

June, 1966

MEDICAL COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

National Office:

211 West 56th Street  
New York, N. Y. 10019  
Tel: (212) 582-1661

Southern Office:

507½ N. Farish Street  
Jackson, Miss. 39202  
Tel: (601) 355-6466

MANUAL FOR SOUTHERN MEDICAL PROJECTS

The Medical Committee for Human Rights was formed in July 1964 at the urgent request of Civil Rights Workers in the Mississippi Summer Project. Organized for members of the health professions who are deeply committed to the Civil Rights Movement, the Committee has become a permanent national volunteer health corps.

During the summer of 1964, more than 100 physicians, nurses, dentists, psychologists, and social workers volunteered their services as the supportive medical arm of the Civil Rights movement in Mississippi. Serving without pay, teams of physicians, psychologists, dentists, nurses and health students provided emergency first aid, arranged for local medical care, secured hospitalization for sick and injured volunteers, and above all provided the presence of sympathetic health personnel in a hostile atmosphere, including visits to jails, and participating in Civil Rights rallies.

The Committee also established contact with white and Negro physicians throughout the State to facilitate the health care of civil rights workers; and took first steps to survey and help local Negro communities meet some of their major unfilled health and medical needs.

In the summer of 1965, MCHR greatly expanded its work. Offices were maintained in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana and 100 of MCHR volunteers came South to lend medical presence and promote community organization around health. MCHR gave assistance to Civil Rights projects all around the South. Our Northern chapters developed local programs, but also offered medical services to civil rights workers returning from the South. In Mississippi there was a summer student program working on community health problems. In November, 1965, a diagnostic screening clinic was opened in the Holmes County Community Center. We now maintain offices in Selma, Alabama and Jackson, Mississippi. Our Southern Regional Office is located in Jackson, and is staffed by the Southern Field Director, two nurses, and a secretary. Our Selma Office this summer will be staffed by two full-time nurses.

The Members:

In addition to strong personal conviction, dedication, and professional skills, one of the most essential characteristics for Medical Committee members working in the South is flexibility and a willingness to listen and accept local leadership. Each person working with the Committee may expect to find himself utilizing his training under unfamiliar legal restrictions and in highly unforeseen situations. Each member should also be prepared to be involved in a wide variety

of activities, some of which may emerge from his own creative thinking, and many of which will have relatively little to do with his professional training. He may find himself in extended contact with a wide range of people who have strong opinions on subjects about which he may be less knowledgeable, and living in surroundings markedly different from those of his home.

Each Civil Rights project in the South has unique personnel and works with a unique community. Consequently, nothing less than extensive experience in the area to which you are assigned can really be adequate preparation. However, the following pages should provide a useful supplement to your first few days of Southern acclimation, and continue to be helpful throughout your stay as a guide in what have been found to be the most common eventualities.

### Going:

It is a good idea to tell many people that you are going to work in the South with the Committee. Some members have even raised money for their trip at the institution where they work. This approach helps to establish new personal involvements with the Civil Rights struggle for many people and provides a basis for their possible participation in the future. Since you will be working closely with many people whose lives exist primarily within the Civil Rights movement, it is also a good idea to read the literature of the "movement" as extensively as time permits before your departure.

Some consideration must also be given to packing. Unusual clothing, or anything else which might prove provocative, should generally be omitted. Anything about which there might be any legal question in the state you are going to should be checked with the Committee before you leave. In general, aside from one set of clothes suitable for physical work, clothing should be cool, preferably wash-and-wear, and generally allow you to maintain a professional appearance. The family you stay with may not provide you with a towel or wash-cloth -- so bring your own. A pair of shoes for mud, a flashlight, sunglasses, a light raincoat, and perhaps insect repellent are items which are often helpful. Do not bring any drugs on your person unless they are in a prescription bottle from your doctor.

The amount of money you may need will vary a great deal from locale to locale and from person to person, but everybody should anticipate spending at least \$20.00 a week while he is in the South. It is advisable to bring your money in Travellers checks. About \$500. in cash should be readily available from a source at home for emergency bail bond.

All members who have cars and can bring them South should do so in order to relieve transportation problems. An automobile will also facilitate your work within the community.

### Arriving:

When you arrive at the office of the Civil Rights group which will be your base of operation, do not expect to be received with open arms. There may be a brief period of social trial before you are accepted -- and this period may be extended indefinitely by any evidence of a paternalistic or authoritarian attitude on your part. Do not make the mistake of telling them how to "run things" on the basis of the experience gathered in your brief stay. It is also important that you seek an appointment with the local people in

the Civil Rights groups to discuss how you can repeat and possibly improve upon the services previously provided by the Committee members who have preceded you. If you are the first one in your area, it is important that the best ways of meeting the prevalent needs within the limitations of what the MCHR offers be worked out in this discussion. Clarity at this point can be extremely helpful later.

#### Housing:

The Civil Rights group with whom you are working will help you find accommodations. Your hosts will be people, who might be taking a risk housing you. They may or may not offer breakfast (and you should use your own discretion before accepting, as the food you eat may cause hardship for the rest of the family.)

In some areas, a customary payment has developed for housing and/or meals and you should check with the Civil Rights group on this. (Last summer in Mississippi, \$5.00 to \$10.00 per week was the usual practice.) Some families may refuse payment but will be happy to accept a gift.

We have chosen to live in the Negro community because we feel that this promotes communication and understanding between the local residents and the outside visitors. In addition to this, we feel it is insensitive to the generally impoverished Negro community to stay at an expensive motel in the white section of town. Your housing will be less adequate than that to which you are accustomed, but you will adapt to it rapidly. There usually is a toilet and running water, but there may or may not be a bath or shower. You will probably have to share a room with another member of the team, and there may be very little space for your belongings. Washing machines, television sets, and so on may be absent, but we can usually arrange to place our team members in a house with a telephone.

In your personal conduct do not flout community values and standards!

#### Offices:

If you are the first Committee member in an area, you will find it very advantageous to set up a physical base of operation. You may select and arrange it independently, or local leaders may find it for you. It should be either in or near the control area of the project where you can keep health materials. You will be supplied with a first-aid kit and health education materials. People should feel encouraged to come and talk to you.

#### Programs:

Which individual programs you work on or initiate will be determined in large part by the situation, but the following is a list of short-term programs which fall within the responsibility of the MCHR.

They fall under three headings:

1. Programs involving Civil Rights workers directly:

- a. Medical Presence

- Just presence of physicians and other health professional per-

sonnel has been found extraordinarily useful in allaying apprehensions about disease and injury in the Civil Rights workers -- there is a certain security in knowing that even if they do get hurt, professional help is available. There also seems to be a preventive aspect to medical presence -- actual violence seems to occur less often if it is known that medical professionals are present, particularly when Civil Rights workers are visited in jail at the time of imprisonment or thereafter regularly. In addition, medical personnel should anticipate violence in terms of specific projects and localities and to be present at the right place and at the right time. Thus, medical personnel should be in intimate contact with the Civil Rights organizations at all times, and to be aware of any immediate planned activities.

Committee members should act mainly as observers who are ready to provide emergency aid at demonstrations. Committee members should strictly avoid getting arrested and going to jail whenever possible.

b. Medical Care

Medical care as such is not practiced because of the lack, in most cases, of a local license. However, initial evaluation on a worker with a complaint is performed and simple home care advised if that is all that is deemed necessary. Should the evaluation reveal a condition needing active treatment, the worker will be referred to a cooperative local physician, usually Negro, or hospital. The Medical Committee makes the necessary arrangements if that action would appear to be helpful. The Southern Field Director is able to provide free medical care to Civil Rights workers at the Jackson office.

c. Hospital Expenses

The Medical Committee cannot pay for medical or hospital expenses. If a Civil Rights worker needs extensive care, he should be sent North where free care is available.

d. Emergency Coverage

The medical teams should always be available and keep in intimate contact by phone in order to go to a sick or injured Civil Rights worker or to cover demonstrations and other Civil Rights activities with emergency medical supplies. Remember, we as citizens, can legally administer first aid in an emergency situation.

e. Jail Visits

Prisoners are permitted to have the doctor of their choice visit them after arrest. We found this to be useful in both reassuring the prisoner and actually obtaining treatment for him should it be necessary, and encourage them to call us. It also serves to deter the police from brutality, because after this initial visit, any injury inflicted would be seen and reported by the M.D. This particular aspect of our program is to be performed only in the absence of a cooperative Negro physician, or at the request of the Negro physician, should he be too busy or unable to attend himself for any reason.

f. Health Education

Teams should conduct classes and workshops on hygiene, diet, first aid, sanitation, common illnesses, medico-legal matters and any other subjects requested by the workers and local community, both for their own benefit and so that they can use this knowledge to promote social change in local health facilities.

g. Supplies

We should attempt to stock project headquarters with basic first aid material, plus simple medications like A.S.A., maalox, kapectate and cough medicine. In addition to this, there should be a supply of health literature, both pamphlets for distribution and a few basic texts for reference purposes.

Rest and Relaxation

We should try and arrange facilities both local and in centers outside the project area where workers can retire to relax and rest. In conjunction with this, we can be involved in organizing recreational activities, which are especially designed to release tension.

i. Individual and Group Discussions

We should always be available to listen to problems of the Civil Rights workers, in a sympathetic and understanding way. Talking out a problem, either individually or as a group, will often go a long way to solving or diminishing the trouble. Common sense advice and counselling should be offered, but we can probably do more by listening patiently, in the avoidance or alleviation of serious physical and/or emotional symptoms, and at all times not pontificate or patronize.

j. Immunization

We should gather together any workers who, for one reason or another, did not get tetanus booster in the past 2-3 years and make arrangements to have these administered at the local public health department clinic, if necessary accompanying the group.

k. Physical Plant

We should be prepared to advise, and if necessary assist, the Civil Rights workers in the care and hygiene of the headquarters and freedom house. We should encourage efforts to paint and decorate for morale-boosting reasons without an authoritarian approach.

2 Programs Involving the Community

a. Educational Programs

We will set up an organized, complete course of instruction for the community covering a broad range of medical and health topics, to last the whole summer. We will make use of lectures, films, slides, pamphlets, diagrams and demonstrations. Some of the topics to be fully covered are:

Arthritis  
Baby Care  
Birth Control

Cancer  
Cigarette Smoking  
Common Childhood Illnesses

Diabetes	Post Natal Care
Heart Trouble	Practical Nursing
First Aid	Pre Natal Care
High Blood Pressure	Sanitation and Hygiene
Nutrition and Diet	Strokes
Pest Control	Tuberculosis

b. Information Program

All available and potentially available health facilities in the area covered will be investigated. A list of available facilities will be tabulated, duplicated, and distributed to the community, which will be firmly and unceasingly encouraged to use them. The facilities to be investigated are those operating under the State Public Health Service; the Federal Public Health Service; civil groups like the Salvation Army, Red Cross, Lions, Rotary, etc.; national disease-oriented groups like the American Diabetes Association, the American Cancer Society, etc. The community will be kept informed of all available programs and will be encouraged to utilize them fully; as well as encouraging them to write for visiting lecturers and educational materials as and when they are available.

c. Liaison with Health Professionals

The health professionals in the area are very busy and have often complained of "being bothered" by a steady stream of volunteers. We, therefore, feel that local doctors should only be contacted when absolutely necessary for professional matters. Other liaison with health professionals is better done by our full-time staff.

d. Practical Action Programs

Certain practical problems exist in specific areas, such as lack of washing facilities and inadequate garbage collection, and street cleaning squads of local volunteers can be organized to handle this-- showers can be built and garbage and streets cleared. Medical support and documentation should be given to local groups in their political programs to have local governments provide equal sanitation services, etc., to Negro communities.

e. Local Health and Welfare Departments

We should make special efforts to persuade or put pressure on these state agencies to provide facilities, such as a health education program, an adequate school health program including dental and eye care, psychological and other specialist consultant services, complete immunizations, birth control information and medication, pest control programs, etc. Perhaps most important of all is the need to bring pressure on the state for free medical care to those who need it.

f. Community Requests

In terms of the Office of Economic Opportunity, projects such as "Operation Headstart," "Job Corps," etc. should be serviced as time will allow and in accord with legal restrictions. Remember that our prime responsibility is to serve as the medical arm of the Civil Rights struggle.

g. Community Organization

MCIR volunteers should know more about community action and organiza-

tion programs and methods. The MCHR worker should be willing to put his skills at the disposal of the community. He should fit himself to the community needs, not expect the community to fit itself to his specialized skills. There must be freer and greater dialogue with community members. The MCHR worker must learn to listen and observe, rather than giving the impression that he can solve all the community problems in the one or two weeks that he will be there. His aim should be in developing community self help and self interest. He should learn about the existing community health and social facilities and be prepared to assist people in finding ways to use the resources at their disposal.

3. Programs Related to Federal Laws

Investigation and Documentation

All hospitals and other health facilities should be thoroughly investigated, particularly in the areas of staff employment practice, as well as the more subtle and obvious discriminatory practices almost invariably found in the patient facilities in the South. Simple complaint forms are available for local people to fill out, and are contained in your orientation packet. Complaints should be filed on all health facilities that are segregated or racially discriminating.

4. Records

Day-to-Day Diary

It has been found very helpful to keep a diary, not necessarily very detailed but enough to keep events fresh in your mind. You will often find things happening so quickly and you will meet so many people that it will be impossible to maintain it all in your head. Later, when you write your formal reports, you will be able to refer back to the diary to remind you of who, when, and where.

5. Formal Reports

Formal reports should be brought into the regional office at the end of the two-week stay in the field. They should be written carefully with respect for details, such as the spelling of a person's name, etc. They should be as brief as possible, and if at all possible, typed with several copies. All meetings, interviews, investigations, trips and anecdotes should be included and also character and biographical sketches of useful contacts. They can possibly be used for information, legal action, or publicity if they are accurate and clearly written.

6. Classified Lists of Telephone Numbers, Names and Addresses

In any local area, please collect data on all contacts, health facilities, civic clubs, charity groups, safe eating places, good stores, and anything else that may be of use to the following medical team. Make a copy of this so that you can leave the original in the local project and bring a copy back in with you to the regional office when your stay is over. In addition, please indicate the political structure of the community.

7. Maps

Try very hard to make maps of places difficult to reach; try to obtain

printed maps of the towns and areas that you cover and mark useful places. This data should be duplicated so that one copy can be brought into the regional office. When maps can be obtained, they will be made available to you.

### 3. Security

Though, as with other considerations, the degree of caution you exercise will be largely determined by local conditions, the following practices are almost invariably sound:

1. Never leave or enter the house in which you are staying when local white people are present to observe you. This will meaningfully reduce the probability of reprisals to your hosts.
2. Do not release the names, addresses and phone numbers of helpful local people indiscriminately, and never release such information to the police; try to memorize and destroy any copies. Remember also that you are not under any obligation to provide information to FBI agents or other federal officials
3. Never respond in kind to verbal provocation by local police or other citizenry.
4. When leaving the office or home, inform someone as to your destination and time of arrival and expected return. If the trip is some distance, call the office when you arrive and again when you leave. Never leave jail without calling the office.
5. Make no unnecessary trips, especially at night, and especially not through or in the white community.
6. Never travel alone (when it is avoidable).
7. When you travel by car to unfamiliar places, make sure you have adequate instructions, including a map. If you should become lost, ask directions in a Negro community only.
8. Your car should have adequate gas, oil and servicing to complete the trip you undertake.
9. For the rare night travel, the bulb in the ceiling light of your car should be removed to prevent illumination of passengers when car doors are opened.
10. If you are sitting in a parked car preparing to leave and the police approach, try to wait until they are gone before starting out.
11. Fill in several slips of paper with your name and phone numbers of the MCHR and other local Civil Rights groups. These can be given to local people when your arrest in the near future seems probable (i.e., while visiting injured local person, you see that two policemen are waiting by your car). In the event you are actually arrested, legal help can then be obtained before you are granted a phone call at the jail.



12. Make full reports of any harrassment. These reports should include details such as license plate numbers, descriptions of participants, etc.
13. Abide at all times by the security regulations of the Civil Rights organizations.

### Arrest

Arrest can follow the violation of either of two types of laws. The first type of law is that which applies equally to everyone. These laws, which may pertain to matters such as maximum automobile speed, etc., must be followed closely. Local police, who will soon learn to identify you, may seize upon any violation as an opportunity for your arrest. The second type of law is that which is designed only for people involved in Civil Rights. These latter laws are usually unconstitutional. Whether you obey these laws or not will depend upon your own judgment and the decision of Civil Rights lawyers working in the area who may or may not be seeking such a case.

The following rules should guide your behavior when you are apprehended by the police:

1. Do not go anywhere with a policeman unless you are under arrest.
2. If you are placed under arrest, you have a right to know what law you have violated and what the charge is against you. Try to find out immediately so as to avoid the charge being changed later to something more difficult to fight in court.
3. Ask to make a phone call for obtaining legal aid upon arrival at the police station. You do not have to tell anyone whom you wish to call.
4. Ask for a receipt itemizing everything taken from you by the police.
5. Don't worry if a lawyer doesn't come immediately. There are often many cases under way simultaneously.
6. Remember to get exact descriptions of the police, including their names.
7. Refuse to participate in any hearing without a lawyer. Do not accept a court-appointed lawyer, since in most cases he will not be helpful. Many Civil Rights lawyers are now available in the South and the appropriate telephone numbers will be made available to you.
8. If the judge tries you without a lawyer, stand mute, which means that you are not to make any plea of any sort.
9. Be cautious in your first hearing. What you say in the Justice of the Peace, Police, or municipal court, will most probably be used to strengthen the case against you in the trial de novo in the county court.
10. Ask the judge to inform you of your rights

Please inform the local MCHR Office immediately of any arrest, accident, violence or other emergency.