

Experience and Exploration of Social Aid in Major Public Health Emergencies

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Abstract: NCP (novel coronavirus pneumonia) is another public health emergency after the SARS. Social aid has significantly protected the life and health of civil service targets, such as older adults, children, homeless people, and people in need. It can alleviate the difficulty of the rescued targets' life and increase their confidence in overcoming the epidemic. Social aid is the vital cornerstone that overcomes the epidemic, reduces the negative impact, and maintains social stability. Based on the actual situation, this paper analyzes and researches social assistance policies and measures of the epidemic in various regions, discovers existing problems, and explores ideas for solving them.

Keywords: COVID-19, NCP, Social aid.

1. Raise the Question

The novel coronavirus-infected pneumonia (COVID-19, from now on referred to as COVID-19) that started at the end of 2019 has evolved into a significant global public health emergency. Due to its rapid spread, a wide range of infections, and great difficulty in prevention and control, COVID-19 has become the most significant public health emergency since the founding of New China. According to the "Emergency Regulations on Public Health Emergencies" promulgated on May 9, 2003, the new crown virus epidemic is a significant public health emergency and has reached the second-level standard. Compared with SARS in 2003, COVID-19 is more contagious, and its death toll and impact on the global economy far exceed that of SARS. The latest global epidemic data show that virus variants gradually become a new obstacle to anti-virus efforts. The epidemic has posed a significant threat to the life, health, and safety of human beings worldwide. In order to resolve the crisis of the epidemic, governments of all countries are working hard to prevent and control it.

In the face of the epidemic, not only do the health and epidemic prevention departments need to act, but other departments also need to cooperate actively. Social assistance plays a vital role in ensuring the life, health, and safety of the elderly, children, homeless people, people in need, and other civil affairs service objects, alleviating the breathing difficulties of the assisted things, and improving confidence in overcoming the epidemic. It has a good effect on restoring social order and maintaining social stability. It is an essential task during the epidemic prevention and control period.

As an integral part of the social security system, social assistance provides material assistance to people in need, intending to alleviate their breathing difficulties. During the particular period when the epidemic impacted social order, social assistance work mainly focused on life, temporary and medical assistance. Social assistance work is primarily reflected in first aid and disaster relief, guaranteeing and meeting the sudden needs of people's livelihood and providing a basic life safety net.

In August 2020, Li Keqiang, a member of the Standing

Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Premier of the State Council, issued instructions on social assistance work. He pointed out that social assistance is a comprehensive institutional arrangement for helping those in need and helping those in need, as well as emergency rescue. The critical content of the book is related to the food and clothing of the people in need and reflects the love and warmth of society. Six stability refers to stabilizing employment, stabilizing finance, stabilizing foreign trade, stabilizing foreign investment, stabilizing investment, and stabilizing work expectations. "six guarantees" refers to ensuring employment, primary livelihood, market players, food and energy security, and industrial chain supply. The chain is stable and the operation of the grassroots is guaranteed. Social assistance is one of the important contents of the "six guarantees" and plays a vital role in ensuring the primary livelihood of the people. The goal of social assistance is to promptly respond to the needs of the masses in the face of the epidemic's impact, actively carry out various assistance work, and do an excellent job of ensuring the primary livelihood of the poor. Emergency rescue is the focus of the civil affairs department. Timely rescue can give people urgently needed help and enhance their confidence and sense of security.

2. Chinese Social Assistance Work Practice

2.1. Relevant documents issued by the central government

After the outbreak, the state and relevant departments successively introduced policies to support social assistance work. These documents mainly guide the work of epidemic prevention and control and life assistance in various places around the goal of ensuring the essential life of the poor.

2.2. Personnel Objects of Social Assistance

In the average period when there is no epidemic, the specific assistance objects undertaken by social assistance mainly include people on minimum subsistence allowances, deplorable supporters, homeless people, etc. During the

outbreak, we should not only pay attention to the routine rescue groups but also pay attention to the groups with particular difficulties. Temporary assistance during the epidemic focuses on helping two groups of people: typically vulnerable groups and dynamic vulnerable groups. [1] There is some overlap between active vulnerable groups and groups with particular difficulties. Temporary impoverished households, people living in problems in home isolation, and quickly homeless people belong to dynamic vulnerable groups.

According to the spirit of the document "Notice on Doing a Good Job in Relevant Social Assistance Work during the Prevention and Control of Novel Coronavirus Infected Pneumonia" issued by the General Office of the Ministry of Civil Affairs on January 30, 2020, during the epidemic period, the relief objects mainly include: urban and rural subsistence allowances; impoverished people; people with difficulties in life;

families of pneumonia patients with novel coronavirus infection.

On March 6, 2020, the Central Leading Group for Responding to the Novel Coronavirus Infected Pneumonia Epidemic issued the "Notice on Further Improving the Protection of the People in Difficulties During the Epidemic Prevention and Control Period." It pointed out that the relief objects include:

Temporary stay people who encounter temporary difficulties during the epidemic prevention and control period
Personnel.

Migrant workers whose basic life is temporarily tricky due to the epidemic.

Older adults who are isolated at home;

orphans scattered in society,

children left-behind elderly people

people with particular difficulties such as severe illness and disability.

On March 14, 2020, the State Council's Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism response to the novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic announced the "Work Plan for the Rescue and Protection of Children Without Guardianship Due to the Impact of the New Coronary Pneumonia Epidemic." The police included children who lacked guardianship as rescue and protection.

Summarizing the above policies, we know that the special needy groups that need assistance during the epidemic include those infected by the virus, temporarily impoverished households, people living in difficulty in home isolation, temporary homeless people, and children without guardianship.

Temporary poor households refer to urban and rural residents who have family difficulties and no source of income due to the new crown epidemic or are unable to work due to the epidemic's impact. Their income has decreased, resulting in fundamental living difficulties. People with challenges in home isolation refer to groups who have problems living during home isolation. Temporary homeless people refer to those temporarily stranded due to the epidemic and other outsiders. Children without guardianship refer to children whose parents or other guardians are confirmed to be infected, suspected to be infected, or need to be isolated for observation and whose parents or other guardians cannot fully perform their parenting and guardianship duties due to the needs of epidemic prevention and anti-epidemic work and other impacts of the epidemic.

3. Basic Ideas and Specific Measures of Social Assistance Work

3.1. Basic idea

The degree of impact of major public health events results from the interaction of three factors: virus transmission speed, fatality rate, and human immunity. The targets of social assistance include children who are more affected by the epidemic, the elderly (senior, disabled, living alone), low-income families and the disabled, people who have difficulties residing due to the epidemic, and homeless people. The purpose of social assistance is to help them solve their problems and relieve life's pressure. The disease's high infection rate and the adversary's invisibility distinguish public health events from other catastrophic events. Due to the suddenness of the management and control work, many needy people need more time to make preparations, resulting in the inability to seek medical treatment and living in difficulties. The supporting role of social assistance in public health events should be carried out from the combination of routine service and remarkable assistance, mainly considering how to reduce the adverse effects during and after the epidemic. Work in three dimensions, including improving the working efficiency of the social support system, ensuring their survival and living needs, and achieving the goal of essential assistance.

According to our country's current prevention and control measures, the possibility of a large-scale epidemic outbreak is unlikely. The main problem we are currently facing is the problem of scattered outbreaks. Scattered outbreaks are mainly local outbreaks. The main direction of social assistance work is to gather social resources, carry out government-society coordination, mobilize social resources such as volunteers and charitable organizations, and apply professional knowledge and skills to provide social support for the disadvantaged groups affected by the epidemic and meet their needs—health and life requirements.

3.2. Three stages of social assistance work

3.2.1. Contingency plan management stage

When a significant public health event occurs, social attention often focuses on preventing and controlling the epidemic. Relief for disadvantaged groups should be one of the contents of the government's emergency plan. The plan aims to start immediately in an emergency and provide comprehensive assistance to those in need. The state and the government are responsible and obligated to help the poor and offer complementary social services on the supply side; when people encounter social risks or need assistance, they can enjoy social aid. [2]

3.2.2. Evaluation phase

Assessment can be divided into routine inspection and emergency assessment. Routine assessment usually works. The Social Welfare Bureau should establish a grading and dynamic needs assessment system for social assistance recipients. This work can be carried out regularly. The evaluation process can divide the disadvantaged group into three levels. The elderly, deplorable supporters, those over 60 years old living alone, and widows who lack family emergency contacts, single social relations, and no relatives to care for belong to the first level and are prioritized for investigation. Groups with low immunity, such as orphans, sick households, subsistence allowances/borderline

subsistence allowances, and severely disabled families, are the second level. Single-parent families, people with employment difficulties, and disabled families with good community participation are at the third level. This assessment facilitates day-to-day social assistance administration.

Emergency assessment means that when a public health event occurs, the civil affairs department can use the usually completed hierarchical screening data to conduct follow-up investigations of complex groups. There are significant differences in the needs of groups at different levels in terms of risk prevention support, survival support, social support, and psychological support. The emergency assessment is combined with health prevention and control. The household investigation is carried out to find the basic situation of the people who most need rescue in a short period. For patients with fever and suspected patients, the civil affairs department will help them give timely treatment. For healthy groups, civil affairs departments provide life assistance services.

3.2.3. Crisis management phase

The suddenness of public health incidents is strong, and the response speed is the primary embodiment of the effectiveness of social assistance work. The purpose of crisis management is to ensure the essential life of the crowd and restore regular life order. Regarding emergency work, a working group can be formed quickly after the outbreak to carry out risk investigation and submit the information to the civil affairs department to formulate a rescue plan. Establish a hierarchical risk management mechanism, and adopt a method of classifying assistance to the aid recipients so that government will deliver the service to the needy people in need as soon as possible. Build a daily information notification mechanism to realize information sharing between social workers and civil affairs departments to achieve practical social assistance work.

3.2.4. Life reconstruction phase

After significant public health emergencies are brought under control, social order is gradually restored. When people's lives begin to return to normal, the focus of social assistance work is changed from maintaining survival to rebuilding lives. The work focus of the civil affairs department has shifted to understanding the economic income of the rescued people through visits, helping them obtain employment opportunities, and providing employment space for the rescued people.

4. Suggestions

4.1. Strengthen the ability training of grassroots cadres

The government will eventually implement social assistance policies at the grassroots level. Grassroots relief work is both a critical point and a difficult point. During the epidemic, the grassroots staff was responsible for the inspection and implementation of the rescue, and the work was trivial and complicated. This tests the grassroots staff's ability to grasp and implement policies. The quality of the rescued objects could be better, which requires the team to have specific working skills. The civil affairs department should actively encourage grassroots staff to participate in professional training, familiarize themselves with the work process of social assistance, and carry out rescue skills training, especially for front-line staff. The competent

department may organize Personnel to exchange work experience from time to time to improve the practical level.

4.2. Medical and psychological assistance

The social assistance department organizes social workers to help promptly solve patients' medical problems with chronic diseases. The staff can provide consultation on epidemic prevention, contacting hospitals, health prevention and rehabilitation knowledge, and other related information for the aid recipients through telephone, Internet, WeChat group, QQ group, etc., reducing the infection risk.

During the epidemic prevention period, due to reduced communication and confusing information, anxiety and tension are prone to occur, and mentally ill patients are more prone to accidents. For these problems, psychological assistance should be increased to meet the hidden needs of the complex groups. The social assistance department fully mobilizes social forces such as social workers, volunteers, and psychological counselors. The full-time Personnel provide psychological counseling and counseling for the aid recipients on family relationships and personal emotional fluctuations and carry out spiritual comfort and counseling to help them relieve tension, anxiety, and coordination. Family relations help them restore order in their lives. Psychological assistance and social love donations form long-term assistance, which can better help disadvantaged groups face difficulties, overcome difficult times with confidence, and return to everyday life.

4.3. Carry out government-society coordination to improve rescue efficiency.

Social assistance work requires the joint work of multiple departments and channels. Civil affairs, social work bureaus, street offices, village committees, and social workers should participate actively. Volunteers have played a significant role in integrating resources, and short-term emergency staffing in the context of public health emergencies cannot meet the sharply increased demand for volunteers. [3] Government departments and social organizations should establish an efficient government-society collaborative working mechanism. Usually, the government and society are connected so that resources can be integrated into the epidemic work. The civil affairs department cooperates with social organizations to set up a social assistance service center, contacts social workers with social organizations, and establishes community work teams and volunteer teams. The social assistance service center investigates and manages rescued persons regularly, establishes contact files for rescued persons, conducts risk and needs assessments, and carries out daily rescue work. The cooperation between the government and non-governmental organizations can significantly improve the efficiency of social assistance—questions about working capital. Civil affairs departments adopt the model of government purchasing services to allow social organizations to participate in relief work. With financial support, social organizations can recruit service personnel and volunteers to conduct a needs assessment, service distribution, and other work. The assistance of social organizations can help the government provide sufficient personnel support and professional services for the relief groups and establish a service support system.

4.4. Set up an infectious disease medical assistance fund and realize long-term medical assistance

My country can establish a public health medical assistance fund for emergencies. This fund aims to prevent and control infectious diseases, effectively controlling the spread of significant outbreaks during a state of emergency. The medical assistance fund is mainly used for the treatment and follow-up treatment of patients with virus infection.

The source of funds can be mainly government public financial appropriations, and at the same time, broaden the channels of fund-raising such as charitable fund-raising and social donations. Civil affairs departments can issue anti-epidemic lottery tickets to quickly raise funds to supplement the lack of financial investment, provide a sound economic foundation for implementing medical assistance and promote the smooth progress of medical aid. Charitable organizations raise funds by organizing fund-raising activities, setting up relief standards for specific groups of people and particular diseases, and setting up relief projects, many of which mainly provide medical assistance for specific groups. [4] Through the accumulation of funds year by year, increase the stock of relief funds and minimize the burden of patients and government financial expenditures in the face of significant epidemics. The public health medical assistance fund can be applied to the subsequent sequelae treatment of patients with new crowns to prevent patients with new heights from facing the same plight as patients with sequelae of SARS.

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