

Centers for Poor Approved

Four neighborhood health centers to be managed by hospitals and medical schools will provide medical and health services to the poor—By Patricia McBroom

➤ SARGENT SHRIVER, head of the War on Poverty, has approved some \$6.5 million to bring medical and health services to the poor. The funds will go to create four neighborhood health centers within three to six months in Watts, in South Bronx, N.Y., and in Chicago's North Lawndale and Mile Square areas.

Mr. Shriver told a news conference that he believes the centers will prove to be as important a break from traditional patterns in medical care as Project Head Start has been in education.

Because they break new ground, the centers will be in the nature of demonstration projects, each one differing slightly from the others. All, however, aim at comprehensive services in one location, including maternity and child care, diagnosis and medical treatment, physical therapy, dental care, birth control services and drugs. Not all centers will provide the full range of services initially. For instance Watts will

offer dental care; the Chicago projects will not.

The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) reasons that 80% of the medical needs of the poor can be satisfied through such centers. Only 20% require hospital care, such as for major surgery.

The actual recipients of OEO money are the private hospitals and medical schools which will staff and manage the centers, said Mr. Shriver. Largest of the four grants is \$2.4 million to the University of Southern California Medical School for Watts.

But however large the grant, it can do little more than make a dent in the medical needs of the Watts population, as OEO sees them.

Between 300,000 and 400,000 people live in this area, the size of the City of San Francisco. The closest public hospital, Los Angeles County General, is 12 miles away. (Los Angeles recently voted down a hospital for Watts. Although 59% of the people voted for it, a two-thirds majority was required.)

Against this massive need will stand the new center, housed in prefabricated buildings, staffed with 24 physicians from the USC Medical School, and designed to handle a maximum of 30,000 people initially.

Dr. Julius B. Richmond, Project Head Start director and now assistant director for OEO's Health Affairs Office, emphasized that the health center will not take the place of a much needed hospital.

But it will bring medicine to people, many of whom never saw a doctor until they reached midteens. Dr. Richmond said such deprivation is common in poor areas.

To stretch physician time, OEO plans to train and employ large numbers of local residents as aides and nonprofessional personnel at all the centers. A significant slice of the \$2.2 million for the Bronx center will be used to create a pool of trained aides recruited from among the poor. Under the management of Montefiore Hospital in New York, the Bronx center is designed for 8,000 families.

In Chicago, Presbyterian St. Lukes Hospital has been awarded slightly less than \$1.2 million for the Mile Square area center, serving 10,600 people at first. A smaller grant, \$719,644, went to Mt. Sinai Hospital in Chicago for the Lawndale area.

Dr. Richmond said OEO is aware of some 200 communities in the United States that need similar centers.

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