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Works Progress Administration Health Projects Give Employment to 7,444 Women

Caring for people who are ill and without means of providing for themselves and carrying on disease prevention campaigns, approximately 7,444 women are now working on Works Progress Administration health projects in 39 States, New York City and the District of Columbia.

Bedside nursing projects employ registered nurses on relief by providing free bedside care to needy patients. These nurses go into homes only on the advice of physicians to assist in prenatal and postnatal care and to serve in cases of general illness. They perform all types of general duties of bedside nurses such as bathing and dressing patients and preparing foods.

Every available unemployed needy nurse in drought-stricken areas is now employed.

To aid in combating the current infantile paralysis epidemic in Alabama, a special detachment of 60 nurses is working with the Alabama State Health Department to supplement the work of 31 already engaged in assisting county health officers in administering the nasal preventative spray, instructing in its use, or caring for those who have been stricken.

In Illinois, five clinics operate for the treatment and elimination of trachoma, an infectious disease of the eyelids which may lead to blindness. It spreads in belt areas and often afflicts entire families. The Illinois area is the southern tip of the State where 7,000 patients are
being treated in five counties of Johnson, Williamson, Gallatin, Union and Saline. Patients are transported many miles to and from clinics three times weekly in busses operated as a WPA project.

In Colorado Springs, Colorado, 23 WPA nurses have made 300 visits to homes of needy patients since March, 1936.

A preventorium for Tubercular Children operating as a WPA project in Tucson, Arizona, cares for 100 children over a period of about six months. Because of undernourishment and resulting low vitality or because of contact with a source of tubercular infection, these children are in danger of contracting the disease. The preventorium provides proper nourishment, recreation, exercise, study and care. Two hundred children a year can be treated.

A medical clinic near Portland, Oregon, operated as a WPA project has ministered to 54,045 patients since it opened.

Numbers of cases of incipient disease have been discovered in families which the WPA nurses have been serving. In one city in Massachusetts, 25 children suspected by the bedside nurse of having tuberculosis in its first stages, have been X-rayed and found to have the disease. Early discovery will prevent its spread and contribute greatly toward the recovery of the patient.

The States generally report excellent results obtained from the nursing projects in educating people in the importance of health; in improvement of sanitary conditions and practices; in the better care of mothers and babies; in developing interest in the prevention of such diseases as pellagra, malaria, tuberculosis and social disease infections.

Public health projects provide employment for persons on relief who promote physical and oral hygiene through health campaigns. Children
are examined for communicable diseases, physical defects and tooth decay or infection.

Among the important activities under the public health program are surveys which are being made in Florida, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and other States, to locate all crippled children so that their defects may be corrected where possible. A survey in one State showed that 71 per cent of the families of crippled children were financially unable to provide needed care without assistance. Thirty-seven per cent of the children listed had been treated only by a local medical doctor. In 13 per cent of the cases, it was stated that no physician had been consulted in three or more years. Nearly one-fifth of the crippled children of school age were either not in school or never had been, and some 75 per cent of the physically handicapped in school were retarded in their school work.

It has been found that some parents are unaware that anything can be done to correct their crippled children's defects. One mother, who herself had club feet and whose little girl was similarly afflicted, was surprised to be told by a relief nurse that corrective measures were possible. She welcomed arrangements for sending her three-year-old daughter to a hospital.

Under the Works Progress Administration program, crippled children are being taken to the regular clinics where they receive expert treatment. As a result of the surveys, a program of education for these handicapped has been developed in connection with the WPA Emergency Education program.

In Grand Rapids, Michigan, an immunization whooping cough project operates. The program includes locating the children and immunizing them against the disease.
Kentucky - a State which has shown a marked increase in the prevalence of whooping cough - is making both whooping cough and malaria surveys in every county in the State. One county often sends in as many as 250 slides, which are examined, classified, and reported back to the county authority. In cases of high frequency, eradication measures are inaugurated by the State Department of Health. To this project has been added the preparations of pertussin vaccine to be sent to localities where whooping cough continues to exist.

A medical survey being made in the Toledo district of Ohio informs parents of children between the ages of five and 18 when their children have tuberculosis. Five groups, each including a physician, nurse and clerical assistant are now working in public and parochial schools administering the Mantoux test to determine if the patient is susceptible or has the disease.

By March 1, 1936, a project in Georgia had made possible the immunization of more than 184,000 individuals against typhoid fever, 2,300 against smallpox and 26,000 children against diphtheria.

Such health projects and others which are needed in the locality are being carried on by women Works Progress Administration workers under the direction of the Division of Women's and Professional Projects of which Mrs. Ellen S. Woodward, Assistant Administrator, is in charge.