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federal vs. unitary → centralized  
 vs. fragmented power  
 → constitutional structure

### Shared Responsibilities in the Federal System

The delivery of mental health services provides a good example of the extent to which traditional patterns of governmental responsibility have been altered in recent decades and the extent to which public programs involve all levels of government. In this and other areas, federal government initiative and financial capacity have been increasingly brought to bear on what once were viewed as primarily, if not exclusively, state functions.

The framers of the United States Constitution created a federal system, dividing powers between national and state governments. The document restricted both levels of government and specifically listed the powers of the national government. By implication, later made explicit by the Tenth Amendment, state powers were general and residual. Some of the specifically listed powers of the national government were considerably less than precise in their implications. In the face of the proclamation that the Constitution and national legislation in pursuance thereof were to be the supreme law of the land, such clauses as those giving Congress the right to make all laws "necessary and proper" for carrying out the listed powers left rather unclear precisely what powers were reserved to the states. While some functions were assumed to be within the sphere of the national government and others were viewed as responsibilities of the states, the Constitution as written left open the possibility of considerable alterations

in the allocation of responsibility in response to changing practical considerations.

Most of the change in the division of responsibility between national and state governments has been in the direction of broadening the federal role. Professor William Riker (1964) has compared the degree of involvement of the national and state governments in the performance of a number of functions at four periods in the nation's history—1790, 1850, 1910, 1964. He concluded that, in general, there had been a progressive rise in the participation of the national government and that the increase had taken place at the expense of the states. The growing role of the federal government in respect to functions once viewed as primarily state responsibilities can be shown in another way as well. In 1902, national government grants to state and local governments amounted to about \$7 million, less than 1 percent of state-local expenditures. By 1932, federal aid to the states had grown to more than \$200 million, and in 1969 it was in excess of \$19 billion, over 16 percent of the direct general expenditures of state and local governments. Grants for health programs alone amounted to \$3.2 billion, some 37 percent of state and local expenditures in this area.

The activities receiving federal grant-in-aid funds are quite varied. Hospital construction, public-health services, highway construction, old-age assistance, aid to dependent children, agricultural extension work, public housing, urban renewal—these are only a few of the more prominent. Nor is the federal role limited to providing money. Some early federal grants of land and money were made with no conditions attached, other than the requirement that they be used for the purpose specified. However, beginning with the Weeks Act of 1911, which provided funds for forest-fire prevention, grants have ordinarily been made subject to additional conditions of two types. First, aid is conditioned upon the states meeting federally prescribed standards and submitting to federal supervision. Second, there is usually a matching requirement. The state or local government receiving the grant must contribute from its own funds some prescribed proportion of the total cost of the project or function.

The existence of extensive grant-in-aid programs and their

conditional nature enables the federal government to exercise a substantial amount of control over state and local activities. Theoretically, of course, a state is free to avoid federal standards and supervision by declining federal grant money. As a practical matter, however, there is ordinarily no real option. In the first place, the state's residents pay their share of federal taxes, with the result that if they do not meet the requirements for federal aid their money will be spent in states that do. Moreover, the costs of governmental services together with the fiscal realities of state and local governments make it all but impossible to decline available funds.

Many view the expanding activities and increasing supervisory role of the federal government with alarm, seeing it as a steady and rapid movement away from federalism in the direction of a unitary system. In reality, of course, despite the significantly expanded role of the federal government, the federal system is far from dead. Indeed, one effect of increased national government activities, especially during recent years, has been to further complicate the allocation of power and responsibility by increasing the ability of local governments to act independently of their states and encouraging them to do so.

In theory, the federal system comprises two levels of independent governmental authority. Although their responsibilities may overlap, the national government and the states are distinct and independent, neither level deriving its authority from the other. Local governments, on the other hand, are legally creatures of the state and have no independent status under the federal constitution. In fact, however, local governments have long enjoyed considerable independence although the degree varies widely both within and among the states. Federal programs such as urban renewal and public housing that make grant-in-aid funds available directly to local governments stimulate greater local independence in at least two major ways. The receipt of such federal funds reduces the localities' financial dependence upon state government. Further, prospects for obtaining federal funds increase the political leverage of local governments for the removal of state restrictions that interfere with meeting the conditions of the grant program.

As a consequence of these and other factors, governmental power and responsibility is currently shared by three distinct and significantly independent levels of government. A leading text on state and local government describes the resulting patterns of influence or control as follows (LeBlanc and Allensworth, 1971):

1. Power in or dominance by the national government
2. Power in or dominance by the state government
3. Power in or dominance by the local government
4. Some combination of the above, to include:
  - a. Both national and state governments exercising power
  - b. Both national and local governments exercising power
  - c. Both state and local governments exercising power
  - d. All three levels exercising power

Examples of each pattern are apparent but it is important to recognize that this description of power allocations is further complicated in several important ways. In the first place, when two or more levels of government exercise power in a particular functional area, they may administer programs jointly or separately. The provision of mental health services provides examples of both. While the Community Mental Health Centers Program involves the joint participation of federal, state, and local governments, state mental hospitals and Veterans Administration neuropsychiatric hospitals are programmatically distinct and separate. Whenever two or more levels of government are responsible for a single function, their relationship will involve both cooperation and competition; clearly, the problem of coordination as well as the means for coping with it will vary depending on whether the function is performed jointly or separately.