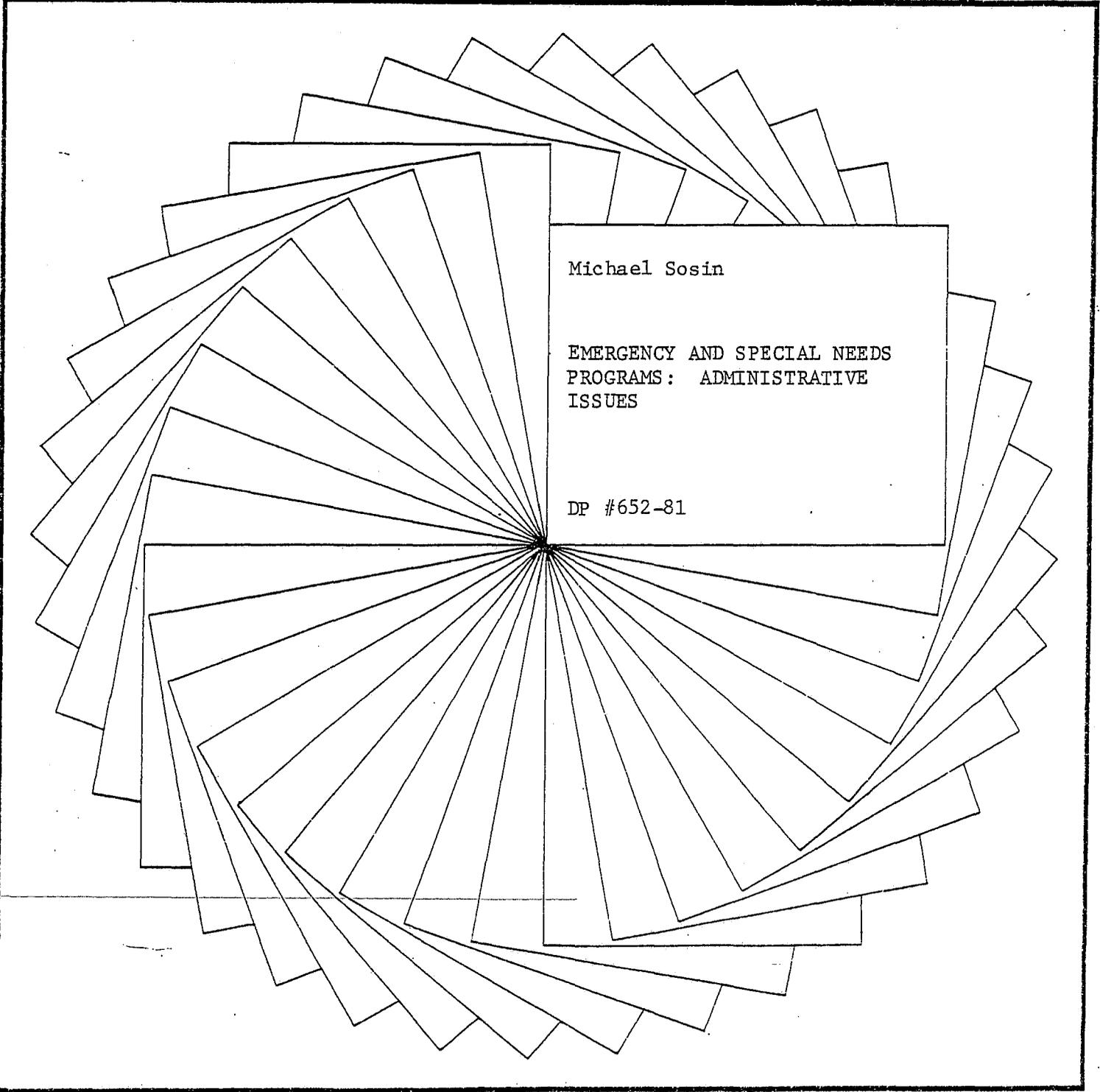




# Institute for Research on Poverty

## Discussion Papers



Michael Sosin

EMERGENCY AND SPECIAL NEEDS  
PROGRAMS: ADMINISTRATIVE  
ISSUES

DP #652-81

Emergency and Special Needs Programs:

Administrative Issues

Michael Sosin  
The University of Wisconsin-Madison

This research was funded in part by Grant No. 18-P-00113-5-02 from the Office of Research and Statistics of the Department of Health and Human Services, and in part by funds granted to the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison by the Department of Health and Human Services pursuant to the provisions of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Joel Handler and Michael Sosin were codirectors of the larger study from which this paper was adapted. Thanks to Joel Handler for useful comments.

## ABSTRACT

This paper describes the way in which states choose to administer emergency assistance and special needs programs--some of the most discretionary programs in public welfare. It suggests that state rules tend to make some distinctions between groups of deserving and non-deserving recipients, but that the application of rules to specific clients is often left to local offices. Rules involving the circumstances covered by programs and the number of repeat requests allowed are most closely correlated to costs and caseloads. The paper suggests some ways in which the results might aid in general discussions of attempts to increase state discretion.

Emergency Assistance and Special Needs Programs:  
Administrative Issues

Emergency assistance and special needs programs comprise an important component of public assistance. They are designed to meet needs that the basic AFDC, SSI, or (in some localities) General Assistance grants cannot cover. They may be used to furnish household goods after a fire or flood, to cover special, medically related needs, to replace broken appliances, or to provide financial assistance when clients face an occasional shortage of funds for food, fuel, or shelter.

The key administrative attribute of all of these programs is state discretion. Within broad limits (to be described below), states have the freedom to decide a variety of issues: for instance, which circumstances and groups of clients to cover, what level of verification to require, or how to monitor local workers. States have varying priorities, and the nature of the emergency and special needs network must reflect a range of beliefs, attitudes, and situations.

The patterns of administration that develop within this flexible framework have not been described in past studies. In fact, although it is fashionable to call for increases in state discretion, there are very few studies of the consequences of any public welfare law that permit states to make many choices (for an exception see Benton, 1978). This paper contributes to the discussion by examining the rules and procedures adopted in emergency programs, and by investigating how these factors are linked to the control of costs and caseloads. It also

suggests the implications of the study for further examinations of patterns of discretionary administration.

## 1. ISSUES IN DISCRETION

What patterns of administration develop in light of the discretion allowed to states in the specialized aid programs? The literature concerning power and discretion offers few ideas. The organizational literature documents the existence of discretion, but it concentrates on the worker level and considers the extent of discretion and not its substantive effects on clients (Downey, 1975; Hickson, 1971; Crozier, 1964; Scheff, 1961). Work on public bureaucracies may consider some of the consequences of discretion, but in terms of individual arbitrariness as opposed to systematic rules (Lipsky, 1980; Jowell, 1975; Davis, 1971). The political science literature that focuses on federalism generally shies away from discussions of state administration (Kiefer, 1974; Grodzins, 1966).

Some of the existing literature concerning the administration of AFDC programs is most useful. Although this literature does not deal with specialized emergency and special needs programs, it suggests some key general issues that may be used as a starting point to study patterns of administration in the programs of interest. Three areas seem most relevant.

Rules. It may be important to look at the patterns of rules that directly control who is served and who is not. According to the literature,

these rules may be based not only on definitions of emergencies and special needs, but also on distinctions between the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor (Handler, 1973; Handler and Hollingsworth, 1971). That is, public welfare literature suggests that states are faced with limited resources that must be rationed. Often, they make rationing rules which mandate that aid be dispensed mostly to clients who are believed to be in need because of circumstances beyond their control--the "deserving." State officials are more reluctant to provide aid to people whose problems may stem from personal failings, or even fraud or abuse--the "undeserving." Dispensing aid only to the deserving obviously helps state officials maintain that they are helping those who, morally, have the strongest claims to aid.

States may vary in their view of how "deserving" all clients are. In addition, within a state certain types of clients may be viewed as more or less deserving than others. Traditionally, individuals who are physically able to work, who do not belong to a nuclear family, or who appear to have problems budgeting, are most often deemed to be less deserving.

Four types of rules help describe the distinction between deserving and undeserving in the emergency and special needs programs. Access rules involve the amount of publicity states give to the program. Verification rules involve the proof clients must furnish of an emergency or special need. Presumably, if clients in general are seen to be more deserving, access will be easy and verification will be quite lenient.

A third set of rules involves repeat requests; repeaters may be seen as potential abusers of the system, and thus maybe deemed less deserving. Finally, rules may dictate which groups of clients and which specific situations are covered by the specialized programs. It may be that certain groups--or certain situations--are believed to be more deserving of coverage. For example, employable adults may be served less often because many believe that they could meet their needs without government support. And circumstances that seem to occur because of client mismanagement--such as the need for extra cash to cover goods that the basic welfare programs claim to provide--may be covered less often.

Control and monitoring. A second group of items involves how closely states monitor the way in which mandates are implemented by local officials. The patterns may reflect so-called patterns of "delegation," (Handler and Hollingsworth, 1971; Steiner, 1965; Selznick, 1957). According to this point of view, higher-level officials are constantly weighing the advantages and disadvantages of obtaining information from and controlling decisions of lower-level officials. Clearly, control is needed to the extent to which costs must be kept in line. Control is also useful in avoiding political complaints about program abuse, and in insuring equity between various local decision-making units. Too much control, however, is problematic. Individual situations often demand flexibility that very strict control mechanisms may limit. Further, if monitoring is tight, officials at higher levels

may be forced to become involved in many politically problematic decisions. It can even be argued that, by refusing to collect information on such issues as error rates, higher-level officials can limit political difficulties by simply not having available any information that can lead to public complaints. One may thus expect the level of monitoring to be close to the minimum needed to control costs and deal with problems that are already public knowledge.

Three items seem to represent patterns of control and delegation. One asks about the specificity of rules. Presumably, very specific rules can be used to limit the amount of further guidance that is required. The other two involve how rules are enforced. Communication between state and local offices is considered, as is the use of quality control mechanisms to "follow up" individual, local-level decisions.

Cost and caseload. Surprisingly, while it is common knowledge that rules are important in determining the size of a program, the literature offers few suggestions concerning what relations to expect (Piliavin, 1979). Common sense indicates that rules involving access, verification, and eligibility will be important, with more restrictive regulations reducing the costs and caseloads. However, it is unclear which rules and procedures will have the largest effect. For example, costs may be affected more by rules governing the eligibility of clients than by rules calling for strict verification.

The expected relation of control devices to the size of the specialized program is also unclear. In this case even cause and

effect are in doubt. For example, it may be that strict rules and monitoring restrict worker discretion and thus limit the size of the program. Or, larger programs may have more monitoring, without any real effect on costs or caseloads.

## 2. DATA AND METHODS

The programs are described, and the procedures are linked to costs, using data from a survey of emergency assistance and special needs programs undertaken in 1979. Income maintenance officials from all 50 states and the District of Columbia were asked to complete a questionnaire concerning any of three specialized programs available in the state: AFDC-Emergency Assistance (AFDC-EA), AFDC-Special Needs, and the largest state-funded program. Responses came from 54 programs. Fourteen are AFDC Emergency Assistance programs, 19 are AFDC Special Needs programs, and 21 are state emergency programs. Because states have the option of adopting programs, not all states have all three programs. There is no central list of all such programs in the country, but judging by response rates to other parts of the questionnaire, the sample probably represents about two-thirds of all of the specialized, state programs of the three kinds in the nation.

Items involving program rules, monitoring, and costs and caseloads are included in the questionnaires, and responses from all three programs are combined to study the issues. However, there are some important differences in the three programs. For example, AFDC-Emergency Assistance is limited to "families" in which "destitution" is threatened (Social

Security Act, 406 (e)1), and AFDC-Special Needs is limited to AFDC recipients. When a question is applicable to only some of the programs or when responses differ by program, this will be noted. The effect of the laws on responses will also be considered. For the most part laws are not the issue, and the patterns seem to be stable across the entire sample of programs.

### 3. ANALYSIS

#### 1. Program Rules

Access rules. Insuring access involves making clients aware of the existence of specialized programs. Without some type of notification, it is unclear whether many clients will realize that emergency or special needs can be met by a government program. According to the questionnaire results, state mandates offer very little guidance to local areas concerning access. In many AFDC-EA or state emergency programs (but not AFDC-Special Needs), individuals who do not receive an AFDC, SSI, or General Assistance (GA) grant are eligible; but out of 34 such reporting programs, only two claim to provide any outreach to these individuals. One claims to conduct a media campaign and to send notices to community groups, while the other only sends notices.

Current recipients of an income maintenance grant are informed to a slightly greater extent. As Table 1 notes, 38 of the 52 programs claim to have some such mandates. Yet only a small minority of programs include questions about emergency aid on the application for public

Table 1

State Mandates for Informing Basic Grant Recipients  
about Emergency Assistance and Special Needs  
(N = 52)

Mandate	Programs	
	No.	%
Basic grant application contains questions concerning eligibility for emergency aid	7	13.5
Grant applicants must be verbally informed about emergency aid	27	51.9
Written information about emergency aid is given to basic grant applicants	13	25.0
Notices about emergency aid must be posted	2	3.8
There are no rules	14	26.9

Multiple responses are possible.

assistance, few post written notices, and only a small number provide a written statement about the emergency or special needs program.

The only form of outreach mandated in more than half the programs is verbally informing applicants for basic aid about the existence of emergency or special needs support. However, this form of mandating access may be only of limited utility. An applicant is not likely to remember any oral statement about emergency aid given during the long, complex, application process. Moreover, in talking to workers for this study, it became apparent that such a regulation is often overlooked in the attempt to gather all the written information that is necessary to verify eligibility for the basic income maintenance grant.

In sum, states have access rules that do not encourage applications. Perhaps officials believe that publicity will increase the number of "undeserving" applicants, or perhaps they are attempting to ration limited amounts of available funds. Whatever the case, it is apparent that most states do not choose to publicize aid that is available in the discretionary programs.

Verification. While outreach mandates can be used to increase access, it is possible that rules involving verification of needs and resources might deter some individuals from using the emergency or special needs program. As Table 2 reports, the overwhelming majority of programs have some mandates for verifying resources and needs; just 3 of the 52 responding programs do not. The verification of income, assets, and the existence of the emergency are required in a majority

Table 2

Verification Requirements in Emergency and Special Needs Programs  
(N = 52)

Item Verified	Programs	
	No.	%
No verification	3	5.8
Income	30	57.7
Assets	32	61.5
Existence of the emergency	40	76.9
Family structure	12	23.1
Attempts to obtain public assistance	22	42.3
Attempts to obtain private assistance	15	28.8

Multiple responses are possible.

of programs. Nearly half of the programs also require the verification of an attempt to obtain other public assistance (such as AFDC or unemployment benefits) first. Attempts to use private aid must be verified in slightly more than one-fourth of the programs.

According to the respondents, these verification requirements are not unusually strict compared to typical requirements in public welfare. In response to another question (not reported in a table), 30 administrators claim that the verification requirements for emergency aid are equal to those used in the basic AFDC, SSI, or GA grant program, and 14 claim that emergency and special needs requirements are less strict. Only 5 claim to have more strict requirements for the specialized programs. In other words, while the majority of programs do not include a large number of mandates that help inform potential recipients about the programs, apparently few make unusual attempts to restrict access, either.

Eligibility: groups of clients. Regulations can also affect the groups of clients who are eligible for specialized assistance. Respondents were asked whether certain groups of clients were specifically eligible-- SSI recipients, migrants, and so forth--and Table 3 reports the results. It lists both whether state executives claimed that each listed group of clients was part of the program, and the percentage of the caseload that each group comprises. The latter statistic is generally an estimate and should be treated with caution. Because AFDC-Special Needs serves only continuing recipients, the question was not asked for this program.

Table 3

Eligibility of Various Groups for Emergency and  
Special Need Aid  
(N = 21)

Group	Programs Eligible		Average % of EA Caseload
	No.	%	
AFDC recipients	18	85.7	37.1
AFDC-UP recipients	7	33.3	4.2
SSI recipients	10	47.6	4.5
Food stamp recipients	12	57.1	10.2
General Assistance recipients	10	47.6	9.7
Nonrecipients	14	66.7	29.7
Migrants and transients	14	66.7	6.1

Note: The question was not asked for AFDC-Special Needs. Because of reporting discrepancies and missing data, the totals do not add to exactly 100%.

As the table notes, four of the seven categories of recipients are eligible in the majority of responding programs. AFDC recipients are eligible for all but three programs, which, as examination determined, are state emergency programs targeted for the elderly only. Perhaps surprisingly, nonrecipients, migrants, and transients are eligible for two-thirds of the programs. Food stamp recipients are eligible for a bare majority of programs.

Less likely to be covered are SSI recipients, General Assistance recipients, and AFDC-UP recipients. Often, these limits may be due to circumstances that are beyond the control of the program. For example, SSI recipients are usually excluded from AFDC-EA programs, but they are included in all but one state emergency program; their exclusions are most likely usually due to federal regulations that stipulate that only families with children are eligible for AFDC-EA. One might also suppose that states which do not cover AFDC-UP clients in the AFDC program also fail to provide any emergency or special needs benefits to this group.

The exclusion of General Assistance cases is not dictated completely by federal rules, as some such clients can be included in AFDC-EA-- for example, General Assistance recipients who have children. State programs can choose whom to serve, but one-third of those also do not cover any General Assistance clients. This group is thus least favored. General Assistance clients, historically considering the least "deserving" (because of claims that they could fend for themselves) must often rely on other resources such as local funds or private charities, or on their own ability to mobilize resources.

Eligibility circumstances. A second means of controlling eligibility is to define the circumstances for which emergency or special needs aid may be used. One way of reporting responses to questions about the issue is to focus on those situations that respondents claim are at the core of emergency and special needs programs--those that comprise most of the expenditures. Table 4 reports such items. It lists the frequency with which an item from a predetermined list is said to represent at least 81 percent of the costs of an emergency program.

Table 4 indicates a perhaps surprising degree of specialization: 37 out of the 51 reporting programs include one item that represents at least 81 percent of its costs. In other words, while emergency and special needs programs can, in theory, cover a wide range of situations, in practice this is not the case. Rather, states focus on only a smaller segment of need (perhaps a circumstance in which some special interest has been expressed by a member of the legislature). This specialization is one possible indication of how states separate the deserving from the undeserving in emergency assistance and special needs programs. Most seem to declare a small number of circumstances as legitimate, choosing not to support other types of needs.

It is difficult to find patterns in such a small number of specialized programs, but it is interesting that special winter needs, lost or stolen checks, and chore service are most likely to be the central focus. These items seem to be less "morally hazardous" than many others, because they involve needs that clients obviously cannot meet by themselves.

Table 4

Items Comprising 81 to 100 Percent  
of the Costs of State-Level Emergency Programs  
(N = 51)

Item	Programs	
	No.	%
Special winter needs	8	15.7
Lost or stolen checks	6	11.8
Chore service	4	7.8
Disaster aid	3	5.9
Need for appliance	3	5.9
Moving expenses	2	3.9
Educational expenses	2	3.9
Unborn child needs	2	3.9
Special diets	2	3.9
Clothing needs	2	3.9
Food shortage	2	3.9
Unpaid utility bills	1	2.0

Thus, lost or stolen checks are not easy to blame on recipients, nor is the need for a chore service, which depends upon unpredictable medical problems. Given the recent concern over high fuel costs, it is not surprising that winter needs are also often covered.

Programs seem to be less likely to specialize in items that are normally considered to be covered by basic welfare grants--such typical basic needs as food emergencies and utility shut-offs. It is possible that, in these cases, moral concerns about the undeserving are more dominant. Perhaps officials are reluctant to expend specialized resources on items that some may claim are already provided in the basic grant and should be financed by the recipient's monthly check.

Table 5 reports whether each of the items receive at least some coverage in the specialized programs, despite the predominant focus on one item. The table notes that seven of the items are covered in a majority of programs, and that three more are covered in at least a third of the programs. Apparently, despite the propensity to focus on one item, other needs are occasionally met in the programs.

Natural disasters are covered in a large number of programs. Perhaps these situations are so obviously beyond the control of clients that they are an acceptable expense to many policymakers and administrators. Yet the other most frequently covered items involve basic needs that are also included in regular grants. These include moving expenses, utility emergencies, food shortages, clothing needs, and other furniture needs. These needs are more commonly met than are

Table 5

Circumstances Comprising at Least Part of the Caseload of  
Emergency Programs at the State Level  
(N = 51).

Circumstances	Programs	
	No.	%
Temporary shelter, moving expense	33	64.7
Natural disaster	31	60.8
Unpaid utility bills	29	56.9
Need for appliances, furniture	28	54.9
Food shortage	26	51.0
Special clothing needs	26	51.0
Other	22	43.1
Lost, stolen, delayed checks	20	39.2
Grants covering applicants' basic needs	18	35.3
Special winter needs	16	31.4
Employment needs	16	31.4
Special diet needs, laundry needs	14	27.5
Day care	13	25.5
Unborn child needs	12	23.5
Educational expenses	9	17.6
Special chore services	6	11.8

Multiple responses are possible.

needs of pending applicants or even lost check emergencies. Basic need items seem to represent a small component of many programs.

Interviews conducted with officials suggest that the common dispensing of goods to meet clients' basic needs occurs both because of the quite serious basic emergencies clients face and the difficulties in controlling circumstances. Although many programs do not directly include basic needs, nearly all definitions of emergency assistance can be stretched to cover them. Given the rather low level of most basic grants, state and local officials often allow this expansion to occur. For example, in New Jersey, emergency assistance under the AFDC-EA program is limited to cases in which homelessness is threatened. But counties have successfully argued that a threatened eviction or utility cut-off constitutes homelessness, and as a result the emergency program has slightly expanded its circumstances to encompass some basic needs.

It is unclear why certain items, such as special services not normally covered in basic income maintenance programs, are seldom covered. Many of these items are covered in the Medicaid programs and in Title XX, and perhaps officials perceive that such needs are more likely to be met. It is also possible that these special services are less likely to work their way into programs that do not intentionally include them. Perhaps the definitions of emergency situations are sufficient to restrict aid concerning special needs that are not a state priority.

Repeater rules. A final eligibility criterion is the repeater rule; it is possible to limit programs to one use a year, or twice

a year, etc. All AFDC-EA programs, by statute, have the once-a-year rule. However, very few other programs restrict repeaters. In response to a question, three-fourths of the 32 reporting programs (24) claim they do not have limits on the number of times a grant may be dispensed. Thus, rules do not generally imply that repeaters are not deserving. Perhaps it is more common to rely on workers to informally "screen out" applicants who seem to be using the specialized program too often.

## 2. Control and Monitoring

Once eligibility and access rules are developed, states must guarantee compliance by monitoring local performance. Control and monitoring also occur when officials find that the rules are insufficient, and that day-to-day adjustments are needed.

State officials apparently believe that the rules, themselves, leave little discretion: 23 say that there is little or no discretion at the local level; 22 claim there is a moderate amount; and 7 claim that there is a great deal of discretion. One would guess that state officials try to limit local differences by writing very definite rules.

There is little evidence that these rules are monitored closely, or that many adjustments are made. For example, one way of monitoring local decisions and adjusting rules would be to communicate regularly with local offices. But as Table 6 demonstrates, communication is rare. State officials say that they consult with counties about emergency assistance, on the average, slightly more often than once

Table 6

Reported Frequency of Communication Between  
State and Local Offices  
(N = 52)

---

---

Frequency	No. Reporting	% State Programs
Many times a day	5	10
Once a day	0	0
A few times a week	9	17
Over a week	4	8
A few times a month	15	29
Once a month or less	19	37

---

---

a month--a figure that, per county, is obviously less than this. Consistent with the theory of delegation, state executives do not contact local offices frequently.

A quality control system is another way of controlling the program, but such reviews are apparently uneven. Although 29 state programs report some review, the distribution varies by the type of program. Fourteen out of 19 special needs programs have some quality control review. Only 15 out of 35 reporting AFDC-EA or state emergency programs have reviews. The high coverage for special needs probably reflects the fact that the grants from this program often are dispensed along with the basic AFDC grant. They are monitored along with the AFDC program.

The error rates give some notion of how the reviews are carried out, and rates are quite low. Only four programs report an error rate at all--most respondents simply state that it is not known. When reported, the error rate is generally in the one or two percent range--clearly a rate that indicates a rather limited review.

Although any interpretation of the frequencies would be speculative, the nature of control devices seems to indicate a high level of delegation. State officials attempt to establish fairly rigid rules, but they do not communicate often with local agencies or have a sophisticated quality control program. Perhaps state officials usually prefer to let local offices deal with the complicated, day to day problems that go beyond the rules in emergency assistance and special needs programs. And perhaps

by limiting quality control, state officials are able to avoid the need to attempt to regularize this very individual, discretionary type of aid.

### 3. Rules, Cost, and Caseload

How do these patterns of rules affect the size of the emergency program? Some indication can be gained by correlating the nature of the rules with two dependent variables: the costs of the program, and the caseload. Because these two can be affected by the size of the basic welfare program, each is first standardized and turned into a ratio. Thus, the rules are correlated with the caseload compared to the number of individuals below the poverty line in a state, and with the costs of the emergency program compared to the costs of the AFDC program, as a whole.

This statistical effort has two limits. First, because questionnaires were sent to all programs in the country, this is a population, not a sample. Statistical tests of significance are thus meaningless. For each correlation a cut-off of .20 is used as a measure of substantive significance. A correlation of about this size would usually be statistically significant, were the data a random sample.

Second, because states did not always report the size of the program, there are not many cases. Accordingly, only simple correlations can be used, and the relations must be treated with some caution. Nevertheless, they give some indication of how rules affect the size of the program.

Table 7 reports the correlations between rules and control devices and the two measures of the size of the emergency or special needs program. The table does not include all items referred to in the last few pages. When nearly all respondents answered a question identically, there is not enough variance for a correlation. The item is thus dropped from the analysis. To save space, some items are also combined. For example, the number of emergency circumstances allowed is used to sum up data concerning each of the 14 items. The reader should be assured that the combined scores do not hide any relationships that are not reported in the table.

Access. Table 7 seems to indicate that access and verification rules play only a limited role in controlling costs and caseloads. In most instances, the correlation between measures of cost and caseload and these independent variables are below the .20 cut-off point. Using this cut-off point, it appears that programs are slightly smaller when there is a requirement that clients are verbally informed about the existence of the emergency program. Of course, correlations do not always imply causality, and it seems unlikely that this requirement, in itself, discourages applicants. It is more likely that programs are small for other reasons that are themselves related to this mandate. The relation does, however, offer support for the earlier assumption that verbal mandates do nothing to encourage utilization of the specialized program.

The table also suggests that there is no substantively significant relation between the number of verification requirements (such as for

Table 7

Correlations Between Administrative Characteristics and Selected  
Measures of Emergency Program Size, State Level  
(N = 19 → 32)

	Emergency Caseload Compared to Poverty Population	Emergency Costs Compared to AFDC Costs
Have some rules for informing current recipients	-.02	.07
Verbal information required	-.22	-.33
Basic grant application includes questions, information about emergency aid	.44	-.06
Have resource requirements	.17	.15
Number of resource requirements	-.02	.12
Require exhaustion of private aid	-.21	-.17
Have verification requirements	.05	.20
Number of verification requirements	.04	-.09
Verify use of public aid	-.12	-.10
Verify use of private aid	-.21	-.17
AFDC recipients eligible	.08	.19
AFDC-UP recipients eligible	-.24	-.39
SSI recipients eligible	.16	.17
Food Stamps recipients eligible	.21	.09
General Assistance recipients eligible	.35	.19
Nonrecipients eligible	.10	.15
Migrants, transients eligible	.19	.34
Number of circumstances allowed	.64	.28
Repeat requests in a year are allowed	.48	.51
Discretion	-.10	-.14
Communication	-.22	.11
Have a review	.08	.05

family structure, the existence of the emergency, and so forth) and the caseload. However, program costs are higher in programs in which there are more such requirements. It is, of course, difficult to argue that verification requirements increase costs. Rather, perhaps more expensive programs attempt to use verification rules more often.

When an attempt is made to verify the use of private resources, the size of the emergency or special needs program is smaller, as measured by the caseload. Perhaps this indicates a causal relationship; the requirement to exhaust private resources may reduce the caseload by discouraging potential applicants, who are aware that they must attempt to receive aid from private sources first.

Eligibility. There are strong relations between some of the eligibility rules and the two measures of the emergency effort. There is a large, .64 correlation between the number of emergency situations for which aid is dispensed and the caseload. Squaring the correlation, the relation accounts for about 40 percent of the variance. The correlation is moderate, and in the same direction, for the relation between costs and the number of situations.

Perhaps the correlations indicate the key role played by the control of emergency situations. Apparently, in order to keep the size of the program within some limits, officials concentrate largely on dictating the number of situations covered. In other words, this appears to be the core device in dictating how large the specialized program will be.

According to data not reported in a table, nearly each item in the list of circumstances covered has a small, positive correlation

to the dependent variables. This may indicate that it is the number of circumstances, rather than the exact item, that is most important in controlling the size of the program. Only natural disaster aid and the need for winterization do not have the positive relation, perhaps indicating that programs based upon these items will not necessarily tend to be expensive or large in caseload.

The eligibility of General Assistance clients, migrants and transients, and food stamp cases correlates with slightly larger programs by one of the two measures. Thus, perhaps programs that increase the eligibility standard or allow nonfamilies to obtain aid have a larger "pool" of eligible clients. According to the table, there is one reversal, as the eligibility of AFDC-UP recipients relates to a smaller program. It might thus seem that eligibility of AFDC-UP recipients leads to smaller programs, but the correlation is more likely a statistical artifact; according to another paper (Sosin, 1981), AFDC-UP eligibility occurs in more wealthy states which, for other reasons, have smaller emergency programs.

Finally, repeater rules relate to emergency expenditures in the programs in which repeaters are possible (that is, in all programs but AFDC-EA). Apparently, the more often recipients can receive aid, the larger the program becomes.

Monitoring and control. The table includes only one relation involving measures of control. Communication occurs more often in programs with a smaller caseload. Otherwise, the measures of control do not closely relate to the dependent variables.

This one correlation, at first glance, might seem to indicate that frequent communication has a small tendency to result in tighter controls and thus a smaller program. But it is equally possible that state officials only use supervision when the program, for other reasons, is small. When there are larger numbers of cases, perhaps officials prefer to rely on rules, thus ridding themselves of troublesome work.

This explanation has some support. The amount of discretion in rules has a negative correlation to the amount of communication ( $r = -.27$ ), and as the table suggests, there is a small tendency for rules to allow less discretion in the larger programs. (There is a negative correlation between discretion and the size of the program.) Perhaps there are two models of programs: a small, highly discretionary program, and a larger program with a little less discretion.

The lack of relation with other measures of control may reflect the limited strength of these measures in monitoring the program; monitoring may simply not have enough "teeth" to enforce standards. Within the program rules, apparently, local offices are given much leeway in handling cases, and monitoring standards do not limit discretion by controlling total costs or caseloads.

#### 4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The data seem to lead to a fairly clear picture of how states choose to organize their emergency assistance and special needs programs. First, there is some evidence that the deserving-undeserving distinction

plays some role. Perhaps due to some desire to avoid giving aid to the "undeserving," state mandates do little to encourage outreach to those individuals who do not receive a regular grant. Notification of current recipients is also somewhat limited. Emergency assistance and special needs programs may thus be viewed as open to abuse if they are publicized too much. In the absence of mandates, it seems likely that workers are in the position of suggesting a specialized program, if they feel a particular situation and client is deserving.

Programs also specialize in a small number of items. Such specialization appears to be most common for items that are obviously beyond the control of the client, and to be least common for basic goods such as food. Perhaps this occurs because many believe that clients should be able to cover basic needs within the basic income maintenance grants. In other words, demands for basic goods place clients in a less deserving category. Similarly, groups of clients who are generally believed to be less deserving, most notably General Assistance recipients, are served less often in the specialized programs.

Nevertheless, coverage is often based less on the deserving-undeserving distinction than many suppose. Basic needs items represent a component of the majority of programs, while certain groups that are traditionally unfavored, such as migrants and transients, are covered in a majority of programs. Furthermore, while most states do little to encourage the utilization of programs by mandating outreach, they do little to require discouraging verification processes, either. In this respect, state

rules do not display an unusual concern about the abuse of specialized programs. Perhaps there is some tension between the desire to restrict aid to the most deserving clients, and the realization that there are many legitimate unmet needs--even among client groups often deemed to make questionable requests.

Some of the results also seem consistent with the theory of delegation. In particular, states do not closely monitor individual decisions of local workers. Officials seem content to establish fairly firm sets of rules, and then to let local officials interpret them. Thus communication about emergency matters and quality control reviews are limited. Perhaps state officials do not desire to become caught up in the specifics of program operation. They may be wary of being forced to deal with errors and individual worker discretion in a program that seems quite difficult to control on a case-by-case basis.

Consistent with these descriptive facts, eligibility conditions appear to have the most to do with the caseloads and costs of the program. The number of items covered, the choice to allow repeat clients, and, in a lesser degree, the groups of clients eligible for aid have significant impacts on the emergency or special needs effort. In many cases, other types of rules seem to be used more in large programs, and do not affect caseloads and costs. For example, larger programs tend to have more verification requirements, and a little less discretion. Perhaps state executives desire to standardize the administration of aid that is dispensed with a higher than average frequency.

This analysis does not, of course, indicate that verification rules, limits to discretion, and so forth could never have a large effect on a program. It just points out that they do not make a difference in emergency and special needs programs at present. For example, it seems likely that very strict verification rules or state monitoring would decrease the size of the program, while very active outreach would increase it. But most states currently do not follow such extreme rules. Apparently, once costs and caseloads are kept in line by eligibility rules, state officials currently have only a small level of interest in emergency and special needs support.

Despite these uncertainties one might suggest that these results have some implications for current suggestions to increase state flexibility in AFDC programs. Perhaps when flexibility is increased, but funds limited, moral distinctions will be common. In particular, states may declare few needed items as within the program, and they may make few attempts to inform the populace about the program. In many states, General Assistance clients may be excluded. In applying those rules, however, perhaps much discretion will indirectly be given to local areas. As in the case of emergency and special needs programs, perhaps little will be done to attempt to control errors and insure equity across local jurisdictions. States do not seem to desire to risk the level of involvement and potential controversy entailed by firm control.

While these suggestions are of course speculative, they suggest some questions for further research concerning discretionary programs.

It may be useful to look at programs that currently allow great discretion to determine if the patterns discovered here generalize. If they do, it would seem that the pattern may also affect the new suggestions.

Some research questions thus come to mind: Do states specify more strict procedural rules and monitoring standards when programs are larger, such as in the case of Title XX? Or is it merely the existence of complaints and controversy that results in more procedural controls? Further examinations of this type can go a long way in understanding the causes and rationales for patterns of control in discretionary public welfare programs.

## REFERENCES

- Benton, Bill, Tracey Field, and Rhona Millar. 1978. Social services: Federal legislation vs. state implementation. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- Crozier, Michel. 1964. The bureaucratic phenomenon. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Davis, Kenneth Culp. 1971. Discretionary justice: Preliminary inquiry. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Downey, H. Kirk, Don Helriegel, and John W. Slocum, Jr. 1975. Environmental uncertainty: The construct and its utility. Administrative Science Quarterly 20:4, 613-629.
- Grodzins, Morton. 1966. The American system: A view of government in the United States. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Handler, Joel. 1973. The coercive social worker: British lessons for American social services. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Handler, Joel and E. J. Hollingsworth. 1971. The deserving poor. New York: Academic Press.
- Hickson, D. J., C. R. Hennings, C. A. Lee, R. E. Scheneck, J. M. Pennings. 1971. A strategic contingencies theory of intraorganizational power. Administrative Science Quarterly 16:2, 216-229.
- Jowell, Jeffrey L. 1975. Law and bureaucracy: Administrative discretion and the limits of legal action. Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press.

- Kiefer, Thomas H. 1974. The political impact of federal aid on state and local governments. Morristown, New Jersey: General Learning Press.
- Lipsky, Michael. 1980. Street level bureaucracy. New York: Russell Sage.
- Piliavin, Irving, Stanley Masters, and Thomas Corbett. 1979. Factors influencing errors in AFDC payments. Social Work Research and Abstracts 15:4, 3-18.
- Scheff, Thomas. 1961. Control over policy by attendants in a mental hospital. Journal of Health and Human Behavior 2:2, 93-105.
- Selznick, Phillip. 1957. Leadership in administration. Evanston, Illinois: Row and Peterson.
- Sosin, Michael. 1981. Emergency assistance and special needs programs in the AFDC System. Forthcoming, University of Wisconsin, Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper.
- Steiner, Gilbert. 1965. The state of welfare. Washington, D.C.: Brookings.