

PAY PROGRAMS FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The following was taken from the News Bulletin of *Public Administration Clearing House*.

Wartime and transitional conditions have brought about re-examination of methods and procedures by which employees of state and local institutions—public hospitals, children's homes, prisons—are paid for their work.

Entering into the picture from the administrator's viewpoint is the problem of determining the "real" wages of employees of such institutions who receive "maintenance"—board or room, or both—in addition to a cash wage.

Differences in practice between state and local governments is revealed in the way maintenance arrangements are made, the American Municipal Association reports on the basis of a survey of practices in jurisdictions operating institutions.

About four-fifths of the state governments pay a basic cash salary plus maintenance for institutional employees; the practice in cities and counties is divided equally between giving employees full or partial maintenance in addition to a cash wage, or giving a gross salary and deducting charges for items taken.

The association said the latter, more realistic procedure is gaining adherents in all units of government, accompany-

ing in most instances the recent moves by states in changing to a new institutional employee maintenance policy.

Several factors are bringing pressure for adoption of the gross salary with maintenance deduction policy. One is the belief currently gaining weight that it is better administratively to require only those employees needed at all times—certain doctors, nurses, etc., in a hospital, for example—to live "in" the institution. The attendants, food service employees and laborers, under such a policy, may live "out" of the institution for a more normal life than the institution provides, receiving a gross wage from which deductions are made only for meals taken during working hours.

Another subject under study involves the problem of more equitable wages for institutional employees who, while making up one of the largest blocs of public employees, are generally considered among if not the lowest paid.

Refinements in the methods of calculating the value of maintenance preserves pay equity between employees, the association said, and permits a neutral policy regarding employees taking maintenance. Recent interest in value of maintenance is based on a variety of considerations, including the high cost of living, difficulty of maintaining institution staffs, and difficulties in securing adequate food for patients and necessary staff members.

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