .....	14
Assistant housekeeper .....	1
Hostess .....	8
Manager .....	4
Food checker .....	1
Newsstand operator .....	1
Restaurant: Hostess .....	4
Hospital: Housekeeper .....	2
School:	
Dining-room supervisor .....	1
Assistant dietitian .....	1
Boardinghouse: Manager .....	1
Motel: Front-office clerk .....	1
Club: Receptionist .....	1
No report .....	28

Summaries of the background and work experience of two of the women provide information on why they took the course and their subsequent work experience.

*Mrs. C*—A widow 58 years of age whose children were grown, Mrs. C's previous employment experience included 10 years of practical nursing and a temporary job doing clerical work. She enrolled in the school because she wanted to learn apartment management and preferred a job that would involve meeting people. After completing the course, Mrs. C was placed as a floor housekeeper in a large hotel. She was in charge of several floors, supervised maids and housemen on these floors, and was responsible for the cleanliness of the rooms and hallways.

*Mrs. D*—Forty-eight years old, divorced, and with a mother partially dependent on her for support, Mrs. D—after spending 21 years as an office worker—wanted to change her occupation. Immediately after completing

the course, Mrs. D was placed as a front-office clerk in an eastern resort hotel for the summer season, and then as a floor housekeeper in a very large hotel. Shortly after, she was offered a more exacting and better paid job as an executive housekeeper in a smaller hotel.

### **Emily Griffith Opportunity School: Denver**

Two evening courses given at this school, the adult-education branch of the Denver public school system, prepare women for work in the field of public housekeeping. One course, institutional housekeeping, is designed to train personnel for hospitals and extends over two school semesters, or 38 weeks. The other course, hotel training, is for one semester only. Both courses are held for 2 hours on 2 nights each week and are taught by women employed as full-time executive housekeepers.

While the instruction encompasses a wide variety of duties, there is little expectation that students without previous work experience in hospitals or hotels can step from the classroom into executive positions as housekeepers or administrators. These students are prepared, however, for immediate employment in jobs that entail limited responsibility. For students with experience, many of whom were already working in hospitals or hotels, training assists them to advance.

A recent outgrowth of the institutional housekeeping course is the hospital apprenticeship program instituted at four of the local hospitals. Each hospital has accepted a course graduate to receive 1 year of in-service training in executive housekeeping. All four trainees are women over 35 years.

The instructors, in both courses, themselves mature women employed as executive housekeepers, were convinced that public housekeeping offered possibilities for interesting and rewarding careers. They found that some of the students had initially regarded institutional housekeeping as a menial occupation. However, as the students became aware of the duties, responsibilities, and dignity attached to the position there was a sharp change in their attitudes. The necessity of learning to make bulk purchases, to budget large sums of money, to supervise other workers, and to acquire a wide range of detailed information developed considerable respect among the trainees for the housekeeping occupations.

## 4

### HOUSEWORK AND RELATED SERVICE JOBS

Traditionally a woman-employing occupation of major importance, household employment began to decline in importance as early as World War I. With the increase of job opportunities for women in other occupations that took place during World War II, this drift of women workers away from employment in private households was accelerated. In the 10-year period between 1940 and 1950—when the total number of employed women rose 4½ million—there was a drop of 300,000 in the number of women domestic workers. Among the causes frequently given for this decrease are the relatively undesirable wages and working conditions, the occupation's low social status, and the lack of training and performance standards.

From time to time individual communities have attempted to deal with local shortages of domestic workers by establishing household-employment committees to formulate standards and determine the placement and training needs in their own localities. Immediately after World War II, some communities organized training courses for unskilled women to raise their level of competence and to increase their employment opportunities. However, these courses were few in number; a 1946 survey of 19 communities with active household-employment committees reported that only 5 offered such training programs.

The three training programs described in this chapter were established to meet the needs of a specific group of women—those on public assistance. However, the experience gained from these programs will be useful to all concerned with establishing courses to train women for private-household employment, regardless of the groups from which the students are drawn. In addition, the results of these programs will be of vital interest to citizens concerned with restoring independence to the dependent. The goals of these three projects can best be summed up in the words of the administrators of the service training program in New York City:

Reduction of the relief rolls through employment is a positive goal toward which the Department of Welfare continuously strives—not only does such a solution of the client's problem bring relief to the overburdened taxpayer in the community, but it likewise tends to improve the vitality of the community by maintaining to a fuller degree the activity and productivity of its members. For the individual involved, the psychological impact is profound. No longer do these persons need to feel dependent, unsure

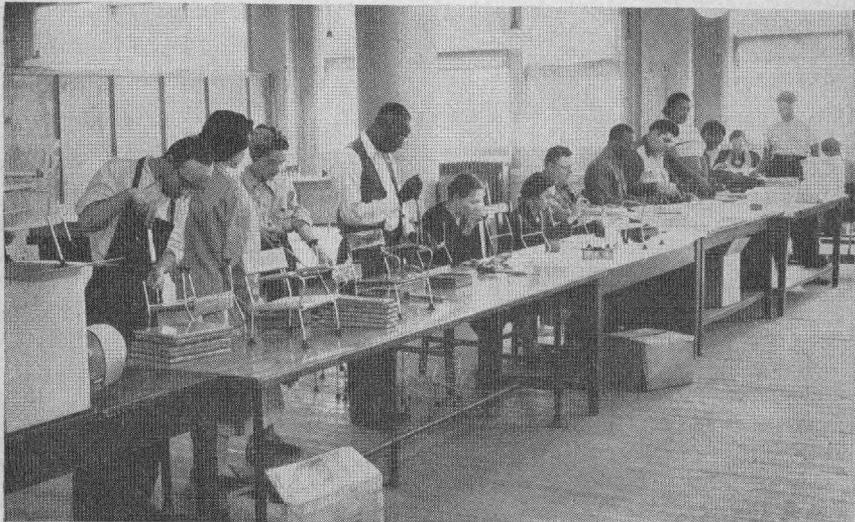
of themselves, and relegated to the shelf. They may again look forward to accomplishment and a good sense of participation in the life around them.

This quotation applies equally to two other programs—in Chicago and East St. Louis—which provide vocational counseling, training, and placement for women receiving public assistance. All three of the programs were developed by municipal or State welfare agencies responsible for public assistance. In Chicago and East St. Louis, the welfare agencies were the sole sponsors; in New York, the Board of Education joined with the Department of Welfare in developing the training program.

The oldest, the broadest in occupational approach, and the only one which trains both men and women is the Chicago program. However, the domestic workers' project is only 1 of 4 established by the Chicago Department of Welfare on the basis that many men and women receiving public assistance can be made employable if given supplementary counseling in addition to financial aid.

In April 1947, the department established a rehabilitation division to develop an integrated program of vocational guidance, training, and placement for assistance recipients who were potentially employable.

The first project organized was an experiment in teaching good work habits and was known as the "industrial training service." This has steadily expanded until it now accommodates 600 trainees learning a variety of relatively unskilled jobs such as soldering, assembling, pack-



Trainees learn teamwork on the assembly line by assembling children's chairs.

aging, sorting, envelope stuffing, and figurine painting. Encouraged by the success of the first project, three more were developed: A domestic workers' training project was started in November 1949, and projects to train food-service workers and hospital attendants were initiated in September 1952.

In New York City the service training course, begun in 1953, was based in part on the experience gained by the Department of Welfare in a household training program it had administered between 1943 and 1947. Although this program draws upon the diverse facilities offered by a number of municipal and State agencies, from X-ray examinations by the Department of Health to the placement facilities of the State Employment Service, major responsibility is shared between the two sponsoring agencies. The Board of Education provides the teaching services; the Department of Welfare is responsible for providing the building and equipment, arranging placements, and day-to-day administration.

The program in East St. Louis is administered solely by the Illinois Public Aid Commission. Providing an example of action possible in a small community, the project drew upon the resources of existing community organizations and various facilities made available by individuals interested in the project's success.

Several factors underlay the decision reached by the sponsors of each of the programs to train the women on public assistance for this occupation. First, a shortage of domestic workers existed in each locality and there would be jobs for competent women after the training was completed. Second, domestic work involves skills which the women already possessed to a certain extent. Third, a short course would be sufficient to make them employable for this type of work. Fourth, the occupation permits part-time employment for women unable to work full time. Fifth, mature women find that their age is not a barrier in securing household employment.

### ***The Service Training Program: New York City***

A continuing program to train women receiving public assistance for household and related service jobs was instituted in 1953 after the two sponsoring agencies—the New York City Department of Welfare and the Board of Education—were advised by the New York State Employment Service that there was a continuous shortage of maids, cooks, laundresses, institutional attendants, and similar workers. Trainees are selected by department of welfare case workers and continue to receive their regular assistance allotments. The women se-

lected are judged able to benefit from the training and are without family responsibilities requiring that they remain at home.

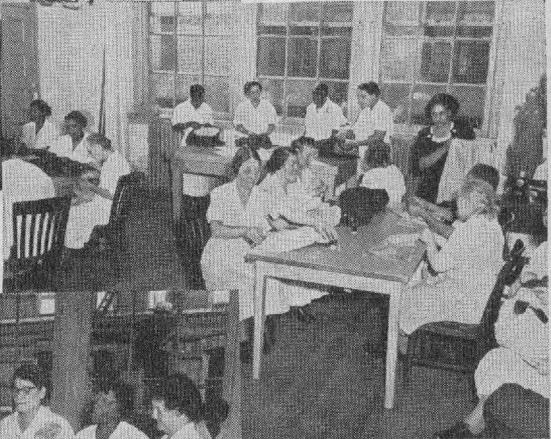
The service training program holds classes from 9 a. m. to 3:45 p. m. daily for approximately 12 weeks. The subjects dealt with include nutrition, house care, sewing, child care, laundry, and simple bedside care. Teaching techniques are a combination of the lecture and demonstration methods, with lecture time kept to a minimum. Since a great many of the women have never used modern cleaning methods or equipment, they must be taught not only how to operate sewing machines, washing machines, and modern kitchen equipment but also the new, time-saving cleaning methods. Trainees judged incapable of meeting final performance standards are dropped from the course after the first 6 weeks.

Almost all the women need advice on good grooming and, throughout the course, the teachers emphasize the importance of an attractive appearance. Near the end of the program, a representative of the New York State Employment Service advises the students, both individually and as a group, on job opportunities and on proper behavior and dress for job interviews. Graduation exercises are held at the end of the program and a certificate indicating satisfactory completion of training is awarded to each graduate. No woman who is below average in performance is given a certificate.

At the time this study was made, two classes had completed courses held in the first half of 1953 and a third class was scheduled to begin. Although the service training program was designed for all women receiving assistance, regardless of age, almost all the trainees were middle-aged or over. Of 150 women in the first two classes, 91 completed the program. Only 1 woman was under 40 years, 25 were between 40 and 49 years, 54 women were between 50 and 59, and 11 women were 60 years of age or over. Although most of the trainees had held jobs in the past, many had not worked for more than 10 or 20 years.

Approximately one-third of the trainees had, on their last job, been factory workers. When interviewing recruits, the registrar at the service training center had been impressed by the number who, because of their age, felt they would be unable to secure regular factory employment in the future. These women were willing to enroll in the course, for they thought that household employment was one occupation in which age was not an obstacle and that it offered a steadier and more permanent source of income.

Of the 91 women completing the first two courses, 40 were placed—chiefly in jobs requiring the use of skills taught in the service training



Women attending a service training program are taught the fundamentals of housework.

program. The majority of those who did not secure jobs were considered unemployable because of poor health. As a result, it was decided that a physical examination would be used to screen future recruits.

Before they were trained, all 91 graduates were considered incapable of supporting themselves. Because of the specialized counseling, training, and placement services they received, however, a significant number proved they were able to become economically independent. Experiences of three of the women illustrate the satisfactory adjustment to the working world made possible by the course.

*Miss E*—Supported by her father, Miss E had never been prepared to earn a living. When his death left her at the age of 55 with no financial resources, she became a recipient of public assistance. On first entering the course, Miss E was not interested in either training or employment, and did not participate freely in the class work. Through the efforts of her teachers, however, her skills were developed so that her final rating was above average. Simultaneously, her attitude toward working changed and, on graduation, Miss E was placed as a nurse aide.

*Miss F*—Aged 53, Miss F had worked as a finisher and packer in a factory and, from 1947 to 1948, had operated her own small newsstand. She had not worked since 1948 and it appeared doubtful that she could benefit from the training as her right hand and leg were affected by paralysis. Miss F was willing to try, however, since her medical report did not indicate that her disability precluded participation in the course. At first her awkwardness in performing some of the work made her shy and retiring but as the class progressed her coordination and self-confidence improved. Her rating on graduation was above average, and she was placed immediately, not as a domestic worker but as an assembler in a factory. The change in her attitude is best expressed in her own words: "The teachers proved to us it could be done, no matter what the handicap might be."

*Mrs. G*—A widow of 63, Mrs. G in the past had been employed as a pantry worker but had not had a job in over 4 years. On entering training, her appearance was unkempt, and her attitude dejected. She became interested in the training, and her appearance and attitude improved. Encouraged by the staff, she lost the fear that her age was an insurmountable handicap in finding a job. When Mrs. G completed the course, she was placed as a pantry maid.

### **The Service Workers' Training Program: Chicago**

Although similar in basic purpose to the program conducted in New York City, the service workers' training program administered by the Chicago Department of Welfare differed from the New York program in many ways. The Chicago program was shorter, the training facilities and equipment were not as extensive, and, at the time of the study, all aspects of the program were administered by the Department of Welfare.

Begun in November 1949, the program was temporarily discontinued in June 1952 as other training programs operated simultaneously by the Rehabilitation Division of the Department of Welfare proved more attractive to potential trainees. However, it is planned to reinstitute this program whenever the need arises in the future.

Between November 1949 and June 1952 a total of 13 classes were held. Given for three consecutive weeks every other month, the classes had a total enrollment of 127 trainees. Subjects covered in the 3-week course included cleaning the home, laundering and ironing, care of children, and simple meal preparation. Discussions covered such additional topics as safety in the home, telephone manners, good grooming, and how to look for a job.

The trainees were selected by the placement and vocational counselors of the Rehabilitation Division from their case loads. Before admission to the course, the women were given simple aptitude tests to evaluate their capacity to absorb program content and to hold a job. A complete medical examination was also given.

As measured by the 64 women who attended the first 6 classes (information for all 13 classes is not available), placements were extremely high. All but 5 women were placed shortly after they finished the course and these 5 either eventually found their own jobs or, for valid reasons, were unable to accept employment.

### ***The Domestic Workers' Training Program: East St. Louis***

The 3-week domestic workers' training program was instituted in 1952 by the Illinois Public Aid Commission to train public-assistance recipients for employment in private households and for cleaning commercial or industrial establishments. When the program began, the trainees were provided with two basement rooms and the use of the nursery in a neighborhood community house. Gradually, additional facilities were made available without cost by interested individuals. These include a small private hotel for women, where the trainees are able to acquire a knowledge of an institutional type of cleaning; two suites of doctors' offices; and private homes and apartments.

Classes are held daily from 9 a. m. to noon during the 3-week course. Trainees are required to be punctual and have perfect attendance; tardiness or lost time must be made up. These rules are strictly enforced in order to accustom the women to a routine which requires them to arise early and be at work at a designated time. The staff is composed of two persons: an employment representative who is a permanent staff member of the Illinois Public Aid Commission and

is responsible for planning the program, selecting the trainees, and placing the graduates; and the instructor who was employed specifically for this program.

Between March 1952 and June 1953, eight groups—a total of 69 women—completed the 3-week course. Some of the trainees found jobs in private homes either on a full-time or part-time basis; the rest were placed in cleaning jobs in commercial or industrial establishments. However, as stated by the program's employment representative, "The trainees employed gained more than a job; they obtained satisfaction from leaving the rut of dependency to follow a more independent way of life."

## 5

### FOOD-SERVICE OCCUPATIONS

There seems to be less discrimination against older women by employers in the restaurant industry than in many other industries. Restaurant owners are apt to regard mature women as desirable employees, possessing certain positive qualities well suited to the food-service occupations. Employers have found them to be stable, courteous, dependable, and cooperative in this work where public contact is important. Also, many of the mature women are willing to accept work on shifts found inconvenient by younger women.

Although work in the food-service industry ranges from general helpers in cafeterias to hostesses in the more expensive eating establishments, the bulk of the jobs are for waitresses. Of the 850,000 women reported by the 1950 census as employed in eating and drinking establishments, approximately 450,000 were waitresses. Women cashiers numbered 22,000 and counter and fountain workers numbered 17,000. (Hostesses are included with waitresses.)

The four programs studied differ widely in the level of jobs for which students are prepared, in length of training, and in basic purpose. In Washington, D. C., a training program for waitresses, hostesses, and cashiers, jointly sponsored by the Board of Education and the local restaurant association, was in operation in 1953, as well as a commercial-foods course conducted by the Hannah Harrison School. In Denver, a program for waitress, cashier, and hostess training was offered as part of the public school system's adult-education program and, in Chicago, the Department of Welfare had developed a program to prepare recipients of public assistance for employment as general helpers in cafeterias and restaurants.

Although varying in many ways, the four programs had two characteristics in common: First, a considerable proportion of the trainees in all four programs were mature women; many were past 50 years. Second, the women completing the courses were easily placed.

One of the chief reasons for the ease with which the mature women graduates were placed is the shortage of competent food-service workers which has existed in many localities since 1940. In fact, two of the four programs—the one conducted by the Board of Education and the Restaurant Association in Washington and the course given by the Denver school—were developed at the request of the local restaurant industry because of shortages of trained food-service personnel.

***Waitress, Hostess, and Cashier Training: Washington, D. C.***

Dating back to February 1940, this joint project of the Board of Education and Restaurant Association shows how the schools can assist industry to meet a personnel shortage and, at the same time, provide the training needed by mature women job seekers.

Costs are shared; the school system provides funds for the instructor's salary while the Association provides training space and facilities, and pays for advertising and placement. Responsibilities are also shared. The Board of Education develops the course of study; and the Association selects the trainees and places them after the course is completed.

This free, 4-week course calls for 2 hours of class attendance, 5 days each week. Classes are given both mornings and evenings; and the students may choose the more convenient time. Trainees are recruited chiefly by advertisements inserted in the help-wanted columns of local newspapers a few days before the opening of a new class.

The course is planned to train—in sequence—waitresses, hostesses, and cashiers. During the first 2 weeks, the trainees are taught how a waitress takes care of her station, receives and seats guests, takes orders for meals, gives and picks up orders in the kitchen, and serves meals. In the third week students are taught to perform the supervisory, administrative, and public-relations duties of a hostess. In the last week, use of the cash register and other usual duties of a cashier are explained. Throughout the course, conscious efforts are made by the instructor to instill self-confidence in the woman who is apprehensive about securing a job because of her age. One lesson during the final week is devoted entirely to a discussion of the advantages of maturity in this type of work.

Although the course is open to men and women of all ages, the majority of trainees have been women between 40 and 60 years of age. Detailed information secured on the 26 women enrolled in the December 1953 class showed that 6 were under 35 years, 3 were between 35 and 39 years, and 17 were 40 years of age or over.

Placement is not guaranteed, but almost all the women secure jobs when they complete the course. For example, of the 20 women over 35 years who attended the December 1953 class, 14 were working a month later, 2 were not available for employment, and 4 were to be employed shortly.

***Commercial-Foods Course: Washington, D. C.***

This 5-month course is one of four training programs offered by the Hannah Harrison School, described in more detail elsewhere in

this report. The commercial-foods course is taught by the school dietitian and the school's kitchen and dining room serve as laboratories for the practical application of instruction in planning menus, purchasing food, cooking, and serving.

Between the fall of 1950 and the spring of 1953, nine women over 35 years enrolled in this course and all but one completed the training. The 8 women over 35 who completed the course were placed. Three women went to work in hospitals, 2 in restaurants, 2 in stores, and 1 in a museum. The level of work secured by the women varied considerably: four of the women became food supervisors; the others secured jobs as hostess, cashier, cook, and counter girl.

### ***Waitress, Cashier, and Hostess Training: Denver***

The training course for waitresses, cashiers, and hostesses has been offered yearly since first added to the Emily Griffith Opportunity School's curriculum at the request of restaurant owners unable to find competent personnel. As students are interested in different types of food-service jobs, the school permits a choice in courses of study. The complete food-service course is 16 weeks in length and calls for 5 hours' attendance, 5 days each week. In addition, there is a 4-week course for busboys, and an 8-week course for women who wish to be waitresses only.

All food-service students except busboys receive the 8 weeks of waitress instruction and practice. After this, those women desiring to become either cashiers or hostesses are given 4 weeks of cashier training followed by 4 weeks of hostess training. Throughout the course, stress is placed on the development of a pleasing personality and appearance, courtesy, and good customer relations. Daily classes consist of 1 hour of lecture and discussion and 4 hours of practice training in the school dining room, serving lunch to students and faculty. During this practice, students are encouraged to develop speed, accuracy, and confidence. The dining-room standards of service that the trainees are required to meet are comparable to those in the best restaurants.

Anyone 16 years or over may apply for admission to the course. The teacher of the class interviews applicants and screens them on the basis of their interest, physical condition, appearance, and apparent ability to get along with others. In case of doubt, the testing section of the school is requested to give appropriate aptitude or psychological tests.

Since the inception of the course, the majority of students have been mature women. Between September 1952 and June 1953 there

were 33 women trainees over 35 years. They constituted approximately two-thirds of the food-service students, and half were judged to be over 50.

Every woman over 35 years who completed training during the 1952-53 school session was placed if she desired employment. Virtually all the graduates of the 8-week waitress course secured jobs as waitresses. Half of the 16-week course graduates were placed as cashiers or hostesses; the rest secured jobs as waitresses. Although the graduates of the 16-week course were often reluctant to accept work as waitresses, it was judged best for them to do so with the thought that they could move into a hostess or cashier job when a vacancy arose.

### **Food-Service Training: Chicago**

The food-service training program is one of four projects developed by the Rehabilitation Division of the Chicago Department of Welfare to prepare public-assistance recipients for productive employment. This 4-week course is designed to provide unskilled persons with the basic techniques needed to make them employable as general helpers in cafeterias, dining rooms, cafes, and restaurants.

Since general orientation to good work habits and attitudes is even more important for assistance recipients than it is for the average new worker, the first week is devoted to this aspect of their training. During the second week, food-service students are assigned to the city-operated cafeteria in the department of welfare building, where they receive a direct introduction to their duties. The final 2 weeks are spent working in cafeterias and dining rooms operated by three cooperating non-profit organizations. Supervisors of the cooperating cafeterias and restaurants help the trainees adjust to duties as met with on the job and, at the end of the 2 weeks, evaluate them on such factors as performance, aptitude, attendance, and appearance.

Trainees who complete the course satisfactorily are graduated at a special ceremony held by the Chicago Department of Welfare. Each "graduate" receives a diploma; for many of these women this is the first award ever received. The final event of graduation day is the distribution of job referrals by the vocational counselor.

Seventeen food-service training courses had been held between the time the project was initiated in September 1952 and the end of 1953. Of the 81 trainees enrolled since the course's inception, almost all were over 35. Records for a group of 20 recent trainees show that most were past 40, and that some were past 60. The majority of these women, after completing the course, secured work as general helpers

## training mature women for employment

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in cafeterias or dining rooms. Others found jobs as bus girls or second cooks and a few became cleaners in private homes or hotels.

Short histories of two trainees illustrate the value of the project in helping to secure jobs for hard-to-place women of mature years.

*Mrs. H*—Mrs. H had lived in Chicago for the last 18 of her 53 years. She had worked as inspector in a felt factory for 10 years, but was laid off when the factory curtailed operations. After looking for a job for over a year, she was forced to seek public assistance. Mrs. H was classified as potentially employable and assigned to food-service training. She was found to be an apt student and completed the course successfully. On her first job referral, she was hired as second cook in a private institution and received one of the highest rates of pay offered a food-service course graduate.

*Mrs. I*—At age 45, Mrs. I's most recent job was that of maid, but she had been employed for only 4 months when she broke her hip. While physically unable to work, she had been helped by family and friends. On her recovery, however, she was unable to find another job and applied for public assistance. Assigned to the food-service project, Mrs. I completed the course and, with the help of the Rehabilitation Division, immediately secured work as a cafeteria helper in a home for the aged.

## 6

### OTHER EXAMPLES: COSMETOLOGY AND RETAIL SALES

The occupations of beauty operator and saleswoman currently offer fruitful employment opportunities for mature women. Trade schools and high schools in many communities include these two courses among the long list of daytime or evening classes given free of charge as part of the public school program. In general, the courses are given to meet the employment needs of the young girl rather than of the older woman.

The public school system in a community, however, can be one of the chief resources for training mature men and women for employment. In some communities, this resource has been developed and utilized; in others, it remains untapped. The Emily Griffith Opportunity School in Denver supplies an example of an adult-education system designed “. . . to give folks who need more training just as much or as little as they want, and at the moment they want it.”

Ever since 1916, when 2,398 adults—instead of the 200 expected on opening night—flocked to the school planned for Denver residents aged 16 or over, there has been a continuous expansion in the school's activities and enrollment. Several years after the school was opened, a few vocational classes given on nonschool property proved so popular that the idea of taking instruction to the students became an integral part of the program. During the depression of the early 1930's, counselors were added as part of an organized guidance program to assist trained but unemployed students to prepare for, and find, jobs. In the fall of 1953, over 200 courses were being taught to 23,000 students. Many of these courses were given in local business establishments, community centers, and public school buildings.

The classroom informality that is customary enables the instructors to combine teaching with counseling. Like most of those engaged in training mature women, the school staff finds that continual counseling—in matters both personal and vocational—contributes materially to their success in finding and keeping a job.

The training programs for beauty operators and saleswomen given by the Emily Griffith Opportunity School are described in this chapter.

### **Cosmetology: Denver**

Although the 9-month cosmetology course is not designed especially for mature women, 33 of the 70 persons enrolled in the course during the 1952-53 school session were women of 35 years or over. About two-thirds of these women were beginners and had enrolled for the full course; the remainder were former beauty operators who had joined the class to prepare for the State board of cosmetology examination.

Classes are scheduled for 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, and are held during the daytime except for a supplementary course on sales techniques given at night for a 6-week period. Each day begins with 1 hour of theory in which students are taught a limited amount of anatomy, physiology, and chemistry. Students spend the rest of the morning on station, receiving instruction and practicing on one another. In the afternoon, the trainees practice on customers who have regular appointments at the school and are charged only the cost of supplies. Weekly tests in theory are given; time records on practical operations are kept for each student; and the final examination is patterned after that of the State board of cosmetology. The intensive nature and high standards of the course are shown by the fact that, since the course began 14 years ago, only one student who took the State examination failed to pass.



A cosmetology student practices on a "customer."

The placement record of the women completing the cosmetology course is excellent. Not only have the graduates, regardless of age, generally secured jobs but—with the help of the school—most of the women had jobs waiting for them. Of the 15 mature women in the beginners' group who completed training during the 1952-53 school year, 2 opened their own shops and the rest were employed as beauty operators. All eight mature women in the refresher group also found immediate employment.

The ease with which these women were placed illustrates the need for competent beauticians in many localities. The 189,000 women employed as "beauticians, barbers, and manicurists" in 1950 were 16,000 fewer than women in the same occupations in 1940.

### **Retail Sales: Denver**

An even more extensive shortage exists for competent saleswomen. The course given at the Emily Griffith Opportunity School to prepare interested persons for retail sales work merits special attention because of the large number of jobs for mature women in this field. In 1950, according to the United States Bureau of the Census, there were 1,192,000 women employed as saleswomen in retail trade establishments, and more than half of these women were 35 or over. In addition, the fact that numerous part-time jobs are available in this occupation makes it one that offers special advantages to many older women who do not wish full-time work.

In general, there are few age restrictions in hiring retail sales personnel. Employers frequently hire women over 50 for sales work, and some employers set no maximum age limitation. Also, those older women interested in part-time jobs furnish the personnel needed to handle peak business loads and to substitute during relief periods of full-time employees.

Although retail sales work is not an occupation which requires extensive training, it involves a type of skill that can be advantageously developed by instruction. Such preemployment training is particularly valuable when there are many job applicants and employers are able to choose those with previous experience.

Organized to supply trained salespeople for the Denver area and to assist persons encountering placement difficulties, the "retail sales and personality development course" covers basic principles of salesmanship and acquaints the students with actual work situations. Classes are held 2 hours daily, during the daytime, for a school semester of 19 weeks. In addition to teaching the specific duties of filling out sales checks, making basic arithmetical computations, operating

## training mature women for employment

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a cash register, and wrapping packages, some instruction is given on general retail-store operation.

Three weeks of the course are devoted to personality development. During this part of the course, work habits and attitudes, employee-customer relations, and basic factors influencing personality are discussed. The teacher intensifies her efforts to help the students become psychologically adjusted to the business world. In devoting so much time to this subject, the school has been guided by the belief—held by many store executives—that the qualities most needed to be a good salesperson are emotional maturity, a pleasing personality, the ability to meet the public, and a neat appearance. This part of the training is considered especially important for the older women who often lack the self-confidence and aggressive drive needed for successful sales work.

The two courses given during the 1952-53 school year were attended by 69 students. Of these, 46 were women and approximately half of the women were over 35 years. Many of the trainees in this group were married women interested in part-time jobs as a means of supplementing the family income and participating in some out-of-the-home activity. The majority of the mature women students completed the course and subsequently secured work as saleswomen in department stores or other retail establishments.

# 7

## THE NURSING OCCUPATIONS

Five programs studied by the Women's Bureau illustrate attempts made by three communities to alleviate local nursing shortages, and the important part played by middle-aged and older women in providing the urgently needed labor supply. Only one of the programs, a refresher course for registered nurses, attempts to augment the supply of active professional nurses. The other four programs deal with training practical nurses or auxiliary workers such as nurse aides and hospital attendants.

The New York City Department of Hospitals is comprised of 33 institutions owned and operated by the city. In early 1952, the continuing shortage of nursing workers caused the commissioner of hospitals to publicize the situation. He wrote to 25 major counseling groups and women's organizations describing the urgent need and stressing the fact that qualified women, particularly those over 40, were desired as trainees for the three programs offered by the department. These programs are: an 8-week refresher course for inactive registered nurses, a 1-year practical-nurse training course, and 4 weeks of on-the-job training for nurse aides. Although trainee recruitment was stimulated by the 1952 publicity campaign, the nursing shortage continued acute, with the greatest need for registered nurses. The use of practical nurses and nurse aides to perform a variety of tasks in order to ease the workload of the professional nurses is illustrated by comparing positions budgeted and positions filled, as of August 31, 1953, in the 33 institutions administered by the Department of Hospitals:

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Registered nurses</i>	<i>Practical nurses</i>	<i>Nurse aides</i>
Jobs budgeted.....	14, 697	7, 415	2, 435	4, 847
Jobs filled.....	13, 212	3, 554	2, 434	7, 224

In Chicago, a 4-week course to train hospital attendants was developed by the Rehabilitation Division of the Chicago Department of Welfare. The choice of occupation was determined to a large extent by the fact that there was a shortage of competent hospital attendants in the Chicago area.

In Colorado, the shortage of nursing personnel prompted the Governor to call a statewide conference in 1946 on the problem. A resultant study made by hospital and school administrators approved the integration of the practical nurse into the nursing team and formu-

lated a practical-nursing program with minimum standards for instruction, curriculum, and student qualifications. In 1949, a practical-nurse training program jointly operated by the Emily Griffith Opportunity School and three Denver hospitals was established in accord with the suggested standards.

Mature women composed a large proportion of the trainees in the five programs at the time of the study. In New York City, 189 of the 202 women enrolled in the refresher course were 35 or over, and a large proportion of the practical-nurse and nurse-aide trainees were over 40. Almost all the women attending the Chicago hospital-attendants' training course were over 40; in Denver, women over 35 comprised slightly over half the graduates of the practical-nurse training program.

None of the mature women completing any of these training programs, regardless of occupational level, had difficulty securing work. The shortage of professional nurses, practical nurses, and other competent nursing workers is so prevalent that frequently no age maximum is set by employers when hiring nursing personnel.

Despite the current acute shortages, training opportunities have age restrictions. Almost no courses are open to the middle-aged woman who wishes to become a professional nurse; an entry age ceiling of 35 years is practically universal among schools of nursing. This is not true for the occupation of practical nurse, where women in their forties are encouraged to enter training, although women over 50 or 55 years are frequently barred. It is interesting to note that, though a maximum age for entrance was set at 50 to 55 years by the New York practical-nurse program, individual exceptions were made and, of the 88 trainees who were over 35, 11 were between 50 and 54 years and 3 were 55 or over. In Denver, no age maximum was set for entrance to the course and, of the 92 women trainees, 10 were between 50 and 54 years, and 11 were 55 years of age or over.

### ***Refresher Course for Registered Nurses: New York City***

The program to provide refresher training for professional nurses began in June 1952. Its purpose was to acquaint inactive registered nurses, through classroom instruction and practice work, with the most recent developments in the profession. Classes were scheduled in four municipal hospitals and, between June 1952 and September 1953, a total of 202 women had participated in the nine courses that were held. Only women with diplomas from an accredited school of nursing were accepted.

Of the 202 women who enrolled in the refresher course, only 13 were under 35 years. Most of the women were in their forties or fifties although ages ranged as high as the seventies.

Two types of training schedules, full time and part time, were developed. However, only the part-time schedule has been used because the majority of members of each of the nine classes, when given a choice, selected the part-time course. This schedule requires attendance 2 or 3 days each week for 8 weeks, in contrast with the full-time schedule requiring attendance 5 days a week for a month.

The training time is divided evenly between classroom instruction and supervised nursing service in the wards. Both individual and group instruction are given, and teaching techniques are adjusted to the needs of each class. Each trainee is rated during the course and, at the end of the course, students are required to pass written examinations.

Nurses who complete the course are expected to accept employment in a city hospital for at least 3 months, and over two-thirds of the graduates were placed in city hospitals. Of those remaining, a few found other nursing jobs but most—for personal reasons—were unable to return to nursing.

### ***Practical-Nurse Training: New York City***

Since the development of the acute shortage of professional and other nursing personnel during World War II, there have been notable changes in the occupation of practical nurse. Many States have established new requirements for licensing and new standards of practice. In addition, training opportunities have expanded considerably.

At present, most practical-nurse training is conducted in three ways: by the public-school system, by private schools affiliated with hospitals, or by schools operated by hospitals. The Denver practical-nurse program described later in the chapter is conducted jointly by the public school system and three local hospitals. The New York City program is operated completely by the hospitals.

Before World War II the New York City Department of Hospitals had hired practical nurses from those trained, sometimes in cooperation with the city-operated hospitals, by the public education system, or by community organizations. However, the shortage of practical nurses caused the department to open its own school, the Central School for Practical Nurses, in 1943. Students receive free uniforms and \$10 a month. They may live at the school, where full maintenance is provided, unless they prefer to live at home.

The 12-month program consists of 4 months of classroom work and supervised care of patients, followed by 8 months of supervised practice in hospital wards. The 8 months of ward practice is spent half in a general hospital and half in a hospital for the chronically ill. On satisfactory completion of the course, students receive a certificate which makes them eligible to take the licensing examination required by New York State since 1938.

Students are carefully selected; on the average, only 1 out of every 3 applicants is found to be qualified. Information secured on 88 trainees who were over 35 showed that many of these women had performed nursing duties before entering and had enrolled at the school to improve their skills. A considerable number, however, wanted to change from another type of work to practical nursing, which they considered more interesting and higher paid. Personal interviews with 1 student and 1 former student supplied information on why they had enrolled in the course.

*Mrs. J*—The student, Mrs. J, was 36 years of age and childless. She had been married for 11 years to a construction worker who did not earn enough to support them, since his work was seasonal. She had enrolled in the course because she had leisure time, liked to take care of sick people, and believed the occupation of practical nurse offered job security.

*Mrs. K*—Separated from her husband, Mrs. K had a married son and daughter. She had never worked before but found that she was lonesome and had too much leisure time. Becoming interested in caring for sick people, Mrs. K entered the school in 1948 and had been working for the Department of Hospitals since she was graduated in 1949. Mrs. K, aged 54, enjoys her job and receives much satisfaction from working as a practical nurse.

The large majority of the women completing the course went to work as practical nurses, not only in city-operated hospitals, but in other institutions, or on private duty. The work performance of the women over 35 who became practical nurses was highly commended by the supervisory staffs of the various hospitals. It was felt that mature women have generally selected the vocation, as shown in the cases of Mrs. J and Mrs. K, because of their interest in nursing as well as in securing a job. In addition, mature women usually have had a certain amount of nursing experience in their own homes, are aware of some of the less pleasant duties the job entails, and are reliable and steady workers.

### **Nurse-Aide Training: New York City**

A 4-week program to train nurse aides in order to insure better care for patients was instituted simultaneously in the 33 city-operated hospitals in 1947. The program has been in continuous operation and,

although the exact number trained each year varies, the numbers are always large. In 1951, for example, there were 2,610 students enrolled.

Persons interested in, and qualified for, a job as a nurse aide are hired with the understanding that they will be trained 4 weeks before being given their regular ward assignment. They are paid the regular nurse-aide wage rate throughout the training period. Recruits are secured through newspaper and magazine articles, through recommendations of former trainees, and through the local office of the New York State Employment Service.

Although some of the trainees are men, the greater number are women. Many of the women trainees, although not the majority, are women over 35. For example, of 533 trainees enrolled in the course given at one of the city hospitals between December 1951 and June 1953, 18 percent were men, 61 percent were women under 35, and 21 percent—111 women—were over 35.

Information secured for 100 women trainees in the over-35 age group showed that 81 completed the training and were assigned to regular jobs as nurse aides in the hospital. In October 1953, 72 of these 81 women were still working as nurse aides. As judged by their supervisors, all but two women were doing average or above average work.

### **Hospital-Attendant Training: Chicago**

The 4-week hospital attendant program is 1 of 4 projects developed by the Rehabilitation Division of the Chicago Department of Welfare to train persons receiving public assistance for employment. Between the beginning of the program in September 1952 and December 1953, 12 classes had been held in which a total of 131 public-assistance recipients—almost all women past 35 years—had been enrolled. Throughout the 4 weeks, trainees receive their usual allotments plus payments for special expenses incurred.

One of the vocational and placement counselors of the Rehabilitation Division is made responsible for each class. The counselor's duties include selecting the trainees, teaching the class during the first week, arranging for the other 3 weeks of training, and securing jobs for students who complete the course.

The first week of the course is devoted to general orientation toward both training and employment. During the second week, trainees report to the Red Cross offices for the regular home-nursing course offered by this organization. In the last 2 weeks each trainee is assigned, on a 40-hour week basis, to 1 of 7 cooperating institutions

to work under the supervision of a nurse or regular hospital supervisor.

Shortly after the course is completed, almost all who are willing and able to work are placed as nurse aides. Many of the trainees in the early classes were retained as regular employees by the hospitals or institutions where they received their last 2 weeks of training.

### **Practical-Nurse Training: Denver**

Both hospitals and school administrators participated in planning and organizing the 1-year practical-nurse program jointly operated, since 1949, by the Emily Griffith Opportunity School and three Denver hospitals. The actual training takes place in the hospitals and is conducted by teachers who are also registered nurses. The teachers' salaries, however, are paid by the school, which also has the responsibility for curriculum planning, overall administration of the program, and recruitment of trainees. Although the State of Colorado does not regulate standards of instruction or issue licenses for practical nurses, this program has been accredited by the National Association for Practical Nurse Education.

A number of problems faced in the first years after the program was adopted have been solved in large measure by adding to the staff of the school the position of nurse-educator. This has enabled one person to devote full time to coordinating the program, facilitating the exchange of teaching techniques and experiences among the three hospitals, and standardizing the textbooks used and the amount of time devoted to specific subjects.

Recruitment, formerly handled by each hospital, was also channeled through the nurse-educator because it was difficult and time consuming. Experience had shown that approximately 60 persons must be interviewed to form a class of 20 students. Also, the criteria used in student selection had varied by hospital, and there had been quite a number who dropped out of the course. Further study of the problem and concentration of responsibility in the nurse-educator have resulted in more standardized selection and fewer dropouts.

In order to obtain a sufficient number of qualified trainees, the school has developed a recruitment program which utilizes the press, the radio, and personal contacts. The school announces the formation of each new class and prepares news and feature stories; the cooperating hospitals place classified advertisements in local newspapers; and the nurse-educator speaks before club and school groups. Publicity is also given to the fact that the course is free and that the students can earn as they learn. Students are paid \$60 a month by the hospital after

their first 4 months of training, and \$90 a month after their second 4 months.

A weekly schedule of 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, prevails throughout the course. The trainees spend most of their first 16 weeks in the classroom receiving instruction in nursing theory. The remainder of the course is spent chiefly in floor duty in the hospital wards and in practice duty with patients cared for by the Visiting Nurse Service in private homes.

Women over 35 comprised slightly more than half of the 93 trainees enrolled in the six practical-nursing courses offered between September 1952 and August 1953. Practical-nursing jobs were secured by all women who completed their year of training. Approximately one-fourth entered private duty; the others secured jobs in hospitals, often in the hospitals at which they were trained. In December 1953, all but three women were known to be still employed.

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# PRODUCTION WORK IN THE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY

The extensive use of women as production workers in the electronics industry began during World War II when critical labor shortages forced employers to seek new sources of labor for their rapidly expanding plants. When production was cut back during the postwar period, overall employment in the industry declined, with the decrease greatest among women workers. However, after the outbreak of fighting in Korea, the percentage of women in the industry again rose along with an increase in the total number of workers.

In 1951, two precision-instrument manufacturers in New York State—finding it necessary to employ inexperienced women workers—began to train women, including a substantial number past 35 years, for production jobs. One program, 4 months in length, was limited to training women for electrical assembly and inspection work. The other, an 18-month program, though concentrating on training for assembly work, also prepared women for the more skilled and higher paid jobs.

Satisfaction with the success of their training programs and with the work of the mature women participants was voiced by officials of both the electronics firms. In the opinion of one executive:

Women over 35 have proved themselves to be aptly suited for the type of precision and sedentary electrical-assembly work which requires patience, a light sensitive touch, and good eyesight. . . . Our experience to date has proved that women in the so-called "middle-aged-group" are, generally, more adaptable to this type of work. Their general dependability is considerably greater than those in the younger groups. Over 70 percent of the females now employed in these occupations are over 35 years of age. The composite average age for all female employees is 39 years. It is our conclusion that the middle-aged woman possesses more patience to perform the precise, tedious type of work. . . . They pay more attention to job details, concentrate on the work at hand, and develop into more dependable employees. Their home conditions are usually more stable—thus having less effect upon their attendance and continuity of employment.

The type of production jobs filled by women workers in the electrical manufacturing industry varies from company to company. Some firms prefer to employ women for only a limited number of jobs such as assembling, winding, or inspecting. Other companies have a more flexible employment policy for women and place them in a wider range of

jobs. The companies studied serve, to a certain extent, as examples of each of these two approaches.

Both companies were alike, however, in their willingness to consider older women as well as younger ones for training and employment. More than one-third of the 190 women completing the 4-month training program were 35 or over, and more than two-thirds of the 250 women recruited for the 18-month training program were over 35.

### **A 4-Month Program: New York State**

An on-the-job training program to prepare women for work as electrical assemblers and inspectors was established in 1951 by a company engaged in designing, developing, and manufacturing precision instruments. Having employed women during World War II, the company once more turned to hiring women when increased orders in 1951 again required more workers.

Virtually the same procedures are used to train the recruits for both assembly and inspection work. Since the company's policy is to hire only a few women at a time, it has been possible to follow what has been described as the "see and show" method. When a new operation is to be learned, an experienced woman worker sitting next to the trainee demonstrates the steps to be followed. If there are questions that cannot be answered by the demonstrator, a leadman is consulted.

Assembly operations taught the trainees include cutting, skinning, and soldering of lugs to wires; simple wiring of small units and sub-assemblies; forming and lacing of cables; coil winding; and simple mechanical assembling of electrical component parts. Training for inspection operations includes blueprint reading, the use of basic measuring instruments, and repetitive inspection of large quantities of purchased materials or of parts machined in the plant. The women progress toward reading complex blueprints or rough drawings so that they can be given responsibility for the inspection of more complicated parts. As inspection work requires mathematical accuracy, only women who have completed high school with a good grade in mathematics are accepted for this type of training.

While the instruction is informal, the progressive pay scale established for trainees has been formalized by an agreement with the union representing the production workers. At the end of the 4-month training period, women are classified as either class D wireman or class D parts inspector. However, instruction on new operations continues to alternate with repetitive production work since continual changes are made in the equipment manufactured.

## **training mature women for employment**

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A total of 250 women were hired between the program's inception in April 1951 and December 1953. Of these, 190 completed the training program. More than one-third of the trainees—70 women—were 35 years or over.

Information secured on 40 of these women who had completed their training showed that 35 were classified as class D wiremen and 5 as class D parts inspectors immediately upon completion. By December 1953, 10 of the 40 trainees had progressed to class C wiremen and 4 to class C parts inspectors. All these class C workers had received merit wage increases in their new jobs.

### **An 18-Month Program: New York State**

Recruiting plant workers became a problem to this company in 1951 when it began to manufacture, in quantity, the electro-mechanical equipment it had previously developed. Located in an area where experienced workers were in short supply, the company turned to hiring women, the only local source of additional personnel. No hiring age ceilings were set. Selection of new employees was based on health, eyesight with glasses, and indications of intelligence, stability, and patience. At first, new workers were chosen on the basis of a personal interview. Subsequently, finger dexterity and mechanical comprehension tests—devised by the company with the help of the Employment Service—were also used.

To help the new women recruits learn the specialized techniques used in the plant, the company developed an 18-month on-the-job training program. A period of this length was set because of the need for assemblers proficient in many intricate and exact operations. In this plant—because of the continuation of experimental work, constant product improvement, and frequent rush orders—each assembler must know more than one phase of an operation.

Most of the women are trained to become winder assemblers or instrument assemblers since those are the workers most needed. The winder assembler trainees prepare wire coils for transformers and other electrical units, and also learn how to operate various types of coil-winding machines. Operations taught women learning to become instrument assemblers include polishing shafts with fine abrasives; alining gears; bending and forming electrical components; fastening chassis parts; soldering wires; and laying out and harnessing complicated multiwire patterns.

Upon reporting to work, each trainee is assigned to an instructor, a woman who usually helps eight women and is located at a nearby work-bench. The instructors are not supervisors; they demonstrate tech-

niques, keep watch on each trainee's progress, and supply work materials when needed.

In accord with the company's stated policy of basing hiring decisions on individual ability regardless of age, sex, or physical handicaps, women workers are not restricted to jobs as winder or instrument assemblers. When job openings occur in the machine shop or in the inspection or sheet-metal departments, women believed suitable for that work are transferred; if none are available, new trainees are sent there directly. Women learning these jobs receive instruction in the routine operation of various machines and equipment, and gradually become responsible for working more independently and on more difficult assignments.

No production requirements are set for the new trainees since staff members in all departments emphasize that it takes time to learn to coordinate the hand and eye, and that stress on speed can spoil the quality of work. Each woman is allowed to progress at her own rate. Accuracy is of overriding importance in the production of precision instruments, and the entire training program is designed to insure high quality production.

About 250 women have been recruited for this training program since its inception in 1951. It is estimated that 70 percent were at least 35 years of age. On the basis of work records for 39 women in the over-35 group, it was found that 26 completed the 18-month training. Most of these trainees—18 women—became winder assemblers; 6 became instrument assemblers; and 2 became winder or assembler technicians. A followup study of the same group made a few months later showed that additional graduates had advanced to the technician grade, and that one woman had become a leadwoman.

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## CONCLUSIONS

### *Learning New Skills After 35*

Women 35 years or over constituted at least half of the trainees in 18 of the 23 programs, and a substantial proportion in the remaining 5. Women in their forties and fifties predominated, although ages ranged to over seventy. On the whole, these women proved satisfactory as students and, after completing their training, became competent workers.

Without exception, the instructors and administrators of the training programs stressed the fact that learning proficiency depended on individual ability, regardless of age. Some of the instructors stated that—in general, and allowing for a wide range of individual differences—older women did not do as well as younger students in class work and theory, but were better in demonstration and practice work. These instructors thought that, since mature women had been away from school for many years, they were no longer accustomed to studying. In a number of courses, therefore, a conscious effort was made to minimize theory and textbook work and emphasize the practice technique.

The need of mature women for individualized counseling and guidance was stressed by the majority of training program administrators. Major emphasis was usually placed on developing the self-confidence of the trainees, helping them to learn how to get along with others, improving their health and appearance, and teaching them good work habits. Services of professional psychologists and other specialists were available in a few of the projects, but generally it was the teacher who also filled the role of counselor.

### *Finding a Job*

Most of the "35 plus" trainees were able to find employment, when they completed training. In almost all instances, the women secured jobs doing the work for which they had been trained.

Although the projects did not usually guarantee employment, trainees were given considerable assistance in finding a job. Many of the courses included instructions on how to apply for work, how to fill out application forms, and how to behave during job interviews. In addition, the programs provided job placement services.

Some of the factors which brought about the successful placement records of most of the programs can be isolated :

1. Job opportunities existed in the occupation for which training was offered.
2. The training programs had preparation for employment as a major purpose, and had established adequate performance standards which had to be attained by the trainees.
3. Trainees were carefully selected, and applicants judged unable to meet training or employment standards were rejected.
4. Classes were usually small, and trainees were given sufficient individual attention to enable each to progress at her own pace.
5. Efforts were made in almost all the courses to reproduce, or use, actual work situations, and instructors were generally persons with considerable work as well as teaching experience.
6. Close contact was maintained with local employers, often through the use of advisory committees that not only advised on the training programs but also cooperated in recruitment and placement activities.
7. Trainees were given individualized placement assistance on the basis of detailed knowledge by the placement officer, often the project teacher, of the woman's personality and abilities.
8. Consideration was given to the overall needs of the trainees in many of the courses so that undesirable personal and work attitudes were dealt with, as well as the lack of a specific skill. This resulted in preparing the women for employment and the working world as well as for a particular type of work.

Middle-aged and older women constitute an essential segment of this country's overall manpower resources. In a number of the programs described in this report, employers—faced by shortages of competent workers—turned to mature women as the source of the urgently needed labor supply. On entering employment, such women become contributors to our productive life and economic well-being. The results achieved in these training programs show clearly that women who have never worked or have not worked for many years can—with proper counseling, training, and placement—become both productive and satisfactory employees.

## APPENDIX

## Characteristics of the 23 Training Programs Studied by the Women's Bureau, 1953-54

Institution or project visited	Location	Occupation for which training offered	Date program began	Training time	In chapter
Emily Griffith Opportunity School	Denver, Colo.	Institutional housekeeper	1946	19-38 weeks	3
		Waitress, cashier, hostess	1943	8-16 weeks	5
		Cosmetologist	1939	9 months	6
		Retail saleswoman	1947	19 weeks	6
		Practical nurse	1949	1 year	7
Department of Hospitals	New York, N. Y.	Power sewing-machine operator	1951	6-8 weeks	2
		Registered nurse (refresher)	1952	4-8 weeks	7
		Practical nurse	1943	1 year	7
		Nurse aide	1947	4 weeks	7
		Institutional housekeeper	1950	5 months	3
Hannah Harrison School	Washington, D. C.	Clothing construction and alteration worker	1950	do	2
		Commercial food worker	1950	do	5
		Service worker	1949	3 weeks	4
Department of Welfare	Chicago, Ill.	Hospital attendant	1952	4 weeks	7
		Food-service worker	1952	do	5
		Household or related worker	1953	12 weeks	4
Joint Department of Welfare and Board of Education Project.	New York, N. Y.	Household or related worker	1953	12 weeks	4
Public Aid Commission	East St. Louis, Ill.	Service worker, domestic or other	1952	3 weeks	4
Hotel Training School	Washington, D. C.	Institutional housekeeper	1916	4 months	3
Joint Restaurant Association and Board of Education Project.	do	Waitress, hostess, cashier	1940	4 weeks	5
Community Hand-sewing Project	Scranton, Pa.	Industrial hand sewer	1952	13 weeks	2
Community Power-sewing Project	Hazleton, Pa.	Power sewing-machine operator	1953	4-6 weeks	2
18-Month Electronics Company Program	New York State	Assembler, technician or related worker	1951	18 months	8
4-Month Electronics Company Program	do	Assembler, inspector	1951	4 months	8