

UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Washington, D.C. 20548

FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY
Expected at 10:00 a.m. EDT
Wednesday, October 17, 1979

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STATEMENT OF
MORTON E. HENIG, SENIOR ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILD AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES
ON THE *SEN 7101*
[OLDER AMERICAN VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS
OF
ACTION]

Mister Chairman, and members of the Subcommittee, we are pleased to appear today as the Subcommittee begins its hearings on ACTION's Older American Volunteer Programs.

We have been reviewing these programs for the Subcommittee on Human Services, House Select Committee on Aging, and have obtained some insights into the programs' administration, accomplishments, and direction which we believe will be of interest. Our appearance here was mutually requested by this Subcommittee and the House Subcommittee on Human Services to ensure that the information we have developed thus far is available for your deliberations.

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The Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 gave ACTION, the Federal volunteer agency, responsibility for three Older American Volunteer Programs: Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and Retired Senior Volunteers. These Programs have been designed to utilize the strengths of people over 60 as providers of services rather than receivers. During 1978, 16,600 Foster Grandparents provided personal support to children with physical, mental, and social problems in a variety of settings including private residences, schools, hospitals, and institutions for the retarded, and 3,300 Senior Companions were giving aid and companionship to vulnerable elderly persons in their homes and institutions. Through ACTION's largest program 250,000 Retired Senior Volunteers addressed these and other basic human needs in their communities. Retired Senior Volunteers are reimbursed for travel and meals, while participants in the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs receive these expenses as well as small stipends.

The Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 requires ACTION to promote meaningful volunteer experiences through its own programs, to coordinate its programs with other compatible programs in the public and private sector and to encourage greater use of volunteer services in those programs. ACTION has been successful in expanding its own programs to a volunteer level of almost 270,000. However, relatively stable funding over the past 3 years has limited further increases in volunteer levels and elderly applicants have been placed on waiting lists. Based on a national poll completed in 1975 by Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. ACTION estimated there was a potential volunteer force of almost 10 million

older Americans.

Our review focused on what ACTION could do to improve administration of its own programs and to stimulate compatible programs in the public and private sector. In our work we looked at ACTION programs in New York, Texas, and California, and at ACTION Headquarters grants and in-house efforts to promote older American voluntarism in the public and private sector. We also obtained data from local organizations sponsoring a combination of two or more ACTION Older American programs.

CONSOLIDATING LOCAL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

During 1979 there were 862 ACTION Older American Volunteer Programs sponsors operating 199 Foster Grandparent projects, 55 Senior Companion projects, and 682 Retired Senior Volunteer projects. Only 66 sponsors operated two or more projects. At the locations where joint program sponsorships have been implemented such arrangements offered a greater variety of volunteer opportunities to older Americans in a community than the single program approach, and provided the opportunity to tailor Older American program delivery to each community's unique service needs and volunteer availability characteristics.

ACTION has not developed formal policies regarding administration of multiple projects by a single sponsor and approves joint sponsorships on a case-by-case basis. Joint sponsorship usually involves the funding of one grantee to operate 2 or more of ACTION's programs with separate program directors. ACTION has discouraged the practice of having one director responsible for two or more programs although some exceptions have been made. Under joint sponsorship volunteers from two ACTION

programs, such as the Retired Senior Volunteer Program and the Foster Grandparent Program, have been serving at the same volunteer station.

Directors of programs under sponsors currently administering more than one volunteer project advised us that joint sponsorship has enhanced program effectiveness by improving such functions as coordination with other projects, volunteer recruitment, referrals of volunteers to and from other projects, and by reducing administrative costs. Many also believed that joint sponsorship improved fund-raising capabilities and strengthened volunteer training. ACTION regional and State officials and directors of single-sponsor projects in the 3 states we visited held similar views. Within the context of joint sponsorship, these officials felt it was important to maintain the integrity of individual programs to sustain the pride of older Americans who identify closely with the services they perform.

Eleven of the joint sponsors advised us that they were using volunteers from more than one ACTION program to fulfill the service needs at one volunteer station. They indicated that these arrangements were beneficial and that no personnel problems were being experienced where stipended and non-stipended volunteers worked side-by-side.

ENCOURAGING VOLUNTARISM IN THE
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR

From 1971 through 1977, ACTION awarded grant funds totalling about \$3.6 million to the National Center for Voluntary Action, recently reorganized as the National Center for Citizen Involvement. The Center is a private non-profit organization created in 1970 to stimulate

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voluntarism in the public and private sector. ACTION funds, other public funds, and private endowments were used to establish and maintain 350 Voluntary Action Centers that, during 1977, referred and placed over 165,000 volunteers annually in local community services organizations. ACTION funds were also used to maintain and expand a National Center information system known as the "Clearinghouse" that compiled and distributed information on successful volunteer programs, program management, and resource organizations with special expertise.

Of the 350 Voluntary Action Centers across the Nation, 148 are located in large metropolitan areas. The Centers in metropolitan areas are major focal points for developing and coordinating area-wide volunteer recruitment and referral activities and the Centers in smaller communities are usually the sole focal point for such activities. The Director of the National Center advised us that many of the 165,000 volunteers placed by local centers at some 36,000 service organizations during 1977 were older Americans.

ACTION provided principal support amounting to about \$685,000 over a 6-year period to the National Center for Voluntary Action which enabled it to expand the Clearinghouse to monitor the activities of and disseminate information on over 5,000 successful volunteer programs. The Center indicated that it used the information to respond to about 10,000 inquiries annually from all levels of government, churches, businesses, individuals, schools, libraries, hospitals, universities and other institutions for information related to voluntarism including program design, development, administration, resources, and local problems. The Center

also indicated that until 1977, ACTION volunteer programs were frequent users of Clearinghouse services making over 1,000 requests for information annually; the requestors indicated that the information was of significant assistance in developing and improving volunteer programs, identifying funding and other resources needed to operate volunteer projects, and matching potential volunteers with community needs.

In 1977—after almost 7 years of support—ACTION discontinued its demonstration grants to the National Center for Voluntary Action and its Clearinghouse operation. ACTION advised us that it had not established a written, time-phased termination of funding for the National Center and that it had implemented a gradual withdrawal of active interest in the Clearinghouse between December 1975 and September 1977 as ACTION explored how best to use its limited resources to provide technical assistance. At the time ACTION had not evaluated the operating performance of the National Center and its local organizations and discontinued its demonstration grants with the expectation that National Center activities would be continued with private resources.

Internal memoranda prepared between 1973 and 1977 by ACTION personnel responsible for administering grants to the National Center were consistently positive, recommending continued funding based on accomplishments of the Center. The documents noted that the Center was the primary focus of voluntarism outside ACTION's operating programs and that its services were extremely valuable to improving and stimulating public and private voluntary action in the Nation.

As ACTION withdrew support of the National Center, the costs of operating Voluntary Action Centers were absorbed through additional funds provided by other public and private organizations. In 1978, shortly after terminating its support, ACTION encouraged United Way of America DLG 03074 to take over the Clearinghouse operation. United Way advised ACTION that the function was of great importance to voluntarism in this Nation but that they were unable to provide the support needed, which was estimated at about \$4 million over 5 years. The Center continued to receive requests for Clearinghouse services. The Center Director indicated that they were unable to respond adequately in many cases because information was no longer being expanded and updated and publications were no longer being reprinted.

In March 1978 ACTION established a new Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation to encourage and support public and private voluntarism by providing financial assistance to State and local organizations to

- encourage development of voluntary action programs,
- provide technical assistance to ACTION programs and local communities to establish volunteer programs, and
- organize conferences and workshops on voluntarism.

The Domestic Volunteer Service Act requires that ACTION, when providing technical and financial assistance, utilize existing programs to the maximum extent feasible and avoid duplication of existing programs in the public or private sectors. ACTION officials indicated that the Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation was not designed to take over the Clearinghouse functions performed by the National Center for Voluntary

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Action. However, it is intended that the Office promote information exchange activities through its State Volunteer Services Coordinator Program. Under the program, ACTION provides statewide offices with funds for collecting information on voluntarism, stimulating volunteer activity in state public programs, and linking public and private sector volunteer activities. ACTION is currently developing permanent guidelines to designate how the information exchange capabilities will be established. ACTION is supporting programs in 8 states and is planning to expand to additional states during fiscal year 1980.

FUTURE DIRECTION OF ACTION OLDER AMERICAN PROGRAMS

ACTION requested \$72 million for Older American Volunteer Programs for fiscal year 1980—an increase of \$10 million from fiscal year 1979. ACTION intended to use the additional funds to increase stipends, travel reimbursement, insurance for volunteers and for project administration and training while keeping the same volunteer levels. A joint conference committee of the Congress has concurred in an \$11.3 million increase over ACTION's budget request. ACTION plans to use \$4.1 million of this amount, when appropriated, to start 30 new projects with a projected strength of over 8,000 volunteers and to expand 170 projects with a projected volunteer increase of 17,000. The remaining money is to be used for further increasing volunteer stipends, transportation reimbursements and project administration budgets.

The stipend increase is the first such increase since the program began and will raise payments to all low-income volunteers in the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs by 25 percent. The increases in

the stipend and other support costs will provide much needed relief to dedicated older Americans in ACTION's programs.

ACTION's efforts to encourage increased voluntarism in compatible public and private volunteer programs have been in a state of change during the past 4 years. This redirection and reemphasis has the potential to provide more opportunities for the millions of older Americans who want meaningful volunteer experiences but have nowhere to turn. ACTION has requested \$2.3 million to operate its new Office of Voluntary Citizen Participation during fiscal year 1980. However, the agency has not yet defined what emphasis the new office will place on encouraging increased voluntarism for older American programs in the private and public sector as contrasted with other domestic and international volunteer programs.

W ACTION should evaluate the State Volunteer Services Coordinator Program HP
it has supported in 8 states in conjunction with service capabilities of the National Center for Voluntary Action—subsequently reorganized as the National Center for Citizen Involvement—to avoid any potential for duplicating development of information exchange systems.

This Committee and other Congressional offices have encouraged joint sponsorship and programming in ACTION's Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs. Toward this end a single authorization was issued for ACTION's fiscal year 1980 Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs to encourage maximum agency discretion in assigning volunteers in these programs. However, formal procedures have not been adopted by ACTION that encourage joint sponsorship where it is feasible. Without established grant making procedures requiring an assessment of the

potential of joint sponsorship arrangements, the best form of sponsorship to match prevailing volunteer interests with community service needs may not always be considered as new programs are started with increased fiscal year 1980 appropriations.

Mister Chairman, this concludes my statement. We hope that our discussion here today will prove helpful to the Subcommittee. We will be happy to answer any questions you or other Subcommittee members may have.