

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY COMMISSION

ROOM 163, HALL OF ADMINISTRATION / 500 WEST TEMPLE / LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012 / 974-1491

November 21, 1975

Honorable Board of Supervisors  
Los Angeles County  
383, Hall of Administration  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Gentlemen:

SUBJECT: REPORT ON COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEE ASSIGNED  
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

Dr. Robert J. Dovvney  
Chairman

Gustave R. Anaya  
George E. Bodle  
Catherine Graeffe Burke  
John D. Byork  
Anne S. Collins  
Mario Di Giovanni  
Dr. Carolyn L. Elmer  
Jerry Epstein  
Milton G. Gordon  
Richard S. Gunther  
Mrs. Mary Jane Kidd  
Leo A. Majich  
Jesse L. Robinson  
Robert Ruchti, II  
Dr. Warren H. Schmidt  
George Shellenberger  
Mrs. Gloria Starr  
Larkin Teasley  
Bryan Walker

Burke Roche  
Executive Secretary  
John Campbell  
Staff Specialist  
Maxlynn Larsen  
Commission Secretary

On motion of Supervisor Hayes on November 12, 1975, the Board directed the Chief Administrative Officer and the Economy and Efficiency Commission to complete on a priority basis a review of commissions and committee assigned to the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). This order was occasioned by the request of one of the commissions involved - the Commission to Review Public Social Services - that the Board approve extension of the contracts of the two staff members assigned to it for two more years so that the commission might complete its work.

In addition, on November 18, 1975, the Board referred a letter to the E & E Commission from the 1975-76 Grand Jury which supported the commission's request for the two additional years.

The E & E Commission herewith submits its report.

Within the time available, we have not had an opportunity to adequately access the work of the commissions and committee associated with the DPSS. They consist of the Public Social Services Commission (15 members), the General Relief Review Committee (a subcommittee to the Public Social Services Commission consisting of 14 members), and the County Commission to Review Public Social Services (5 members).

Because of the request for the extension of its services, we have concentrated on the need for a continuation of the services of the Review Commission. In conjunction with the Chief Administrative Office, we have interviewed key personnel on both commissions, commission staff, departmental management, and the Grand Jury to obtain their views.

The Commission to Review Public Social Services will terminate its business on December 31, 1975, unless further extended by your Board. In order that all parties might proceed in an orderly fashion, unencumbered by imminent deadlines, we recommend that the Board adopt the following:

Recommendations

1. *Continue the Commission to Review Public Social Services for one additional year, and instruct the Chief Administrative Office and County Counsel to negotiate and prepare the necessary contracts with the commission staff.*
2. *Request the Chief Administrative Office and the E & E Commission in the interim to conduct a detailed study of the work of the DPSS commissions to determine the most appropriate commission structure for the DPSS.*

Discussion

There are serious problems involved in the present DPSS commission structure. First, there is a definite overlap in the official duties of both commissions as provided in the County Administrative Code. The ordinances establishing the two commissions - the P55 Commission in 1967 and the Review Commission in 1971 - specify general duties relative to advising departmental management on welfare policies and administration. There is no clear line of demarcation establishing their respective areas of operation, particularly with regard to reviewing the administration of the department. Representatives of both commissions have stated that this overlapping of responsibilities has not resulted in any problem or conflict between the two boards.

The Board's recent order, however, directing the Commission to Review Public Social Services to conduct a review of the Food Stamp Program provides a good example of how this overlapping of functions is a potential source for future conflict.

In a letter dated November 7, 1975, the P55 Commission requested that the Board reconsider its action and designate the P55 Commission as the appropriate body for conducting this review. The fact is that both commissions have been involved in studies of the Food Stamp Program, and either could appropriately undertake the study requested by the Board. Our intent is not to decide this issue but to illustrate that the present situation of two advisory commissions with overlapping responsibilities provides a source for confusion and problems.

Second, the DPSS is constantly being audited by Federal, State and local agencies. (See Attachment A.) Cooperating with these audits and responding to their conclusions requires a substantial allocation of time and effort by DPSS management and staff. In addition, DPSS management and staff must constantly meet with the various welfare rights organizations and over 100 other voluntary organizations operating in the community. Operation of the two separate commissions adds to the burden of meeting attendance - on the average of five to six commission meetings a month.

Third, the staff costs to support the operation of the P55 Commission and its subcommittee - the General Relief Review Committee - and the Review Commission amount to over \$302,000 annually. (See Attachment B for a detailed breakdown of these costs.) We should note that six departmental staff positions are assigned to the Review Commission as an audit group called the Value Improvement Section. If they were not assigned to the commission, they would still very likely continue to operate under departmental direction. Even if we subtract the \$132,000 for these positions, the cost still amounts to \$170,000 annually for the two commissions.

#### Conclusion

We have delineated briefly some of the problems involving the present commission structure in DPSS. It is these problems and others which we believe the Chief Administrative Office and our commission should address themselves to in the study which we have recommended during the following year.

Very truly yours,

ROBERT J. DOWNEY  
Chairman

DAY-TO-DAY AUDITS

Federal Level

Department of Health, Education and Welfare

Department of Agriculture

General Accounting Office

State Level

Department of Benefit Payments

Department of Health

Controller's Office

Local Level

DPSS Quality Control

Auditor -Controller

Grand Jury

Grand Jury Contract Auditors

OCCASIONAL AUDITS

State Department of Finance

State Legislative Analyst