

The Public Health Service in 1952

The material presented in this review is excerpted from two recent publications of the Public Health Service. One is "The Public Health Service Today." It outlines the organizational structure of the Public Health Service and gives a broad picture of its operations. The other is the 1951 annual report, which presents in some detail the activities of the Service for the fiscal year 1951.

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The Public Health Service Today. (Public Health Service Publication No. 165) 1952. 22 pages.

Annual Report of the Public Health Service, Federal Security Agency, 1951. 79 pages. 25 cents.

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Good health for the people of the United States is a matter of vital concern. There are many agencies, voluntary organizations, and professional groups on local, State, and Federal levels all working toward the goal of longer and healthier American lives. The steady drive against diseases and environmental hazards that sicken, cripple, or kill is going forward on many fronts.

The United States Public Health Service is the principal agent of the Federal Government for protecting and improving the Nation's health. Its staff is constantly working to make more effective the multitude of efforts to conquer disease—conducting and stimulating research, aiding in the extension of health services and resources, and providing information and guidance to local and State agencies.

Job and Organization

The Public Health Service job can be summed up in three major aims:

- Conduct and support research and training in the medical and related sciences and in public health methods and administration.

- Provide a full range of medical and hospital services to persons authorized to receive care from the Service and aid in the development of the Nation's hospital and related facilities.

- Assist the States in the application of new knowledge to the prevention and control of disease, the maintenance of a healthful environment, and the development of community health services.

These three areas are reflected in the organization of the Service. Research is the principal responsibility of the National Institutes of Health; medical and hospital care is the responsibility of the Bureau of Medical Services; and aid to the States is the main job of the Bureau of State Services.

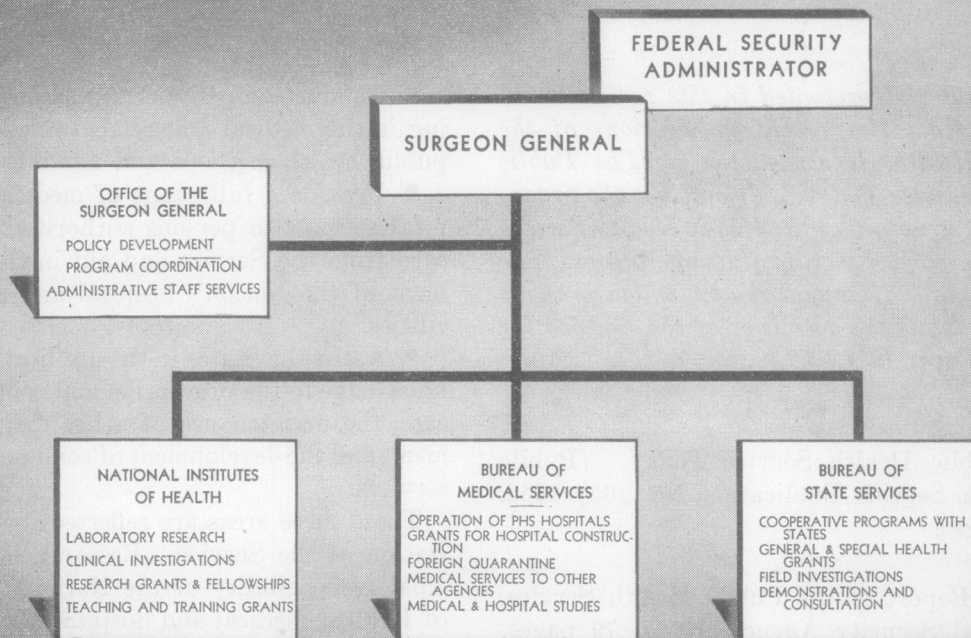
Administration of the Service is vested by law in the Surgeon General, aided by Assistant Surgeons General, each appointed from the Commissioned Corps. The Deputy Surgeon General is designated head of the Office of the Surgeon General—which is, in effect, a bureau of general administration.

Growth of Responsibilities

Since its beginning in 1798 as a medical care program for seamen of the American Merchant Marine, the Public Health Service has been called upon to assume many new responsibilities. Particularly in the past 15 years have advances in medical science and growing public awareness of the primary importance of health placed increased demands upon the Service.

As an example of how work of the Public Health Service has increased, the seven institutes in the National Institutes of Health have come into being since 1935, two of them since 1950. Although the Public Health Service has

THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE



been carrying on basic research for more than 50 years, the establishment of these institutes, in many instances consolidating previous activities, has resulted in a considerable expansion of the research program, particularly in the fields of chronic disease and mental illness.

The passage of the National Hospital Survey and Construction Act in 1946 increased the Public Health Service's responsibilities in the fields of medical, dental, and nursing resources and hospital facilities. In administering this act, the Service provides financial assistance and technical advice and leadership to State and local governments and to nonprofit organizations so that community needs for hospitals and health centers may be measured and plans developed to meet them.

The Public Health Service is engaged today in some 30 different programs, ranging from quarantine to chronic disease control and from the production of yellow fever vaccine to re-

search in atomic radiation. And not the least among these is the expanding participation of the Public Health Service in the progress in world health. In cooperation with the Technical Cooperation Administration of the Department of State and the Mutual Security Agency, the Service was assisting in the operation of health programs in 8 countries during 1951 and had plans either proposed or being drafted for programs in 18 others.

Service to Other Groups

As a focal point for health activities in the Federal Government, the Public Health Service program is intimately allied with many related governmental programs in education and welfare. As part of the Federal Security Agency, it works in close cooperation with other parts of the Agency, such as the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Food and Drug Administration, the Office of Education, and es-

pecially the Children's Bureau of the Social Security Administration.

The Public Health Service also provides medical and technical services to many other agencies of the Federal Government whose general programs include medical and public health activities. For example, for the past 21 years it has supplied medical, psychiatric, dental, and nursing services to the institutions operated by the Bureau of Prisons. It assigns physicians to the United States Coast Guard to provide medical care for the crews aboard ships at sea, provides dental care, and inspects medical and dental facilities of the various sick bays and infirmaries. In addition, the Service assigns medical staff to certain bureaus within the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, Labor, and State.

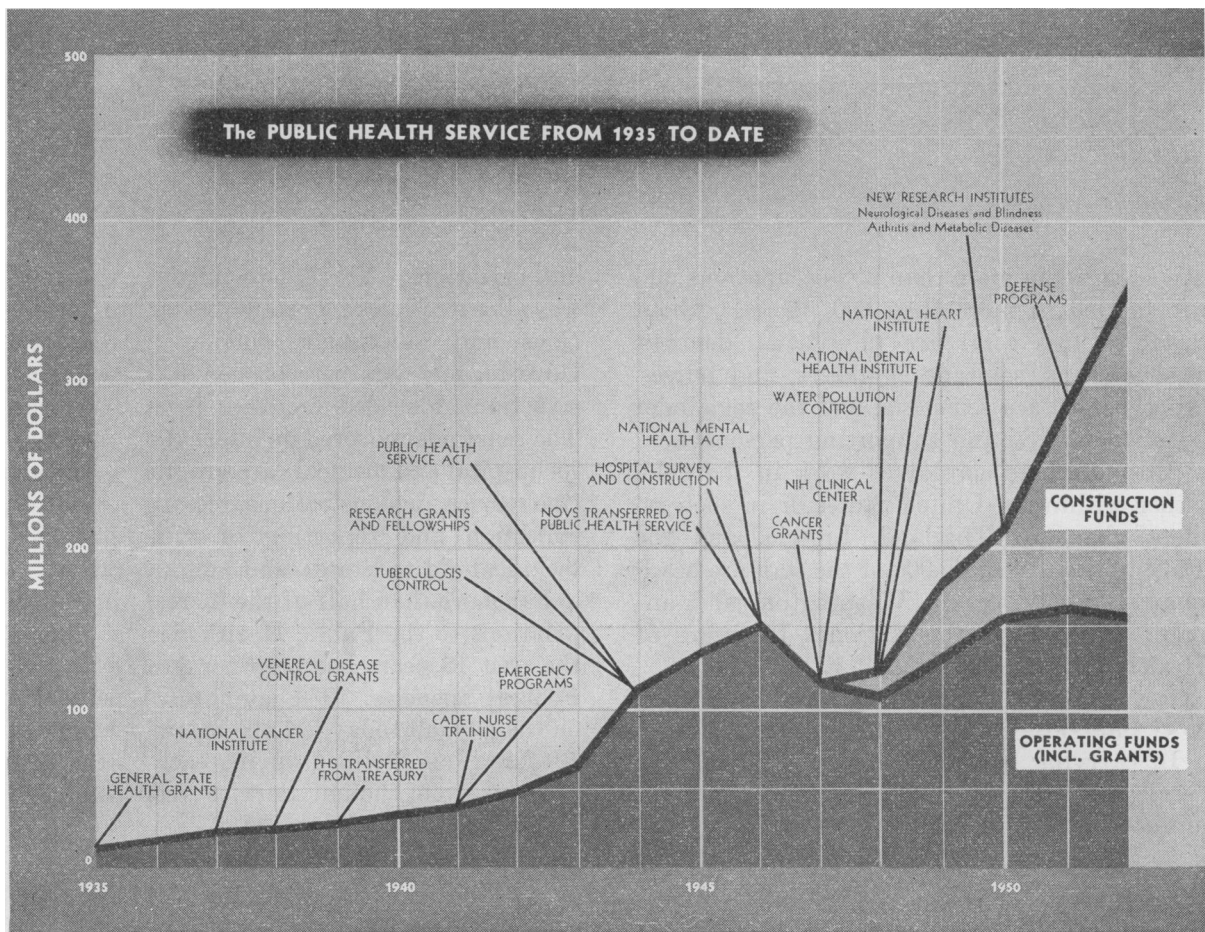
In the interests of national defense, the Service, on request, provides technical staff and consultation to the Department of Defense, the

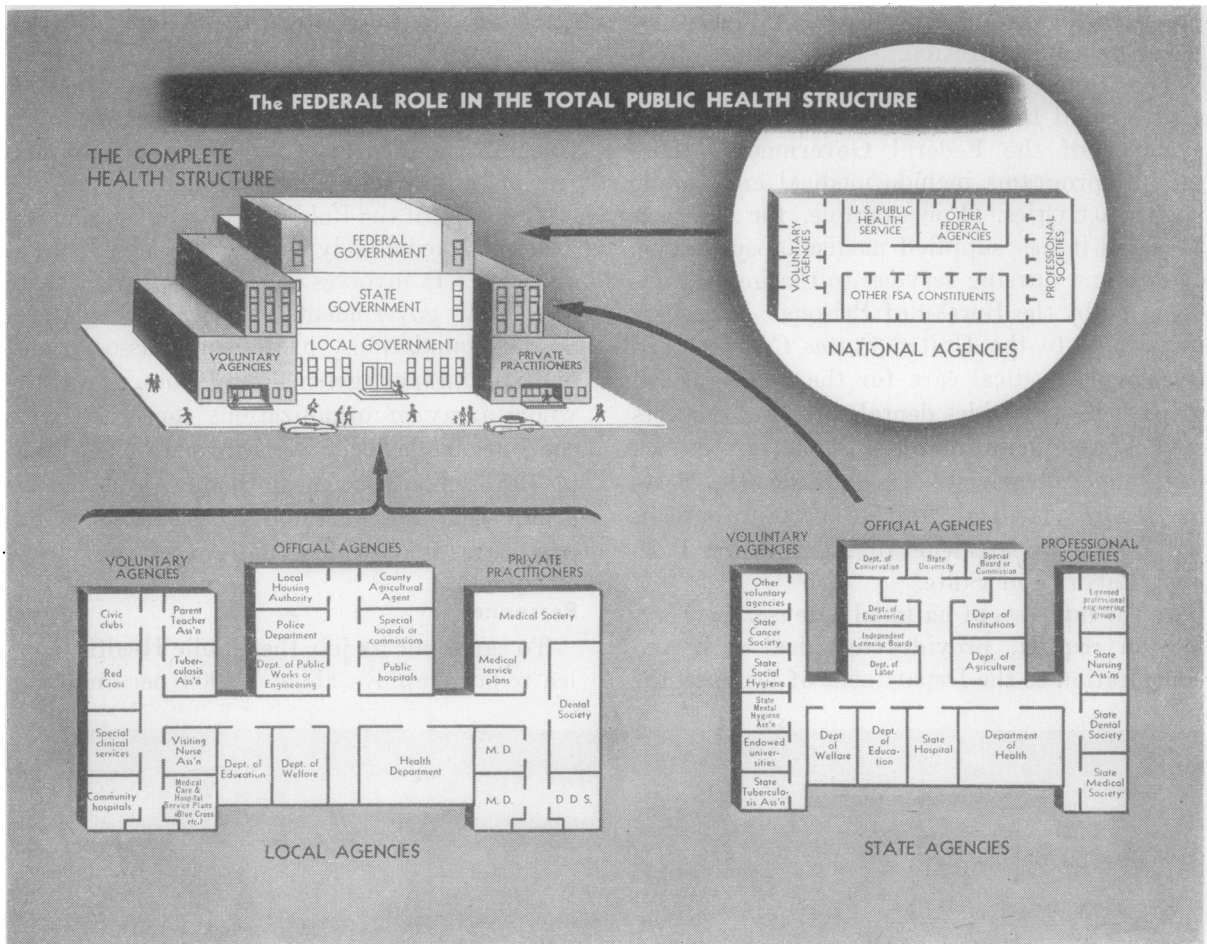
Selective Service System, the Atomic Energy Commission, the National Security Resources Board, the Office of Defense Mobilization and its constituent agencies, the National Research Council, the Federal Civil Defense Administration, and other Federal agencies.

The work of the Public Health Service, moreover, is linked closely with that of non-Federal agencies. It involves collaboration with State and local governments, medical schools, research foundations, professional associations, and voluntary agencies—in short, with the whole array of organizations concerned with the Nation's health. It is through the States, medical schools, scientific bodies, and similar groups that most of the benefits of Federal expenditures for health actually reach the public.

Personnel

To carry out its job, the Public Health Service today employs about 15,000 persons, who





are engaged in more than 250 occupations and are located in more than 600 places. About 3,000 of this total are physicians, dentists, veterinarians, sanitary engineers, and nurses. Another 500 are scientists, and the remainder constitute allied and supporting personnel.

Most of these employees work in the field, either within the United States or in such remote places as Thailand, Liberia, and the Philippines. About 2,000 of the staff are headquarters employees in Washington, and another 2,000 are in the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Md.

1951 Appropriations

In carrying out its assignment during the fiscal year 1951, the Public Health Service administered \$332 million in appropriations and

authorizations. Nearly two-thirds of this total was allocated in grants to States and to institutions and individuals outside the Federal Government. Six percent was devoted to construction of needed facilities for the Service. The remainder covered its internal operations—its hospital and medical care programs, quarantine service, demonstrations, research activities, collection and reporting of vital statistics, technical aid to States, and administration.

Far more than half of the increase in appropriations to the Public Health Service during the past 15 years has been for grants to non-Federal agencies. The number of personnel on the payroll today is 1,500 below the peak of 1944 and has declined during each of the past 4 years even though Service responsibilities have substantially increased.