

**THE SOCIAL WELFARE ACT (EXCERPT)**  
**Act 280 of 1939**

**400.55 Administration of public welfare program by county department.**

Sec. 55. The county department shall administer a public welfare program, as follows:

(a) To grant general assistance, including medical care and care in the county medical care facility, but not including hospitalization and infirmary care except for care in the county medical care facility or a county infirmary existing on January 1, 1981, to any person domiciled in the county who has a legal settlement in this state. General assistance may also be granted to a person who has a legal settlement in this state but no domicile in the county and a recoupment may be made when appropriate in the manner provided in cases of emergency hospitalization under this act. In a temporary emergency, general assistance may be given to indigents without a settlement in this state as the county department considers necessary, including, if other funds are not available for the purpose, all necessary expenses in transporting an indigent to his or her domicile in this state, or in another state or nation, when information reasonably tends to show that the person has a home available in his or her place of domicile in this state or a legal residence in another state or nation. A legal settlement in this state is acquired by an emancipated person who has lived continuously in this state for 1 year with the intent to make it his or her home and who, during the 1-year period has not received public assistance, other than assistance received during and as a direct result of a civil defense emergency, or support from relatives. Time spent in a public institution shall not be counted in determining settlement. A legal settlement shall be lost by remaining away from this state for an uninterrupted period of 1 year except that absence from this state for labor or other special or temporary purpose shall not occasion loss of settlement.

(b) To administer categorical assistance including medical care.

(c) To supervise and be responsible for the operation of the county infirmary and county medical care facility. In a county having a population of 1,000,000 or more that maintains a county infirmary or county hospital or a joint infirmary and hospital providing for mental patients, the institution and the admissions to the institution are subject to the control of a board to be known as the board of county institutions. The board shall consist of 5 members appointed by the county board of commissioners, except that in a county having a board of county auditors, 3 members of the board of county institutions shall be appointed by the county board of commissioners and 2 members shall be appointed by the board of county auditors. Each member of the board shall hold office for a term and receive compensation as the county board of commissioners provides by ordinance. In relation to the administration of the institutions the board has and succeeds to all powers and duties formerly vested by law, general, local or special, in the superintendents of the poor in the county and the board of county institutions as constituted on April 13, 1943. The board of county institutions of the county may also maintain outpatient facilities for the treatment of needy persons suffering from mental disorders. The board also has the same powers as are given to the county board in section 78.

(d) To furnish in all cases, insofar as practicable, care and treatment that will tend to restore needy persons to a condition of financial and social independence.

(e) To require that each applicant shall furnish proof satisfactory to the county board that the applicant is entitled to the aid, assistance, or benefit sought.

(f) To investigate, in respect to each application for any form of public aid or assistance, the circumstances of the applicant, both at the time of application and periodically during the receipt of aid or assistance.

(g) To maintain adequate social and financial records pertaining to each recipient of aid or assistance and so far as is practicable engage in the prevention of social disabilities.

(h) Except as otherwise provided in this subdivision, to investigate, when requested by the probate court or the family division of circuit court, matters pertaining to dependent, neglected, and delinquent children and wayward minors under the court's jurisdiction, to provide supervision and foster care as provided by court order, and to furnish the court, on request, investigational service in respect to the hospitalization of children under the program of services for children and youth with special health care needs established under part 58 of the public health code, 1978 PA 368, MCL 333.5801 to 333.5879, which services shall include the follow-up investigation and continuing observations. If the county is a county juvenile agency as defined in section 2 of the county juvenile agency act, 1998 PA 518, MCL 45.622, the county department's obligations under this subdivision are limited to public wards within the county's jurisdiction under the youth rehabilitation services act, 1974 PA 150, MCL 803.301 to 803.309, and county juvenile agency services as defined in section 117a.

(i) To assist other departments, agencies, and institutions of the federal, state, and county governments, when requested, in performing services in conformity with the purposes of this act.

(j) To assist in the development of sound programs and standards of child welfare, and promote programs and policies looking toward the prevention of dependency, neglect, and delinquency and other conditions

affecting adversely the welfare of families and children.

(k) To create within the county department a division of medical care. The county board may appoint a properly qualified and licensed doctor of medicine as the head of the division and an advisory committee. The advisory committee shall consist of 1 doctor of medicine, nominated by the county medical society; 1 dentist, nominated by the district dental society; and 1 pharmacist, nominated by the district pharmaceutical association, to assist in formulating policies of medical care and auditing and reviewing bills. "Medical care" as used in this act means medical care rendered under the supervision of a licensed physician in an organized out-patient department of a hospital licensed by the department of community health under article 17 of the public health code, 1978 PA 368, MCL 333.20101 to 333.22260, or home and office attendance by a physician, osteopathic physician and surgeon, or podiatrist licensed or otherwise authorized to engage in practice under article 15 of the public health code, 1978 PA 368, MCL 333.16101 to 333.18838; and when prescribed by the physician, osteopathic physician and surgeon, or podiatrist, diagnostic services requiring the use of equipment not available in his or her offices, if the services do not require overnight care, dental service, optometric service, bedside nursing service in the home, or pharmaceutical service. The private physician-patient relationship shall be maintained. The normal relationships between the recipients of dental, optometric, nursing, and pharmaceutical services, and the services furnished by a physician, osteopathic physician and surgeon, podiatrist, or a chiropractor licensed or otherwise authorized to engage in practice under article 15 of the public health code, 1978 PA 368, MCL 333.16101 to 333.18838, and the persons furnishing these services shall be maintained. This section does not affect the office of a city physician or city pharmacist established under a city charter, a county health officer, or the medical superintendent of a county hospital. This section permits the use of a case management system, a patient care management system, or other alternative system for providing medical care.

(l) To cause to be suitably buried the body of a deceased indigent person who has a domicile in the county, when requested by the person's relative or friend, or of a stranger, when requested by a public official following an inquest.

(m) To administer additional welfare functions as are vested in the department, including hospitalization.

(n) To act as an agent for the state department in matters requested by the state department under the rules of the state department.

(o) To provide temporary general assistance for each family found ineligible for family independence assistance by reason of unsuitable family home as provided in section 56.

**History:** 1939, Act 280, Imd. Eff. June 16, 1939;—Am. 1941, Act 343, Eff. Jan. 10, 1942;—Am. 1943, Act 85, Eff. July 30, 1943;—CL 1948, 400.55;—Am. 1951, Act 248, Imd. Eff. June 15, 1951;—Am. 1957, Act 292, Eff. Sept. 27, 1957;—Am. 1961, Act 184, Eff. Sept. 8, 1961;—Am. 1962, Act 195, Imd. Eff. June 4, 1962;—Am. 1963, Act 141, Eff. Sept. 6, 1963;—Am. 1965, Act 401, Imd. Eff. Oct. 27, 1965;—Am. 1966, Act 258, Imd. Eff. July 11, 1966;—Am. 1980, Act 486, Imd. Eff. Jan. 20, 1981;—Am. 1987, Act 266, Imd. Eff. Dec. 28, 1987;—Am. 1998, Act 516, Imd. Eff. Jan. 12, 1999;—Am. 2015, Act 90, Imd. Eff. June 25, 2015.

**Compiler's note:** For transfer of policymaking, administration, and all related functions for the assistance to disabled persons' portion of the General Assistance Program provided for in MCL 400.55 of the Michigan Compiled Laws from the county departments to the Office of Income Assistance of the Family Services Administration of the Department of Social Services, see E.R.O. No. 1991-14, compiled at MCL 400.222 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.

**Former law:** See Act 85 of 1943.

**Popular name:** Act 280

**Administrative rules:** R 400.1 et seq. of the Michigan Administrative Code.