

"THE NATIONAL HEALTH COUNCIL - ITS ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITIES."

By
RUSSELL H. KAUFMAN.

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON MEDICAL SCHOOL

FEBRUARY 15, 1925.

THE NATIONAL HEALTH COUNCIL - ITS ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITIES.

The history of the National Health Council stretches back over a period of 12 or 15 years, during which the need for cooperation and coordination among national health agencies was seen more and more clearly throughout the United States. Of especial importance was a conference of 39 health agencies held in April, 1913, at New York, at the suggestion of the Council of Health and Public Instruction of the American Medical Association; this conference resulted in the appointment of Prof. Selskar M. Gunn to study the problems of coordination among national health agencies. His report was completed in May, 1915 and showed that there were twenty four National Organizations, ten of which were of major importance, engaged in health activities. The organizations were intensively studied still further by a special committee with the idea in view of developing a national clearing house for voluntary health work. These developments however were abruptly interrupted by the World War and were not again taken up until the winter of 1918 - 19 when a conference was called by the American Public Health Association. At this time it was found that further study was necessary and in the summer of 1920 a special committee was formed for this purpose and Dr. Donald B. Armstrong was engaged to make a survey of the existing situation. This work was financed by the American Red Cross. Dr. Armstrong's report was presented to a conference which met in Washington, D.C. in October of the same year. After discussion of the report by this and subsequent conferences the National Health Council was at last formally organized in December, 1920.

The fourteen organizations which are direct or indirect or conference members of the National Health Council cover the major fields of public health work in America. The general American Public is perhaps best represented by the American Red Cross, the professional health worker by the American Public Health Assn. and the Conference of State and Provincial Health Authorities of North America, the medical profession by the Council on Health and Public Instruction of the A.M.A. the public health nurse by the National Organization for Public Health Nursing, and the National Government of the United States by the United States Public Health Service which is a conference member of the council. The National Child Health Council represents a group of child welfare organizations and the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, the American Social Hygiene Assn., and the American Society for the control of Cancer are also members of the National Health Council.

The financial support of the Council has been derived from several sources but especially from the American Red Cross and certain foundations. Dues of members, payments for services rendered by the Council to members, and the sale of publications issued by the council are further sources of revenue.

The Council exists to promote mutual understanding and helpfulness among American health agencies and to assist them in their work by conducting a central service bureau. The fundamental spirit of the Council and its practical operation is made more feasible by the close association of members in a joint office arrangement. Seven of the associations and committees, cooperating through the common service committee of the council have established joint offices in the Penn

Terminal Building in New York. By this arrangement the directors and staffs of the several agencies having headquarters in New York are in daily contact with each other. This close association is increased by the organization under the Council's business committee of inter-staff conference groups appointed to advise members on their activities. under the following heads: Nursing, Coordination, Publicity and Education, Publications and Health Plays, Exhibits and Films. There are also standing committees to promote efficiency in the service and to safeguard the health and welfare of employes. Two special committees on "Health Days" have been appointed to prepare plans for a national campaign in which health examinations will be emphasized.

The Council itself, as distinguished from the groups of staff members, is composed of one representative and one alternate from each member agency. This small group of official delegates govern the Council and determine all matters of policy, but the council has delegated authority for the execution of policy to a group of five representatives called the business committee, to a committee of membership, and to a common service committee. The organization of the Council is kept as simple as possible, and its secretarial work is maintained on inexpensive and modest lines.

The functions of the Council are best indicated by a brief summary of its current activities and achievements since the foundation. The work is carried on in two offices - viz., the official headquarters in Washington and the joint offices in New York. Through the Washington office the Council's representative has been in close contact with those government bureau's which deal in any way with health, and with the American Red Cross and the National Child Health

Council. At the New York office are carried on those services which require association with the largest number of national voluntary health and welfare agencies. The following is a brief resume of the work of both offices:

1. Publications

- A. Establishment and maintenance of the federal health legislative information service, including a bulletin.
- B. Maintenance of the State health legislative information service in cooperation with the United States Public Health Service, also including a bulletin.
- C. Issue of the "Monthly Digest" a general information publication.
- D. Issue of the "Library Index", listing important health publications.
- E. Issue of list of 300 health films.
- F. Issue of the "Weekly Common Service News", a house organ for the staff members.

2. Special Washington Activities.

- A. Publication of a series of authoritative reports and organization chart dealing with the health activities of various government bureau.
- B. Cooperation in development of plans now being carried out for a permanent health exhibition at the Smithsonian institute in Washington.
- C. General Headquarters service for members (Personal representation, arrangement of conferences, collection of information)
- D. Consultive assistance for the American Red Cross Health service.

3. Common Service Committee Activities

- A. Joint office projects for certain member and tenant organizations, including renting, leasing, janitor service etc.
- B. Accounting, library, purchasing, mimeographing and copying, shipping, storage, telephone exchange, film distribution etc.
- C. Direction of work of inter staff conference groups.
- D. Establishment of a health examination system for staffs of members
- E. Confidential study of salary standards and methods among organizations in New York joint offices
- F. Office administrative studies.

4. Additional Information Service

- A. General clearing house of information regarding health organizations and health work etc.

5. National Coordination Work

- A. Arrangement of lectures for staffs of members and for outside agencies, study of health plays, assembling of exhibition materials and arrangement of exhibitions, inquiry into problems of production and distribution of health motion pictures etc and establishment of a statistical service, and of various committees to consider problems of public health nursing, negro health interests, national health day etc.

6. Field and State Coordination Work

- A. Preparation of special reports on public health subjects for various associations, and study of coordination of health activities in several states.

7. Miscellaneous Services

A. Organization of health institute in connection with semi-centennial of the American Public Health Association.

B. Cooperation in rotary health week with members, particularly with the National Tuberculosis Association.

C. Cooperation in Cancer Week activities

D. Numerous minor activities.

GENERAL SERVICES WHICH ALL HEALTH AGENCIES MAY PERFORM.

A primary purpose of nonofficial agencies is the encouragement of the organization or extension of official health activities in as many ways as possible.

1. Experiment and research in unestablished fields
2. The promotion of legislation and appropriations
3. Development of standards- Educational, statistical etc.
4. Recruiting and training of personnel.
5. Education of public along health lines
6. Information, consultation and advisory service.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES OF INDIVIDUAL AGENCIES.

1. Maternity, Infancy and Child Health

1. Health supervision and education for parents, children
2. Stimulation of training of professional workers; scholarship
3. Preparation of scientific and popular literature relating to child health.
4. Publication of magazine "Mother and Child".
5. A service of information, consultation and assistance to state and local groups.
6. Bureau of research and statistics in child health problems.

2. Public Health Nursing.

1. Fitting the right nurse to the right work. This is accomplished thru the vocational department.
2. Thru National Health Library offering services in the preparation of bibliographies, distribution of loan package libraries, advice on health literature etc.
3. Assisting in organization of state and local nursing groups - Thru field service.
4. Offering services in studying problems of the education

- of nurses for public health nursing - Thru Educat. Dept.
5. Through the eligibility department the establishment and maintenance of standards of nursing education.
 6. Through membership and publicity department, supplying material for nurses recruiting campaigns, publicity campaigns etc.
 7. Publishing a monthly magazine " The Public Health Nurse"

3. Tuberculosis

Special mention is made here of the work of the National Tuberculosis Association.

1. The medical service, offering consultation on surveys of tuberculosis institutions, advice on occupational therapy, sanatorium an home treatment, industrial rehabilitation etc.

2. A crusade service, promoting the modern health crusade in the schools.

3. A field service, giving special attention to organization problems, programs and budgets of State and Local tuberculosis Associations, interrelations between voluntary and official groups.

4. Publicity and publications service, making available newspaper and special articles, motion pictures and other educational features.

5. Statistical service offering assistance in health surveys consultation on morbidity and mortality statistics etc.

6. Library service on tuberculosis and general health through the National Health library.

7. Publishes "The Review of Tuberculosis" and the "Journal of Outdoor Life"

8. The training of personnel thru the Tuberculosis Institute.

4. Venereal Diseases

Special mention is made here of the work of the services offered by the American Social Hygiene Association:

1. General promotion of public opinion in support of the Venereal disease programs of state and local health departments.

2. Making and distribution of films desired by health authorities, playing the program before physicians, social workers, officers of courts, and police departments and other important groups.

3. The making and distribution of other exhibits, pamphlets and publicity.

4. The provision of full or part time personnel when voluntary aid is desired for surveys of clinics, lectures, conferences, vice investigations etc.

5. In addition the association carries on its general activities which are not generally considered as within the public health field but which indirectly have a bearing upon reduction of the total number of exposures to the venereal diseases:

- A?. Publication of monthly journal of Social Hygiene.

- B. Promotion of education in Social Hygiene

- C. Promotion of protective measures

- D. Promotion of legal measures

- E. Other activities in general field of social hygiene.

6. General sex education and home and child hygiene promotion
7. Library service thru the National Health Library.

5. Division of Mental Hygiene

Particular mention is made here of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene.

1. A statistical research and advisory service on mental hygiene and insanity problems.
2. Public education thru lectures, literature, exhibits, monthly and quarterly bulletins etc.
3. Institutional and other surveys and promotion of adequate facilities.
4. Delinquency and other child health and welfare contacts.
5. Information and expert advice on general mental hygiene problems.
6. Library service thru the National Health Library.

6. A Division of Public Health Education

Many of the agencies devote a major portion of their resources to health education, including the American child health association, the American Social Hygiene Assn., the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, the National Tuberculosis Assn., the American Society for the control of Cancer, and the National Organization for Public Health

Nursing. In addition, one agency, the American Red Cross considers that public health education constitutes one of the first factors in its future health program, thru the health study class, lectures, exhibits, classes in first aid, life saving, home hygiene, nutrition etc. Thru the Junior Red Cross, the American Red Cross offers facilities of interest to child health divisions; and thru its public health nursing service, it is in close touch with the corresponding division of State health Departments

7. Division of Vital Statistics.

The following agencies provide practically full time statistical personnel:

1. The National Tuberculosis Association
2. The National Committee for Mental Hygiene
3. The American Social Hygiene Association
4. The National Organization for Public Health Nursing.
5. The American Child Health Association.

The National Health Council is still in its infancy but as time goes on it will closer and closer approach its ideal - Cooperation and coordination of all existing health agencies.