unmarried parents
A GUIDE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES IN PUBLIC WELFARE

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a guide for the development of services in public welfare

UNMARRIED PARENTS

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Basic objectives of child welfare services and the aid to dependent children's program are to strengthen family life and to assure children an opportunity for full growth and development. Both programs have a common obligation to make available to families and children the best possible services for meeting their needs.

In both public assistance and child welfare, personnel need a better understanding of the problems of unmarried parents and of how to work together in making services available to them.

Social welfare programs vary from State to State and from community to community. Their development is affected by the needs of people, the resources available, and the customs and attitudes of the community. Social agencies, both public and voluntary, have been established to help people with social problems. Women who bear children out of wedlock, and their children as well, have problems with which they need special help. This help may take the form of financial assistance, counseling, medical care, legal advice, vocational training, or aid in making and carrying out a good plan for the unmarried mother and her child.

Some of these unmarried women go to social agencies with their problems; sometimes they find the help they seek; sometimes doors are closed to them. Many do not seek help, either because they are afraid to ask for it or because they do not know that help is available. Some do not recognize the need for prenatal care or help in planning for themselves.

This material, prepared cooperatively by the Bureau of Public Assistance and the Children's Bureau, recognizes the importance of long-range goals for improving the social conditions that contribute to illegitimacy. The primary purpose of this pamphlet is to provide some guidelines for the use of public welfare agencies as they strive to develop or improve services for the unmarried parents who must turn to them today and tomorrow for help with their problems.

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THE REACTION of the public to the increase in illegitimate births during the last two decades is confused and often contradictory. All of this is reflected in the proposals made for dealing with this problem. Some are thoughtfully based on a constructive approach. Others seek primarily to punish unmarried mothers and particularly to oppress those who require financial assistance.

Leaders in our society, both civic and professional, need a greater understanding of the conditions and influences that contribute to births out of wedlock in our country. At the same time, the public must clarify some of the reasons for its concern about illegitimacy. Is it appalled by social, economic, and ethical problems associated with births out of wedlock? Or is the public distressed only when a child born out of wedlock requires public support? Does public concern spring from a desire to punish transgressors or to help people in difficulty?

Any attempt to eradicate the problem of births out of wedlock by a single drastic solution is doomed to failure and often creates more problems than it solves. The threat of punishment, for example, may
lead unmarried mothers to conceal their pregnancy or possibly to re-
sort to an abortion. Mothers and their unborn children may, as a
consequence, suffer severely from malnutrition and debilitation. More
deaths among the babies, more cases of infanticide, abandonment, neg-
lect, and hiding of children; more “giving away” of children and in-
discriminate placement in adoption are other outcomes that society
may reap when punishment replaces constructive help to unmarried
parents.

Community planning is essential at State and local levels if
casework services are to be provided to the unmarried mother and
father and adequate plans made for medical services to mother and
child. This planning must also be directed to the broad social,
economic, psychological, and ethical problems of which births out of
wedlock are an end product. In the long run, no one benefits from
shortcut methods that avoid basic difficulties, that disregard respect
for human lives, or that deny the concept of the intrinsic worth of the
individual and his right to help with his problems.

The State department of public welfare is responsible for en-
couraging the development of a network of services throughout the
State that assures every unmarried mother the help she requires. The
department has the obligation to encourage all agencies, public and
voluntary, to reexamine policies that tend to rule out rather than to
accept for service unmarried pregnant women who need help. It
also has the function of interpreting to the public what services are
needed.

A large proportion of the mothers who conceive out of wedlock
do not receive casework services and many do not receive prenatal
care. Frequently the mother with children in the home fears further
financial loss to her children if she seeks help for herself for the birth
of her baby out of wedlock. State and local departments of health
and welfare have a responsibility for reaching out and involving the
unmarried pregnant woman in health and welfare services through
education, interpretation, and case finding. This responsibility ex-
tends to the unmarried mother living in the most rural parts of the
State as well as those living in the congested sections of big cities.

Does the community have an overall plan to encourage or permit
adolescent girls who drop out of school because of premarital preg-
nancy to reenroll after the baby’s birth? Does the community provide
sufficient facilities for the unmarried mother so that she may go to a
maternity home, a foster home, or remain in her own home depending
on what is best for her? Is marriage entered into as a means of escape?

The State agency will want to direct its attention specifically to
the impact of residence restrictions upon services to unmarried par-
ents. Many unmarried girls become panicky when pregnancy is
suspected or confirmed. In an effort to hide their condition, they leave their homes and go to a strange community. Is it reasonable to refuse health and social services to these women simply because they have attempted to solve one part of their problem by moving to another community?

If births out of wedlock are to be reduced substantially, communities, groups, and agencies concerned about unmarried parents will have to broaden their approach and exert greater effort in working toward:

1. Providing unmarried mothers with easier access to adequate financial assistance, medical care, and social services.
2. Expanding health and social work personnel in communities of special need.
3. Conducting research into the basic problems contributing to births out of wedlock and interpreting these findings to public officials and citizen groups.
4. Improving the economic and social status of men in minority groups in order to make it possible for them to maintain a stable family life.
5. Affording youth with an earlier opportunity to become participating members of the community with special attention given to children and youth who are socially and economically deprived.
6. Providing better housing for low-income families including those receiving public assistance.
7. Expanding group services to provide parents in socially deprived families with opportunities for family life education, vocational training, preparation for employment, and other informal educational experiences to aid them in their efforts to meet society's expectations and to improve their living standards.

In addition, all professional workers who deal with social problems need an opportunity to increase their knowledge of family dynamics and of sound methods for helping families to improve social functioning.

These are long-range goals—and will take a considerable stretch of time to realize. The following activities, however, represent immediate steps a State welfare agency can take now to improve its services to unmarried parents:

1. Providing a structure for statewide leadership.—A statewide advisory committee to work with an interdepartmental council is an effective means for bringing together the best informed leadership in the State to study the problems of unmarried parents, to stimulate action in their behalf, and to expand and coordinate public and voluntary services.

Within the State agency, child welfare and public assistance staff must work continuously together on these problems and services.

A primary responsibility of State agency leadership is to interpret to the public the kind of legislation that will provide and support the services required.
2. Issuing policy statements and program materials.—A statement describing the responsibilities of the State for the protection and care of unmarried mothers and their children can help to clarify the functions of the State agency for its staff and for the public. This statement should include the philosophy upon which these responsibilities are based with references to statutes and judicial decisions, the rights and responsibilities of unmarried parents, the rights of the child, and the obligation of the State to guarantee these rights.

Policy materials for State and local agency use should cover the full range of resources and services now available to unmarried parents through the public welfare agency. As a means of implementing State policy, a staff committee would be assigned the task of preparing program materials that describe and illustrate the activities of the caseworkers in these services. Since the largest number of unmarried mothers served by the agency are those who keep their children, program materials should deal especially with the kinds of problems these mothers experience and describe what workers can do to help them obtain medical services, an adequate income, improve living conditions, and care for their children. These materials should also describe the resources available in the community when the mother and child should not remain together.

Financial assistance from the public agency should be sufficient in amount to provide good physical care for the unmarried mother and her child: that is, food for good nutrition, a safe and decent place to live, clothing, personal incidentals, the cost of maternity services, the care of other children while the mother is at clinic or hospital, transportation, household supplies and maintenance, fees incidental to education, employment, or vocational training when needed as a part of the casework plan. The agency’s policy on financial assistance may require further development to include special grants to cover the special circumstances involved in helping unmarried parents, to permit grants in excess of regular agency maximums and to guide staff in the use of general assistance, aid to dependent children, child welfare, and special funds in combinations to plan successfully for the care of an unmarried parent. Policies that include the unborn child in the aid to dependent children payment and the mother in payments for medical care are also sound steps in program development.

3. Identifying roadblocks to services is another important task for the State agency staff.—Roadblocks such as delays in acting on applications, failure to include the out-of-wedlock child in the public assistance case count and payment, requiring the release of the child for adoption as a condition for helping the mother, or requiring the mother to take legal action against the putative father or to place the child voluntarily in a relative’s home as a condition for receiving financial assistance, suitable home or other restrictive requirements. Once the roadblocks are known, decisions can be reached as to actions necessary to remove them.
4. **Using staff to the best advantage.**—Clarifying for each staff member his role in services to unmarried parents is essential, including heads of divisions, consultants, field representatives, hearing officers, local agency directors, casework supervisors, caseworkers, telephone operators, and receptionists.

To this end, recruitment activities need to be increased to secure a larger number of professionally qualified supervisors and caseworkers. Working conditions and compensation plans require evaluation in an effort to facilitate these recruitment objectives. Through educational grants, staff members now employed by the agency should be encouraged to plan for additional professional education on a full-time basis.

Wherever feasible, unmarried parent cases should be assigned to caseworkers who are professionally qualified and their caseloads should be kept small enough to permit work on an intensive basis. In communities where special workers are not possible, consultants from the State office ought to be readily available and local agencies should be encouraged to request consultation in work with unmarried parents.

In the training program of the agency, services to unmarried parents should be emphasized and this emphasis sustained until all supervisors and caseworkers are thoroughly conversant with their role in these services.

5. **Assisting the local agency to strengthen its services.**—Through discussion of agency purposes and the content of services, the field representative and consultants can help the local agency director to create a climate within the agency that makes it easier for the unmarried mother to come to the agency and for the staff to respond to her request for help.

To facilitate this, reception and intake workers have to understand the services the unmarried mother requires and the ways they can assist her in the beginning use of these services.

Seminars and workshops for nurses and caseworkers to discuss their respective roles and ways of their working together day by day can do much to help assure maternity services and social services for every unmarried mother.

As a means of securing thoughtful citizen participation in the agency's work with unmarried mothers, the local agency can be encouraged to develop a plan for inviting outstanding men and women to work with the casework staff in making these services available. In urban areas, a women's committee for this purpose might be formed by representatives of the principal women's organizations, such as the Auxiliary to the Medical Society, the American Association of University Women, the Junior League, business and professional women's organizations, federations of churchwomen and of women's clubs. In smaller communities, a committee might be formed of representative women in the community who are known to be concerned and interested in the problems of all the women and children in the community.

6. **Encouraging community planning activities.**—Local agencies need to be encouraged in participating in the work of community planning councils and where necessary to initiate community planning projects to
find better ways of offering services to unmarried parents, eliminating duplication, closing gaps, and improving communication. Too often the unmarried mother who keeps her child is left to make her own way in the community without followup medical services or a plan for herself and her child. If she places her baby in adoption, the mother may also be left without followup medical services or a plan for herself. This is particularly true if she decides not to return to her home community. Through community planning, the hospital, clinic, visiting nurse, family service and child placing agencies, schools, and public welfare agency in the community can be brought into close cooperative working relationships and thus assure that no unmarried mother goes without needed services.

7. Sponsoring education, interpretation, and case finding.—Pamphlets that list and describe the medical and social agencies offering services to unmarried pregnant women with the agency address, telephone number, and name of the person to contact should be made available cooperatively with professional associations. These pamphlets are especially helpful to clergymen, doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, and school officials. Youth-serving organizations can be encouraged to include information in their programs about maternity and welfare services. Talks by agency staff before school, church, civic and professional groups, articles in newspapers and national magazines that appeal particularly to women and to youth are useful means of interpreting the services needed and encouraging the unmarried mother to seek help early in her pregnancy.

The 1960 White House Conference on Children and Youth in the following recommendation}\(^1\) calls for national concern and interest in the development of services:

"A national program should be instituted to explain the needs of children born out of wedlock; the unmarried mother should have available, from public and voluntary agencies, medical, psychiatric, casework, group work, legal, and financial services, vocational guidance, education, living arrangements, and early planning for the baby; services should be extended also to the biological father and to the parents of minor unmarried parents. Restrictions on public assistance and other services to, and particularly residence requirements for, needy children born out of wedlock and their mothers, should be removed. Research is recommended into the causes of the rising rate of illegitimacy, and into the cultural patterns into which many illegitimate children are born, which conflict with the values of society; and as part of a program of prevention, an effort should also be made to identify youngsters who are likely to become unmarried parents."

Perhaps the time is not too far distant when as a Nation we will see births out of wedlock in terms of their deep significance for our society—and move ahead on a broad front to meet this challenge to our ingenuity and vision for measures insuring a stable, satisfying life for children and their parents.

II | THE PROBLEM:
BIRTHS
OUT OF
WEDLOCK

BIRTHS OUT OF WEDLOCK have occurred since the beginning of time despite their lack of social acceptance in many cultures—and have often been viewed as unique and peculiar to the time. In the United States, public concern has mounted as illegitimacy has increased.

In our culture, the family is the core institution through which society is perpetuated. Civic leaders speaking at the 1960 White House Conference on Children and Youth—educators, physicians, social workers, clergymen, leaders in public life, and other citizens—re-affirmed the concept that the home constitutes the major stabilizing and salutary force in the lives of children. Births out of wedlock pose a threat to this concept of the family.

The question is often asked as to whether or not a higher illegitimacy rate reflects a real change in social mores. The trend today seems to be toward increased freedom and lessened adult supervision for adolescents. At the same time, movies glamorize sex; magazine articles and illustrations rouse the sex interests of the teenager who is highly susceptible. Automobiles are used for steady dating at an early age. All these practices would seem to imply an acceptance in our society of freedom in sex relations outside of marriage. Yet when an unmarried woman gives birth to a baby, the public expresses its concern and disapproval. Permissiveness in sex relations in a society that theoretically reserves such privileges for married couples brings doubt, confusion, and conflict to youth at a time when they may be struggling to resolve conflicts within themselves and to identify with ideals.

Dimensions and Nature of Problem

Illegitimate births do not loom large in terms of their numbers in our society. But in terms of being symptomatic of grave social ills, they must loom large in our planning.
Illegitimate births are estimated to have increased from 3.8 to 4.7 percent of all live births between 1940 and 1957. The ratio of illegitimate live births to 1,000 total live births rose from 47.4 in 1957 to 49.6 in 1958. The number of unmarried mothers 19 years of age and under totaled 83,800, while the number of these mothers over 20 reached 124,000. These figures are estimates and are based on live births only; they do not include children born to married women by men other than their husbands, the number of abortions, or births that are inaccurately reported as legitimate.

Most unmarried mothers and their children are not recipients of aid to dependent children. In November 1958, the children in families receiving aid to dependent children comprised about 13 percent of the estimated number of children under 18 whose births were reported as illegitimate.

The unmarried mother cannot be stereotyped. Even with the advantages of a good home and loving parents, some unmarried girls become pregnant. Nor is the amount of education a factor in incidence of illegitimacy. While the exact number of high school and college “dropouts” due to pregnancy of unmarried students is unknown, educators are becoming alarmed by their increased incidence. Women who conceive outside of marriage come from every walk of life—the educated and uneducated, the intelligent and the dull, those with professional status, the rich and the poor.

Illegitimate births of children to women who were once married often involve unique problems both social and psychological. Sometimes the legal status of these women is not clear, even to themselves. The loss of their marriage partner and the expectation that they will manage their lives independently often lead to confusion and resentment. In some cases, an impediment to a new marriage may exist; or financial circumstances may prohibit them from “straightening out” their legal status. As a conscious or unconscious defense against problems thrust upon them, some of these women drift into a relationship with a new partner. Although not married, the couple may view themselves and their children as a stable family unit. Such unions are subject to many social stresses and because of their very nature receive few protections in our social system.

A high proportion of out-of-wedlock births occurs within the nonwhite population. This is often interpreted as a cultural phe...
nomenon without any consideration of the many complex factors that play into it. For example, prolonged economic deprivation is frequently linked with social problems. Limited opportunities for housing, education, or employment mean lowered ability to meet everyday pressures in life. The differences in illegitimacy rates between the white and nonwhite groups are substantially reduced or disappear when comparisons are made across socioeconomic lines rather than by ethnic groups.

The relative proportion of Indians and Negroes in the lowest income group is high. In certain sections of the country, this is also true of other minority groups, i.e., the Spanish-American in the west and the Puerto Rican in the east. Negroes, perhaps more than any other group, are subject to discrimination. As a result, they are limited in their access to public and semiprivate institutions, facilities, and services that would help them to accommodate to the middle class mores of American life.

In various parts of the country, the mother or grandmother in many Negro families has been the dominant member for several generations. Perhaps one reason for this lies in the fact that the male members of the family have had little opportunity to earn enough to establish a household or maintain a permanent family. Many Negro and Indian families experience extreme stress as they move from rural to urban areas in their search for economic opportunity. Reports on the suffering and deprivation among migrant families include a high although undetermined incidence of illegitimacy. Unaccompanied adolescents moving from camp to camp often lack supervision and live in a permissive environment.

The public has shown special concern about the increase in the number of women who bear more than one child out of wedlock. Birth registrations do not show whether or not a mother has had prior births out of wedlock. The order of a child’s birth to a mother is recorded. “Even for those mothers who report their second or third births as illegitimate, not all of their previous deliveries occurred out of wedlock.”

In some urban communities, families with several children born out of wedlock are such heavy consumers of community resources that the public gets an exaggerated impression of the total number involved.

**Conditions Contributing to the Problem**

While it is impossible to know precisely all the causes contributing to illegitimacy, certain factors are often associated with it.

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Many studies show that certain environmental, socioeconomic, and psychological problems are frequently concomitant with births out of wedlock. Faulty parent-child relationships frequently enter into the basic reason for many out-of-wedlock pregnancies. The attitudes of parents toward a daughter and their warmth and acceptance of her have a great deal to do with her ability to withstand many pressures in the growing up process. When the family is basically secure, interpersonal relationships within the family are strong. Sibling rivalry can be a constructive or destructive experience within family life depending upon the help and understanding given by the parents. The family that offers children love, understanding, and acceptance is less likely to develop such social ills as illegitimacy.

Instability of parents and a harmful social environment often leave scars upon the child's personality as he is growing up. As a result, social ills, including illegitimacy, may introduce new problems and strains that further weaken family life.

Crowded living conditions that deprive, depersonalize, and shame the individual undoubtedly contribute to the problem of illegitimacy. When a family of 7 or 8 people are crowded into a single room to live, eat, and sleep, it is impossible for any member of the family to function adequately. Social problems are accentuated both when families reside in delapidated housing in distressed rural areas or when they move into cities and must accept intolerable living quarters.

Inadequacy of food, clothing, or enough money for even simple essentials poses a problem for boys and girls and their parents. For many of these families, medical and dental services are unattainable. Some pregnant unmarried women who come to maternity homes or social agencies are found to be debilitated as a result of such conditions. Frequently they have had no dental care and some have diseases associated with poor nutrition.

Lack of supervised recreational facilities within a community or within a neighborhood, inadequate supervision of children of working mothers, hostility toward a particular race, attempts to keep a group of people apart from those who have had greater opportunities for self-improvement—all these factors are provocative of illegitimacy.

Some of the adolescents who participated in the forums at the 1960 White House Conference on Children and Youth expressed their concern about the pernicious aspects of some of today's books, magazines, radio and TV programs. They stressed the subsequent influence of such matter upon values, behavior, and development of social responsibility in youth. Noteworthy in this connection is a recommendation of the Conference that research be undertaken to determine the impact of spectator entertainment; to determine the influence of books, magazines, and newspapers upon children and youth; to determine,
through study supported by Federal financing, how these media can develop talents, integrity, and social responsibility.  

Mobility brings problems, too. A young girl who moves about in search of economic opportunity may have difficulty in maintaining herself. She may live alone; she may find it hard to make friends; and, lacking emotional satisfactions that normally come from family and close friends, she may be more vulnerable to the pressures and enticements in her environment.

When families move to new communities, sometimes parents give less attention to their teenage children because of pressures of establishing their new home. Under these circumstances, the normal problems of adjustment that beset these boys and girls in relation to the new school, friends, and neighborhood may become more stressful.

Migrant families in particular have difficulty in meeting the needs of their children. The adolescent who moves from one makeshift living arrangement to another has little opportunity to make friends, to participate in community life, or to plan for his own future.

The circumstances under which these children and young people live thwart their hopes for a stable family life.

The dimensions of the problem of illegitimacy cannot be validly measured nor can solutions be worked out unless resources are developed. Sometimes information is lacking as to the importance of giving service, and often interpretation is not given to the public regarding the special problems faced by unmarried parents or information regarding existing services.

Births out of wedlock involve many persons—the unmarried pregnant woman, the father, the families of both parents, the child, and the community. Full services for unmarried parents have been provided in some communities, partial assistance has been given in some, little or nothing has been developed in many others. Over the years, different solutions have been sought—varying from those meeting the whole problem of illegitimacy to those providing a solution for a particular girl who becomes panicky and tries to run away from home when she learns of her pregnancy. A look at some of these efforts may provide a base for concerted planning on the part of the State agency.

III | SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS

Obviously State agencies are in no way responsible for the existence of social problems such as illegitimacy. They must, however, search for ways of meeting this problem and for gathering and using information that will help in understanding its underlying causes. Over the years, a number of drastic solutions have been suggested to solve the problem of birth out of wedlock—solutions that in themselves show society’s confusion as to goals.

Confusion regarding society’s goals

Some of these solutions are only too familiar—cutting off financial help to mothers and children; construing pregnancy out of wedlock as a criminal offense; advocating sterilization on either a voluntary or compulsory basis. The public’s reaction to birth out of wedlock has ranged from sympathy for a girl because she has been exploited to outrage because the unmarried mother violated cultural mores.

When viewed as a moral problem, the search for a solution to births out of wedlock was usually sought in reform movements. Around the turn of the century, various religious groups set up homes for wayward girls in an effort to “save” them.

At various times, the concept has been accepted that punishment in itself would correct this social problem. A belief that punishment of the unmarried mother serves as a deterrent for others has had a measure of popularity despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

The complexities of the problem and the attitudes of relatives, friends, neighbors, and the total community toward the unmarried mother affect or shape the “search” undertaken. A close scrutiny is needed in every community of customs, policies, and laws which influence or are influenced by attitudes toward women who bear children out of wedlock.

Bills introduced into a number of State legislatures would prohibit or limit financial assistance to the unmarried mother. Their
The ostensible purpose is to eliminate dependency and save the taxpayer's money. Often this kind of action has its roots in a moralistic attitude or desire to punish a particular group. Such legislative goals seem inconsistent with any expectation that the unmarried mother can eventually achieve some measure of personal adjustment.

The number of abortions performed each year can only be estimated but experience has shown that this course has been taken by many unmarried pregnant women rather than face the inevitable stigma in completing their term and presenting "evidence" of their behavior. Some women will resort to infanticide, abandonment, or selling the baby.

Another effort to solve the problem of pregnancy out of wedlock has been the practice of forcing the parties to marry. Under such circumstances these couples, many of whom are youngsters themselves, are faced with additional problems that often take on overtones of tragedy. Again the attempted solution often compounds the initial problem and the couple winds up in divorce.

As more people have gained insight into the problems associated with births out of wedlock, society's search has turned toward solutions based on help to the individuals involved and to measures that are preventive in nature.

In an effort to strengthen services to parents and children, the two advisory councils appointed by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, at the request of the Congress, examined the problems and issues involved.

The report of the Advisory Council on Child Welfare Services reinforces the concept that child welfare agencies are an instrument for carrying out society's responsibility in the prevention and treatment of social ills which affect children. In meeting the problems of families and children, specific services must be provided. Among them are those extended to unmarried mothers.

The Advisory Council on Public Assistance disagreed with prevalent criticism of the aid to dependent children program, that holds the program encourages unstable family life and unmarried parenthood, by stating: "Rather than the ADC program's being a major cause of social evils, we regard it as a reflection of their existence, just as public assistance programs as a whole mirror, not cause . . .


weaknesses in family life and other gaps and inadequacies of our social and economic institutions.

"We believe that the primary criterion for financial assistance to a needy child should be his need. . . . we feel strongly that no more should a needy child be punished for his parents' actions, than he should be deprived of financial aid because his able-bodied mother and father lawfully and lovingly together try to maintain a home for him."

A successful search for solutions to the problem of illegitimacy requires joint activities of State health and welfare departments and cooperation among all the social work resources in the community offering medical and casework services to the unmarried mother.

Research activities

As recommendations based on research findings are evaluated and synthesized, those community groups concerned with the problem of births out of wedlock are forced to rethink their goals. Recent surveys by State and Federal agencies have done much to bring the problem of births out of wedlock into focus and pinpoint the circumstances contributing to this problem. Research projects underway by national organizations and at several universities go directly to youth and their families in an effort to understand the influences that shape their behavior. Studies by councils of social agencies attempt to learn why available community resources are not used by the unmarried mother. Case studies by public agencies show clearly what public welfare must do to help unmarried parents. These studies also show the urgent need for preventive measures—such as an income sufficient to assure the family of food and good nutrition and a safe and decent place in which to live.

National organizations

Simultaneously with these research efforts, several national organizations with program responsibilities in this area are seeking ways to improve the quality of their services to unmarried parents. The Child Welfare League of America, the Salvation Army, and the National Conference of Catholic Charities have each issued statements on standards of services.

The National Association on Service to Unmarried Parents brings together representatives of agencies and national organizations to consider ways of improving services. The program sponsored each year by this organization at the National Conference on Social Welfare brings new developments on services to the attention of social workers and interested citizens. The National Association on Service to Unmarried Parents reproduces these papers and issues a directory of

See references beginning page 56.

11 See references beginning page 56.

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maternity homes.\textsuperscript{12} The Florence Crittenton Homes Association has broadened its program to encourage services to the girl who lives in the community as well as the girl who enters the maternity home.

The American Public Welfare Association has issued policy statements that support the full development in public welfare of casework services to families and to children. This organization and the Family Service Association call attention of their members to new developments in services to unmarried parents through their publications and their regional and national meetings.

\textsuperscript{12} \textsc{Maternity Homes Directory}. White Plains, N.Y.: National Association on Service to Unmarried Parents, 1960. 168 pp.
IV RESPONSIBILITIES OF STATE AGENCIES

BY LAW AND TRADITION, State departments of public welfare have special concerns for all families and children who are disadvantaged socially and economically. This concern finds expression in a variety of efforts to assure to all persons full and equal opportunity for family life, healthy growth, and maximum realization of potentials. Among the most disadvantaged children are those of unmarried parents. Consequently these departments have specific responsibilities for seeing that basic social services required by unmarried parents are available to them and that the community understands the nature of constructive and preventive approaches to their problem.

Clarifying Objectives

A clear statement of purposes and objectives of the State agency and its responsibilities for the care and protection of unmarried parents and their children can do much to dispel confusion and uncertainty in local communities. Such a statement is useful to staff in both public assistance and child welfare and to the public by describing the services the agency has available and identifying the units within the agency that offer these services.

Laws Provide the Base for Services

In most States, a framework of legislation makes possible the provision of services to unmarried parents and regulates community efforts in their behalf. Although not identical nor comprehensive in every State, this basic legislation consists of statutes that establish the following:

- Duties and responsibilities of State and local departments of public welfare and of public health.
- Programs for the care and protection of children; adoption, foster care; and other child welfare services.
Public assistance to include monthly grants, payments for medical care, and social services to parents or relatives for the care of needy children in their own homes, and for community planning in their behalf.

Public health services, including maternal and child health services; vital statistics, school health services.

Authority for the development and maintenance of standards for agencies offering services to unmarried parents and their children; for inspection, licensing and consultative services to maternity homes, other group care facilities and for foster family homes.

Procedures for the reporting of illegitimate births or expectant births to State departments of public welfare.

Procedures for the establishment of paternity, legitimation, birth registration and amendments, guardianship, custody of children, and responsibility for support.

Resources of the Federal Government are available to States under the Social Security Act to help finance programs of child welfare services, maternal and child health, and aid to dependent children as basic public services available to meet the needs of mothers and children, including unmarried mothers and their children. These programs, under the Social Security Administration in the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, provide for Federal financial participation in the costs of financial assistance, medical care and administration, including staff salaries for social services.

The Public Health Service in this Department also administers programs which offer Federal funds to State agencies. Many public health activities, such as research, medical and hospital service, and public health nursing, are of importance to unmarried parents and their children.

Knowledge gives meaning to functions

The State agency draws on its knowledge of the special needs of unmarried parents as it:

- Develops standards, policy and guide materials for services;
- Provides supervision and consultation to local agencies;
- Cooperates with other departments and agencies, professions, public officials, and citizen groups;
- Participates in community planning to assure adequate resources for unmarried parents;
- Conducts research into contributing causes and ways of helping;
- Interprets all aspects of the problem to the public.

In order to develop and carry these responsibilities, the State agency must progressively formulate policies, adopt methods appropriate to their implementation, establish staff responsibilities, and plan administratively for the day-by-day supervision of program operation.
The Services Required

The child of the unmarried mother is in need of protection and an opportunity to grow up in the family home best suited to his needs.

The unmarried mother needs access to a social agency for help in planning. She needs good medical care. She may need financial assistance and help with living arrangements, planning for continued education, special training and employment. She may need help with personal relationships, especially with those involving the father of the child and members of her own family. Medical care and health services should include a complete medical examination as soon as pregnancy is determined, prenatal care, including laboratory and other tests, health education, any indicated medical treatment, confinement, and postnatal care.

Living arrangements may include maternity or foster family care or help in making the mother's own home a safe and more satisfactory place in which to live.

Financial assistance and planning should cover, as needed, the cost of maintenance; that is, food for good nutrition, safe and decent housing, clothing, personal incidentals, payments for medical care, and fees incidental to social and vocational rehabilitation.

Legal services may be needed by the mother in connection with residence, support, paternity proceedings, legitimation, or termination of parental rights.

The father should, if possible, have access to the same social agency as the mother so his interests and responsibilities may be explored and established. He may need legal services and social services to deal with his own problems.

If the mother decides to keep her child, she may need financial assistance for basic maintenance, medical services for herself and child, help with living arrangements, personal relationships, education, child care, job preparation and placement, and recreation.

Coordinating Within the Agency

The staff of public assistance and child welfare within the State department of welfare must work together continuously on the problems of unmarried parents. With the goal of strengthening agency services to unmarried parents, the State office staff of these two programs should jointly: (1) review and revise policy, standards, and guide materials that relate to unmarried parents; (2) plan for the use of consultants; (3) evaluate the staff development programs; (4) develop working relationships with other agencies and professions; (5) recommend community planning activities for prevention

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and for services; and (6) prepare materials to interpret services to the public and to special groups.

Coordination is facilitated for all units of the agency when the responsibilities for services to unmarried parents are discussed at regular meetings of State office executive personnel, at joint meetings of field representatives and consultants, and when staff groups made up of representatives of the different agency units are given specific assignments to develop plans and materials to implement these responsibilities.

By working in ways such as these, the resources of public assistance and child welfare services become fully available to unmarried parents and their children.

Cooperating With Other State Agencies

An interdepartmental committee or council which meets at regular intervals provides a useful structure for communication and cooperation among all agencies of State government with programs that reach unmarried parents.

In the State department of health, the divisions of maternal and child health, public health nursing, hospitals and institutions, licensing and inspection of group care facilities, and the office of vital statistics administer programs that reach unmarried mothers. The State department of education is faced with the problem of out-of-wedlock pregnancies among school children, teenage marriages, and the continued or special education of the youngsters involved. School health services and family life education are related areas of interest. Other departments of State government such as corrections and institutions and the attorney general are concerned with the problem of unmarried parents.

State advisory committees

In some States, a statewide citizens committee has been formed to study the problems of unmarried parents. A committee or commission of this nature may be created by action of the governor, the legislature, or appointed by the State department of welfare. The membership usually includes public officials, professional persons, representatives from the public and private agencies working with the problems, and outstanding citizens. Such committees are usually concerned with the incidence of illegitimacy within the State, the conditions associated with and contributing to this problem, and the availability of needed services. They should be authorized to study the problem and to recommend measures that are preventive and that will improve services. The authorization for such a committee should provide for the staff services to carry out its charge.
Protecting the Rights and Responsibilities of Unmarried Parents and Child

In each State, the rights and responsibilities of out-of-wedlock children and their parents are developed through legislation and case law. The State agency performs a primary service by charting these rights and responsibilities and interpreting them accurately to local agencies and the public.

The unmarried mother usually has the same rights and reciprocal responsibilities concerning her child as married parents. Different laws, however, apply in certain situations as when the unmarried mother is a minor.

The father's responsibility to support his child born out of wedlock is recognized by law.

Every child has a right to a proper home, moral and religious training, education, health service, wholesome community environment, and employment resources as needed.

In most States, certain actions are necessary to bestow inheritance rights. However, in two States Arizona and Oregon the illegitimate child has the right to inherit from both natural parents.

The State has an obligation in all of its activities to respect and to secure these rights of both the parents and child.

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OVER THE YEARS, States have enacted laws creating regulatory and standard-setting authorities to protect the interests of the public. When children, unmarried mothers, the sick, the disabled, older persons and others with a special problem require care away from their own homes, the public wants to be assured that their lives are safeguarded and that they receive essential services. These basic protections are secured through laws that place upon a designated State agency—usually the State health or welfare department—responsibilities for promulgating the requirements which must be met by agencies and institutions offering such care, for inspecting and issuing licenses, and for providing consultative services that are educational in nature. The statutes also empower these State authorities to help bring action against those agencies and institutions that do not meet minimum requirements.

Standard Setting

In developing standards for the care of unmarried mothers and their children away from home, each State conveys its philosophy of help and protection to unmarried mothers. These standards should be drawn up by the designated State agency with focus on their ultimate objectives—to be a constructive force in helping unmarried mothers develop their potentials and adjust to society’s expectation.

The development of these standards requires the cooperation of doctors, nurses, hospital administrators, attorneys, school counselors, psychologists, clergymen, and social workers in medical, family and child welfare agencies, group workers, psychiatric and community organization specialists. This process takes time, thought, and concerted effort and cannot be done quickly.

A number of States have developed standards through a statewide committee which included representatives of social agencies and
professionals interested in services to unmarried mothers. Many agencies in these States took steps to meet the standards during the time the committee was at work. When agencies and institutions are directly involved in the process of discussing and developing sound standards of practice, action to improve services often occurs before minimum standards have been issued by the State agency. Such standards are of direct value to the agencies guided by them. Indirectly they benefit all agencies giving auxiliary help including those individuals and agencies in a position to refer unmarried mothers to agencies and institutions giving direct care.

**Foster family homes**

The State agency develops standards for foster family homes for unmarried mothers as well as children requiring such placement. These standards will include consideration of personal qualities of foster parents, family composition, health, religion, age, income, physical standards including space for sleeping, eating, and recreation.14

These foster homes are selected through a process of careful study and understanding of the family’s potentials and ability to relate to adolescents. In addition to their maturity, warmth, and flexibility, these foster parents will need additional understanding of the unmarried mother’s special problems and be able to accept her.15

Provision must be made for supervising the unmarried mother and for service to the foster parents so they may gain in their understanding of her, receive counseling and supportive help in coping with frustrations as they occur—all this in order to offer maximum help to the girl. Specific arrangements for medical care of the girl (prepartal, confinement, and postpartal) must be made. The foster mother should be aware of the physical needs of the unmarried pregnant girl and be able to carry out medical recommendations. Special planning will be required regarding schooling, recreational activities, and participation in family activities.

The caseworker with experience in child welfare should have special skills in homefinding, studying, selecting, and supervising the foster family home for the unmarried mother. The State agency interprets the special qualifications needed within these homes and helps the agencies providing the direct service to understand and meet the requirements.


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Maternity homes

Standards for maternity homes have been developed and issued in a number of States. These statements include requirements and suggested recommendations in certain specified areas such as organization, physical plant, staffing, personnel policies, program.

An adequate discussion of standards for group care facilities would require much more space than this section permits. The following material is only illustrative of some of the matters that should be given consideration in developing standards.

Organization and administration.—The materials on standards developed by the State agency usually include requirements for incorporation and recommend that the bylaws of the agency provide for a governing board with rotating membership and responsibility for policymaking, financing, budgeting, recordkeeping and reporting, public relations, and program planning. The board of directors as well as the staff must understand the standards prescribed by the State and take the steps necessary to assure that these standards are maintained. The organization and administration of the maternity home need to be clearly delineated in order that the community, including the persons served, the board of directors, and the staff will understand the agency functions and plan of operation.

Physical plant.—The building should be conveniently located and accessible to hospitals, clinics, recreation, shopping districts, and transportation. The facilities for sleeping, bathing, cooking, etc., must meet sanitary inspection standards and measure up to the health codes in the particular community or State. Safety devices and measures to eliminate fire or other hazards are essential.

Staffing and personnel policies.—The staffing pattern is planned in relation to the size of the home and whether or not medical care is offered within the home or through the use of community resources. In general, however, staff include the following personnel: a director, housemother, nurse, caseworker, cook, housekeeper, and others who

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21 STATEMENT OF THE SALVATION ARMY WITH REFERENCE TO THE PROBLEM OF ILLEGITIMACY. New York: The Salvation Army, 1960. 3 pp. (February.) (Mimeographed.)

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carry responsibility for housekeeping, cooking, or maintenance; also
physicians, including a medical director. Additional medical per-
sonnel are required if medical service is given in the residence.

The personnel policies of the agency provide for a description
of each position in terms of qualifications and duties. The requisites
for each position are such as to assure good standards of performance
and meet the requirements of the State department of welfare or
health. The casework and group work staff are required to have
special professional training and understand individual or group dyna-
ics. Additional qualifications for all staff include some knowl-
edge and understanding of the special problems encountered by the
unmarried mother and an attitude of acceptance of unmarried mothers.

In deciding on staffing pattern, how the responsibilities of social
workers and medical personnel from other agencies in the community
dovetail with those of the maternity home staff should be clarified.
Rather than duplicating services, a staffing pattern should enrich the
program of the home and clearly designate responsibility for helping
the individual girl to come to grips with her specific problems and de-
cisions.

Salaries of all staff members should be comparable to those
given in similar institutional settings. Because of the importance of
obtaining and keeping a high-caliber staff, reasonable salary scales
with various steps for increments and opportunities for advancement
should be set up. Consideration must be given to cost of living and
other local factors that would influence the salary schedule.

Policy in regard to personnel practices needs to be thoughtfully
developed, written in clear-cut terms, and geared to meet the needs of
staff and, in turn, the welfare of the residents of the home.

Program.—The philosophy developed in the provision of mater-
nity home services is vital to its success. The needs of an individual
girl must be stressed and the program should be treatment-focused.
A maternity home is no longer considered a place in which a girl
hides. Rather the home is a place where she lives during her preg-
nancy and profits by group living in a situation that offers sufficient
protection, care, and treatment to help her develop her potentialities.

Flexibility in program planning is important. A program
must be geared to meet the physical, emotional, and intellectual needs
of the girls for whom care is offered. It cannot be set up without
regard to the age range, interests, and capacities of the girls accepted
for care.

The recommended standards should call for a written descrip-
tion of the services offered or made available by the home, including
medical, financial, legal, religious, counseling, psychological and psy-
chiatric services, casework service, vocational guidance, schooling and

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recreation. A range of services must be available even though every
girl does not require all these services.

Program planning includes admission and discharge policies
which are flexible in relation to needs.

Agreements should be entered into with outside facilities for
services to be rendered and responsibilities assigned for the coordina-
tion of all aspects of the program. Agreements or contracts with
hospitals, clinics, child guidance clinics, and other facilities need to be
clearly stated. Policies regarding every phase of the program should
be developed for the best interest of the unmarried pregnant girls
and should be evaluated periodically to determine that they are serv-
ing these purposes.

Education.—Since a number of girls in residence will be of
school age, plans for courses, provision of teachers, credits, and related
areas should be worked out with the local board of education. In
many instances, arrangements can be made for the basic school courses
to be offered for credit.28

Care of infants.—Additional specific licensing requirements
must be developed by both the State departments of health and welfare
for the maternity homes that operate a nursery for temporary care of
the newborn infants. In developing a plan for their care, all the es-
sential protections for infants, both around medical and psychological
aspects of the services, must be taken into account. Included in this
overall responsibility for their care is planning for medical and
nursing care, feeding, clothing, sleeping, as well as plans for dis-
charge. Special staff is needed to care for infants. Mothers who
plan to relinquish their children should not be required to care for
babies in the nursery.

Licensing

The licensing division of a State department of health or wel-
fare acts as society's agent in assuring the unmarried mother of at
least minimum protections in the care offered by the agency, foster
home, or maternity home. The agency has a right to refuse to license
any organization that does not meet minimum requirements. The
right to inspect the facility to ascertain that requirements are being
met must be explicitly stated in the law.

The department having authority to license an agency or
facility should keep the maternity home or agency fully informed
regarding requirements or any anticipated change. In many in-

28 Derbick, Lawrence G.: ELIMINATION OF ROADBLOCKS IN EDUCATING SCHOOL
AGE UNMARRIED MOTHERS. Speech delivered at annual meeting of Florence Crittenton
(Mimeographed.)
stances, sufficient time is offered the organization to work out plans to
effect changes. Certain requirements for safety and protection require
immediate action. The attitude on the part of the licensing worker
affects the success or failure of the licensing program. A desire to
help the agency to bring up its standards with concrete suggestions for
doing so is more likely to result in action.

Depending on whether or not the licensing authority is given
to the State public welfare department or the State department of
health, the State welfare department has a function either to set
standards or to participate in their development. Cooperative work is
essential between the two State departments regardless of which one
is given the major responsibility for licensing or certifying agencies
or institutions.

The statement of minimum requirements should be published in
the form of a guide available for ready reference by personnel of
the agencies concerned with services for unmarried parents, including
the State and local departments of health and welfare. The standards
should be written clearly and should differentiate between require-
ments and recommendations. Definitions should be succinct, concise,
and clear.

In attempting to meet its responsibility for licensing agencies
and institutions serving unmarried parents, the State agency works
cooperatively with many governmental and voluntary agencies and
organizations. The standards or regulations must be appraised and
reevaluated to determine their validity in relation to changing needs
and acquisition of new knowledge about the problems of the persons
served.

The standards for use in licensing should include basic prin-
ciples and philosophy of their services, their goals and purposes, the
authority for licensing with reference to specific sections in the code,
definitions, terms, conditions, requirements and procedures for a first
license, for the maintenance of standards under the license, and for a
relicense.

Consultative Services

Consultation provides a method of helping the operating agen-
cies and institutions to attain the quality of services required for licens-
ing. Consultative services represent a valuable tool for maintaining a
sustained cooperative relationship.

The State agency's authority for providing consultation must
be included in the legislation that places upon it the responsibility for
standard setting and licensing. The availability and use of consulta-
tion helps agencies providing services to unmarried parents to keep
abreast of new concepts and improvements in services. The under-
standing and relationships formed during the process of developing standards and licensing and the continuous evaluation of services of individual agencies and institutions make consultation from the State agency a stimulating and profitable experience for the agencies and for communities in which they serve.
VI  DIRECT SERVICES
FOR UNMARRIED
PARENTS

THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE in most States is responsible for the development of policy and materials that serve as guides to local public agencies in administering direct services to unmarried parents and their children. In order to do this effectively, this department should issue statements describing the range of services available by the agency through child welfare and public assistance, and the content of the services offered. Obviously, the particular combination of services required will vary in individual situations.

Reaching the Unmarried Mother

The unmarried pregnant woman often turns to a friend or relative for help with her problem and then goes to a physician for an examination to confirm her pregnancy. In many instances, she seeks no further services until the time of her confinement. This may be due to lack of financial resources, to lack of services in the community, to lack of knowledge about them, or to the unmarried mother's fears.

Her inability to face the facts of her pregnancy or her desire to conceal it as long as possible may deter the unmarried woman from seeking help. She may feel hesitant about approaching the agency for help or about telling the worker of her condition for fear she may be criticized or denied financial assistance. She may fear giving information to the agency about herself, her family, or the father because she is uncertain how this information will be used. If the mother is to reach a social agency for help in planning her own and her baby's care, the public and especially physicians must have information as to the social and health services available in the community and understand their usefulness to the mother and her child.
Help begins at intake

In many communities, the local department of public welfare is the only available social agency. For this reason, the State agency should develop and maintain an open-door policy under which any unmarried mother may receive agency help for purposes of planning.

At intake, the staff of the agency, receptionist, caseworker, and others, must convey to the unmarried mother their genuine concern for her, their acceptance of her as a person, their willingness and ability to be of help to her. Respect, courtesy, privacy, consideration for the individual, and promptness are essential qualities of both intake and continuing services. Because requests for help are often urgent, the caseworker tries to learn the immediate concerns of the unmarried mother and discusses such matters as living arrangements, medical care, and financial need with her. The worker helps the mother to use the resources immediately required and establishes at least a tentative plan for continued casework and other agency services.

Use of the Casework Method

The experienced caseworker is a skilled counselor who helps the unmarried mother in such a way that she can come through this experience strengthened for future living. From the very beginning, the caseworker is concerned with the practical aspects of the problem and with the mother's feelings.

To be helpful in planning, the worker tries to understand the unmarried mother, her particular situation, and how to use the available resources. She offers the unmarried mother acceptance, kindness, and understanding without making a moral judgment of her. The caseworker, as she helps the unmarried mother to understand her own feelings and to plan, learns what kind of person the mother is and the significant things that have happened to her in the past that have a bearing on her present situation.

During pregnancy or shortly after the baby is born, each unmarried mother must face the question of whether or not she will keep her child. Social workers, doctors, nurses, and others should be wary against concluding that because an unmarried mother has said initially that she wants to give up her child or to keep him that this represents her real wishes or the plan that should be followed. She may say she wants to give up her baby because she knows of no alternative or is functioning on a strictly emotional basis.

The unmarried mother’s feelings and needs must be acknowledged, understood, and dealt with in a satisfactory way before any wise or lasting plan can be entered into by the mother for herself or for her child.
Helping the unmarried mother through the use of the casework method involves:

1. A diagnostic evaluation of the capacities of the mother for meeting the problems imposed by her pregnancy or out-of-wedlock child with regard for her rights; the capacities and strengths of the father for meeting the problem imposed by his relationship to the unmarried mother and the child; the factors in the mother's and father's environment that help or hinder them in meeting present problems; the problems that can be anticipated in the foreseeable future.

2. Formulation of a plan by the unmarried mother and the caseworker for a course of action that will help solve the problems with which the mother must cope, that protects her and her child, and that can be carried out in the face of the realities of the mother's situation and her inner resources.

3. Carrying out the plan. The caseworker, to meet the varying needs of the individual unmarried mother, uses selectively and in a coordinate way the resources and services within the community as well as those provided by her agency.

Adequate Assistance, Promptly Given

The unmarried mother's most compelling need may be for income to meet living costs. To provide this service, agency standards always have to take into account the full cost of her physical requirements. The worker can plan individually when agency standards are adequate to provide basic maintenance and cover special circumstances that go beyond usual agency maximums. In meeting individual financial needs, the worker usually has access to general assistance funds, aid to dependent children, child welfare and other special funds. The amount of the grant should always be adequate to provide either good quality of care away from home, or good physical care in the unmarried mother's own home. In some States, the costs of the mother's medical care are met by public assistance. Policy that counts the unborn child as a member of the family is another way of providing assistance more adequately.

The State agency field representative is responsible for seeing that State policies and standards are fully understood by local staffs. Delays in acting upon applications by unmarried parents can be equivalent to denials of assistance. The field representative will want to know whether these delays reflect local agency attitudes toward the unmarried parent or whether workers do not know what the agency expects of them or how to go about helping. The field representative


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should be equally alert to decisions that omit the child born out of wedlock from the grant.

**Choice of Living Arrangement**

Another important agency service is helping the unmarried mother choose the living arrangement that is best suited to her needs and stage of personal development. The State agency's materials should clarify for caseworkers the availability and advantages of different kinds of living arrangements.

**Own home**

The expectant mother who has made a decision to keep her child is likely to remain in her own home during pregnancy. The outcome of this plan will depend upon a number of factors, such as whether or not the home or family situation have contributed to the unmarried mother’s problems; the family’s ability to give her support and encouragement during pregnancy; acceptance of the baby without resentment; respect for the mother’s right to her child without need to appropriate her role; and the community’s reactions to the out-of-wedlock child. Unfortunately, in some communities, lack of facilities or service has made it necessary for girls either to leave the State or to remain in an unsatisfactory home situation.

The woman who has an established home with children in her care also may require financial assistance for living costs and a plan for the care of the children at time of confinement. She may need the agency’s help in locating satisfactory living arrangements or in improving the place where she lives.

The woman who has lived away from her family and has been self-supporting may need help to continue to live independently in her own living quarters during pregnancy. In many instances, she can continue employment until the latter part of pregnancy.

**Foster family home**

A carefully selected and supervised foster family home should be available for the younger adolescent or the older girl who needs the seclusion of a private home. Foster family care has much to offer the immature girl in need of mothering and supervision; also for the person whose behavior would be disrupting in a group living situation.20

The division of child welfare should carry responsibility for foster family care of the unmarried mother and for planning with her,


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her family, and the foster parents. The agency's established boarding rates and standards apply to this use of foster care. The local agency should be able to use available homes throughout the State.

**Group living facilities**

Residential group care can offer the unmarried mother security and protection in a regulated environment, confidentiality, the possibility of concealing her pregnancy, and a diversified program to meet her emotional, physical, educational, recreational, and spiritual needs. The modern maternity home is an important part of an overall community program and offers group living opportunities which promote treatment goals and facilitate personal growth.\(^{21}\)

**Medical and Hospital Care**

To assure the unmarried mother of the medical and hospital care and help in planning that she requires, the State public welfare agency must have close working relationships with public health agencies, the medical profession, and hospitals. In developing working relationships with medical groups, the State agency involves both the divisions of child welfare and public assistance and works in cooperation with the State department of public health.

The physician to whom the unmarried woman first turns must have information readily available as to the resources in the community if he is to assume responsibility for directing her to a social agency that can help her with planning.

**Standards of medical care**

The unmarried mother, like all pregnant women, should have good medical care. Professional societies, such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists\(^{22}\) have established standards of practice, and the American Academy of Pediatrics\(^{23}\) has developed standards and recommendations for the hospital care of newborn infants. Public agencies have drawn on these standards. The State department of public health through its program of maternal and child health has developed standards for maternity health services. Medical and health care that meets acceptable professional standards should be made available to the unmarried mother regardless of financial ability, race, religion, or legal residence. The basic


\(^{22}\) MANUAL OF STANDARDS IN OBSTETRIC-GYNECOLOGIC PRACTICE. Chicago: The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 1959. 86 pp. (March.)


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requirements for complete maternity care have been professionally
developed to include:

- Regular and continuous prenatal care, including diagnosis and treatment
  of all medical problems.
- Dental examination and treatment.
- Medical care at time of delivery including hospitalization.
- Nursing supervision.
- Postpartum care of mother.
- Pediatric care of baby.
- Nutrition and health instruction.
- Medical social work services in hospital or clinic.
- Followup medical treatment for the mother and baby.

The total hospital and clinic staff, including nurses and medical
social workers, plays a part in helping the unmarried mother to come
through her pregnancy successfully, receive postpartum care, and
reestablish herself in the community.

From a psychological standpoint, the attitudes of those who
provide service make it possible for the unmarried mother to return
for her appointments. If she is made to think that she is worthless,
she is unlikely to continue with medical care. A nonjudgmental atti-
dude on the part of the doctors, nurses, and social workers helps the
unmarried mother accept and use the skilled services she needs.

Role of agency caseworker

The caseworker in the public welfare agency should be alert
to the need of each individual for early and continuing prenatal care,
be able to interpret its importance to the unmarried mother, and to
give her the support and encouragement she needs to secure and
continue medical care. This means knowing the health resources in
the community including the intake policies of hospitals and clinics.
The worker interprets to the hospital the welfare agency's policies
and procedures and works with the social service department of the
hospital or clinic, wherever one exists.

All too frequently the unmarried mother is unaware of the
importance of receiving good medical care because her parents before
her lacked information or interest in the medical needs of pregnant
women. Sometimes she postpones going to a doctor or clinic because
of her fear of disclosure; sometimes she denies her pregnancy; some-
times she hopes for or plans an abortion. The caseworker should
know this mother and try in every possible way to make health serv-
ices available to her. Lack of care through fear or neglect on the
mother's part or negligence on the part of the community will increase
the risk to her life and that of her child.

Instructions on referrals should indicate the information the
caseworker is to include in the social study to enable the doctor and
public health nurse to understand the patient and be prepared to meet special needs.

In smaller communities, the caseworker, public health nurse, and private physician often carry the full responsibility for professional services. Good communication among these three persons is essential to insure that adequate services are available. The doctor and nurse need to know enough about the mother's situation to understand her special needs, feelings, attitudes, and problems. The nurse and doctor should likewise keep the caseworker informed of health or other problems as they arise so that the caseworker will be more helpful in planning.

Legal Services and Considerations

The agency serving unmarried parents must consider the legal services which may be necessary to protect the child born out of wedlock and to safeguard the rights and responsibilities of the child's natural parents. Legal protection depends largely upon an adequate framework of legislation and utilization of legal and judicial procedures. Working relationships should be developed and maintained with the legal profession to assure that an attorney is available to unmarried parents for legal services as needed. State agency material descriptive of legal services should be prepared in cooperation with or reviewed by legal counsel.

This material should contain descriptions of the additional legal safeguards needed when the unmarried mother is a minor; also when a married woman wishes to place in adoption her child conceived through someone other than her husband.

Workers must know that because of the presumption of legitimacy, a child of a married woman, regardless of paternity, generally has the status of a legitimate child until there has been an adjudication to the contrary. Serious errors are sometimes made by agency workers through classifying these children as illegitimate.

Agency materials in regard to unmarried parents should include the legal rights and responsibilities of the mother, the legal status of the father, the rights of the child, and the legal services most frequently needed. Reference should be included to sections in the agency's manual that describe the legal aspects of adoption, such as the right to place a child for adoption, termination of parental rights, consents to adoption, and the adoption hearing and decree.


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Legal counsel for mother

The adult unmarried mother has certain specific rights and duties in relation to her child. Usually she has parental rights and responsibilities for her child comparable to those of a married couple. She should have legal counsel, as appropriate for consultation and advice in regard to these rights and obligations, and to be represented by counsel in legal actions.

When adoption is considered for the child, the attorney often has an opportunity to counsel with the unmarried mother in regard to the legal consequences of a decision to keep or to give up her child.

Legitimation

At times, legal services are needed in regard to legitimation. There should be legislative provision for the legitimation of the child born out of wedlock by methods which safeguard the privacy of all parties involved and which delineate the rights and responsibilities of both parents and the child.

The right of the child to inherit through the father as well as the mother is extremely important when social security and veterans benefits are under consideration. The Social Security Administration has compiled a list of guides regarding the inheritance rights of illegitimate children in the several States.55

Support agreements

A legal problem with which welfare agencies are concerned, and which needs much improvement in practice, has to do with financial support. Consideration of support for the child immediately introduces questions related to paternity of the child and the child's legal status. Once paternity is established, liability for support relates also to the mother and includes costs of confinement, various medical expenses, and maintenance for the mother. To facilitate enforcement, voluntary support agreements with putative fathers should be reviewed through court action.

Acknowledgment of paternity

The Commissioners on Uniform State Laws56 have recommended that legislation should provide for action to establish paternity as a civil rather than a criminal procedure and should also permit a father to appear before a court without trial to acknowledge paternity and to agree to provide for the support of his child.

References

Adapting Services to Meet Differences in Unmarried Parents

Unmarried parents differ in their characteristics. As workers recognize this, they are asking for program materials to guide them in selecting the services, methods, and techniques that will be most useful for the individual parent. For example, working with the adolescent unmarried mother is different from working with the woman who is mature. Her behavior, health problems, and legal status require different consideration. The variations in the legal and social circumstances of the older unmarried mother must be known if she is to be helped with her problems. For years, the approach by agencies to unmarried fathers has been largely legal. Work with the father also calls for a differential approach. He may be an adolescent or an older man already married and with a family of children.

The unmarried father

The father of an out-of-wedlock child may be of any culture or economic class.7 He may be young and still in school; he may be an older man; he may be single or married. He may not see his relationship with the unmarried mother as leading to marriage. He may run away or deny responsibility as a way of defending himself against accusing and punitive attitudes. He may be worried and anxious, concerned as to the reaction of members of his own family or others closely associated with him.

The unmarried father should have an opportunity to sort out his own feelings, to make his own interests and views known, and to understand his responsibilities. The father should have the opportunity to consider how much responsibility, including support of the child, he is able to assume. Agency efforts that attempt to get financial support only through a court order may result in losing the father's help in other ways. Wherever possible, casework methods should be used to help the father to participate in planning and to accept financial responsibility.

In most States, agency policies in regard to the unmarried father are lacking or inadequate. Policy should be developed to guide agency workers in their approach to the unmarried father. The purpose of this policy should be to enable the agency to know and understand the father's situation and, when indicated, to involve him constructively in planning and in decisions. The methods used, casework and legal, should be based on a philosophy of help rather

than punishment. The father's age, education, health, employment skills, earning capacity, marital status, legal responsibilities he may have, are all factors that must be considered.

The agency should have background information about the child's origin for use in adoption services and to help the children who later want to know about their natural fathers. A social worker's personal interview with the putative father is the most effective means of getting the information needed.

To the sensitive interviewer, the father sometimes reveals his own problems. This awareness of the particular problems of unmarried fathers is leading agencies to offer services to them. The adolescent unmarried father especially should have an opportunity for casework help.

**The adolescent unmarried mother**

The social worker, doctor, or nurse must recognize that helping the adolescent differs from helping the older pregnant woman. Usually the adolescent is emotionally immature, confused, vacillating, and ambivalent. Her personality formation may be fluid with identifications and sense of identity less stable and fixed. Her behavior may reflect rebellion and lack of trust. The agency may need to make available to staff its knowledge about adolescents, their characteristic behavior, and how to work with them.

When health care is planned, special problems of growth and nutrition in the young girl who is pregnant must be taken into account. Unless her physical needs, including the required diet during this period, are met, the outcome of the pregnancy may have serious untoward consequences for her and for her baby.

The caseworker helps the girl to resolve some of her conflicts about her parents, gives her assistance in arranging for absence from school and later to return to school if this seems wise, to handle termination or temporary absence from a job, and to give help in relation to the putative father. The best arrangement for temporary living must be worked out. If relatives are hostile and rejecting of the girl, the caseworker must understand how their attitudes affect the girl's welfare and plans. The adolescent will need help to gain an insight into her own difficulties and develop a feeling of self-esteem.

The teenage mother is legally a minor and her parents are still responsible for her. Because she is a minor, her parents or guardian must give their consent for medical care, anesthesia, surgery or delivery, and in most States to adoption of the baby.

The girl's motivation for having a child out of wedlock may be closely tied to her feelings about her parents and their behavior toward her. Interviews with the parents of the girl are essential if
the dynamics of the situation are to be understood and the parents are to be engaged in responsible planning. If the girl has not told her parents about her pregnancy, the caseworker should discuss with her the importance of confiding in at least one parent and give her the support she needs in order to do so. When diagnostically indicated, agency services should be available to help the parents understand and change their relationship to their daughter.

Most social agencies believe that a minor should not be compelled to surrender her child against her will because of her status as a minor. In some situations, however, legal action to terminate her rights may be necessary to serve her best interests and that of the child.

Occasionally a child, 12–15 years of age, who receives aid to dependent children becomes pregnant. This situation requires careful study by the agency to organize and sustain the services required and to learn why efforts had not been made earlier under the aid to dependent children program to improve the family, neighborhood, or other social situations in order to reduce the conditions which jeopardized the child. Such a case illustrates the importance of adequate standards of financial assistance and of workloads which permit the public assistance worker to know the families receiving assistance and the circumstances under which they live. The public assistance worker must have sufficient time to help parents improve their home and family situation and to deal with problems that interfere with the development and guidance of their children.

Not infrequently an older unmarried adolescent, 16–17 years of age, who is out of school and perhaps working applies for financial assistance for herself and her child. The caseworker involves responsible relatives as well as the girl in an effort to provide a good living arrangement.

Many public assistance workers have not understood what is expected of them when an unmarried mother presents a plan that is essentially unsound for herself or her child. Some workers have tended to back away from these situations and to do nothing to help. Sometimes two or more unmarried mothers find living quarters in the same rooming house or building, preferring the acceptance and comfort they afford each other to the uncertainties of establishing themselves in more desirable neighborhoods. The worker needs guidance in evaluating the living arrangement of the adolescent unmarried mother who has undertaken the care of her child.

Some boards of education have plans for the continued education of the school girl who becomes pregnant.28 A special teacher is

often assigned to the maternity home or is available to the girl in her own home to continue her studies. After the baby is born, some girls have transferred to another school or have completed their high school education at night school.

In one community, an experimental project provides day nursery facilities in connection with vocational education and instructions in child care for the mother.

Girls in smaller communities who wish to finish high school especially need counseling and encouragement. State and local departments of welfare, working with education, can often develop a plan that enables these girls to finish school.

Older unmarried mothers

Often the older woman who bears a child out of wedlock does not recognize a need for social services or even medical care. Some older women work throughout their pregnancy and are reluctant to take time off for medical services or social services, or if at home, say they cannot arrange for the care of their other children.

If the mother is receiving public assistance, she may be reluctant to tell the caseworker for fear the agency will discontinue assistance or insist that the mother bring charges against the putative father.

One study of 520 unmarried mothers living in a large urban area found that those on public assistance received the poorest prenatal care of any unwed mothers. A majority of these mothers were 25 years of age or older and already had at least one child born out of wedlock. The older unmarried mother with children in her care needs the caseworker's support and encouragement to secure and continue medical care. When discussing arrangements with her, the worker must make sure the mother knows clinic hours, has transportation, has someone to care for her children, will make and keep her appointments. If the mother seems immobilized, the caseworker must be more active in support of the mother—make appointments for her, providing homemaker services or for the purchase of child care.

The public assistance agency, in the process of determining eligibility, has a responsibility to know the total situation and to use every appropriate resource in helping the unmarried mother.

The older unmarried mother who keeps her child in all likelihood will need financial assistance, medical care, and casework services. She may need vocational counseling, training, and employment serv-

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A POSITIVE APPROACH TO UNMARRIED MOTHERS: Parental-Vocational Educational Program. Second Progress Report. Philadelphia: Berean Institute, 1960. 9 pp. (November.) (Mimeographed.)

ices, and leisure-time interests, spiritual guidance, and the support of
the church of her faith. An understanding and sympathetic attitude
on the part of the caseworker does not mean condoning births out of
wedlock. Rather it means helping with particular problems.

Public officials and others in the community often protest vig-
ously when a mother has two or more children born out of wedlock.
A close examination, case by case, usually reveals loss of self-esteem
on the part of these mothers through deprivation or abuse, impaired
intelligence, emotional disturbances caused by prolonged stress, and
legal or religious barriers to marriage. The public's interest is better
served through combinations of social, medical, and legal services that
offer support and protection and improve the social functioning of the
family—and thus avoid situations leading to repeated pregnancy.

Public welfare workers have often accepted without further
exploration a mother's statement that each of her children has a dif-
ferent father, or that she does not know the identity of the father.
Sometimes such a statement is made to protect a continuing relation-
ship with one man. Most unmarried mothers on ADC want help
with their problems and when given the opportunity will discuss their
hopes with a sympathetic worker and take steps that will improve
living conditions for themselves and their children.24

The married woman who has children born outside her mar-
riage has a different combination of problems. If the mother has a
husband, the legal presumption of paternity on his part exists even
though the circumstances are such that he could not be the father of
the child. Unless he has been judicially declared not to be the father,
his consent to adoption or relinquishment of paternity rights is needed.

Many families coming to the attention of the department of
public welfare have been formed without a legal marriage. The
father and mother are accepted as a married couple in the community
and at the father's place of work. Births of children are registered
as legitimate without question as to their paternity. Consensual
marriage has been commonplace among people who live in isolated
areas. For some of these couples, a legal barrier to marriage exists.
The woman whose husband has deserted may sometimes enter into
another relationship as a defense against her social problems. Lack
of money may stand in the way of her securing a divorce.

Some poorly educated men and women for years have con-
sidered their former marriage as legally dissolved. They may have
in their possession a notarized statement which they believe represents
a certificate of divorce, when in fact there is no record even of a peti-
tion for divorce. All of these families are subject to as much stress

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24 FACTS, FALLACIES AND FUTURE: A Study of the Aid to Dependent Children Pro-
(p. 23.) (Processed.)

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as those legally formed. When disruption occurs, the consequences may be more serious, especially if the mother and children are legally denied veterans and social insurance benefits from the father. It is important for the worker to know the marital situation, to understand the feelings of the mother and father for each other, their attitude about marriage, and the economic consequences of their situation to the mother and children.

Sometimes it is the financial situation of the father that affects the question of remarriage. He may have other children for whom he is legally responsible. His earning capacity may be insufficient to maintain any combination of his, her, and their children on a continuing basis. The policy of the agency should encourage workers to help parents clarify their marital status, remove wherever possible the barriers to legal marriage, and to discuss the steps necessary to acknowledge paternity or to legitimate the children.

**Teamwork**

In order to coordinate services, the public welfare worker must be skilled in the use of the casework method and the resources of his agency and also be able to participate in a team relationship with doctors, nurses, lawyers, school personnel, the clergy, and others whose professional services are required. Teamwork becomes effective as a result of a thoughtful, knowledgeable approach, with sufficient time for communication, for planning, and for followup on each aspect of the agreed upon plan. Agency administrative direction, policy, consultation, supervision, staff development, and community planning can all combine to create a climate for establishing methods that make effective teamwork a reality.
THE STATE AGENCY, in order to improve its program of direct services to unmarried parents, must focus on the administrative planning essential to implementing and insuring program content and purposes.

Revisions in Policy and Procedures

As a first step in this planning, the policies and procedures of the agency should be clearly formulated in a manner consistent with the objectives of the agency. These should be made available to the staff in the agency's manual. In order to accomplish these objectives, the agency must be able and willing to undertake the task of reviewing related policies and procedures and to revise them when necessary to support agency objectives. In the day-to-day process of agency operation, caseworkers, supervisors, consultants, and field representatives can identify the policies and procedures that run counter to specific goals. When inconsistencies are based in law, administrative leadership, community interpretation, and planning will be required to assure revision of legislation or enactment of proposals that are consistent and constructive.

Information and Interpretation

Reliable information as to what social service and medical resources are available should reach the community in a number of specific directions. Directories or lists of the community agencies that offer services to unmarried parents should be in the hands of professional persons—doctors, lawyers, clergy, social workers, nurses, and educators. Both voluntary and public agencies should share in the preparation of these directories. Informational leaflets and personal interpretation of available services to community groups are also essential.
The State agency will base its program of education on the principles that: (1) every unmarried mother should have access to social services and (2) every pregnant woman should receive prenatal services. In planning a program of interpretation, every effort should be made to identify and to overcome attitudes that stand in the way of the unmarried mother reaching a reliable source of help. In this regard, the attitudes of the staff in the various community resources are influential in determining whether or not a person seeks out or continues with services. The treatment received by an unmarried mother will color what she recommends to a friend in a similar situation. An analysis of complaints and criticisms also helps the agency to detect misinformation and misunderstandings that require study and action if improvements are to occur.

**Interagency Cooperation**

Specific planning on the part of the public agency is always needed if interagency and interprofessional cooperation is to be established and maintained. Cordial and effective working relationships do not just happen. Staff at all agency levels contribute to their development. The steps officially taken by State and local agencies—group discussions, written agreements and understandings, the working out of referral procedures and guides for cooperation—are for the purpose of helping the caseworker, nurse, doctor, lawyer, and other practitioners to organize and sustain individualized services without delay or difficulty. State agency staff who have responsibilities for administrative planning, policy development, staff development, field services, consultation, and supervision contribute to these important working relationships. In serving unmarried parents, the public welfare agency must give special consideration to its working relationships with hospitals, clinics, physicians, health workers, maternity homes, voluntary family and child-serving agencies, lawyers, and the courts.

**Staffing**

Both child welfare and public assistance administrators are giving attention to staffing patterns and workload standards. As a consequence, some State agencies are in a good position to measure and estimate the size and competency of staff required to administer the social service programs.

In the face of severe shortages of professionally trained social workers, State departments of public welfare must exert great effort to secure and retain fully qualified professional staff. All supervisory positions in the social work series require graduate professional
education. The staffing pattern must also provide for caseworkers who are qualified to offer specialized services. Staff with special interest in work with unmarried mothers should have the opportunity to secure additional education. The combined staffs of public assistance and child welfare must be able to offer the services needed by the unmarried mother who relinquishes her child and for the mother who keeps her child.

State agency supervisors or consultants with special knowledge of the services required for unmarried parents should participate in program development and be readily accessible to local agencies. Since the caseworker carries the primary role in planning with the unmarried parent, every effort must be made by administration to fill these positions with professionally qualified persons and to reduce workloads enough to enable the worker to individualize the persons served and to give adequate attention to each aspect of case planning. The staffing pattern should also permit continuity and integration of agency services by one caseworker.

In urban offices, a variety of staffing patterns are found for services to unmarried parents. Some urban agencies have special workers at intake and in district offices; some have a central unit under specialized supervision.

Every State agency under its present staffing pattern can facilitate program development in such ways as the following:

1. By securing more information about unmarried mothers, fathers, and their children, and circumstances contributing to illegitimacy;
2. By interpreting these data to the public;
3. By clarifying responsibilities and developing relationships between public assistance and child welfare;
4. By defining the responsibilities of each staff member realistically;
5. By engaging in demonstrations of services directly and in cooperation with other agencies;
6. By making recommendations to legislature for positive and constructive legislation; and
7. By assigning responsibility on the State level for planning a statewide approach to development of services.

Staff Development

The rising incidence of births out of wedlock underlines the importance of the State agency formulating a program of staff development focused specifically upon its services to unmarried parents. Inservice training would focus especially on the role of the caseworker and the supervisor in these services. The workers should know the legal and policy base for services, the professional content of services,
and be able to resolve any conflicts they may have about helping unmarried parents.

Staff development in this area utilizes the regularly established methods of teaching within the agency, i.e., seminars and workshops, case conferences and group discussions, professional literature, the selective use of case materials, films, tape recordings, interagency and interprofessional meetings, etc.

Through staff development the agency over a period of time provides opportunities for the caseworker to understand his role in activities, such as:

1. Developing a relationship that offers acceptance, a noncritical approach, and support in planning.
2. Planning in regard to—
   a. Living arrangements.
   b. Medical examination and services.
   c. Maintenance and medical costs.
   d. Legal services related to acknowledgment of paternity, legitimation, support agreements, termination of parental rights, residence, adoption, or other services requiring legal action.
3. Helping the mother with her relationship to the father of the child and to other members of her family.
4. Developing a good social plan for the mother that will strengthen her for the future.
5. Reaching a decision in regard to plans for the child so that he will receive all necessary protections whether kept or placed by the mother.
6. Establishing and maintaining cooperative working relationships with doctor, nurse, clinic, hospital, maternity home, child welfare, public assistance, school and employment personnel, foster family home, voluntary family and child serving agency, lawyer, court, etc.
7. Reaching a decision to involve the father of the child; interviewing the father to explore his interest and responsibilities.
8. Involving the parents of a minor unmarried mother; determining responsibility of the parents; working with the parents as well as the girl.
9. Using knowledge and the casework method for purposes of exploration, diagnosis, evaluation, and case planning together with a sense of timing and pace.
10. Understanding the factors that have contributed to the present problem.
11. Understanding behavior, feelings, and attitudes.
12. Using supervision, consultation, and case conferences.
13. Knowing and using agency resources.
14. Knowing and using community resources.
15. Respecting confidentiality.
16. Helping the unmarried mother who decides to keep her child; using agency resources for maintenance costs, medical care and social services; helping the mother to make a home for herself and children and a place for her family in the neighborhood and community, and to deal
with problems in rearing the child born out of wedlock; helping the grandparents or other relatives with problems as they arise; helping the child himself as he grows older and strives to establish his sense of identity and make plans for himself.

The supervisor must have the same basic knowledge as the caseworker. He carries overall agency responsibility for seeing that essential services are given in each case and must be able to give practical help and encouragement to the worker in the process. Staff development can help the agency at all levels of operation to test policy and practice against accepted philosophical concepts and principles in social work.

**Workload Standards**

In determining its workload standards, the State agency weighs the various activities of the worker from the time the unmarried mother first contacts the agency, through the birth of the child, reaching decisions, planning the future of the mother and child, and following through on the plans agreed upon. The State agency uses its experience in child welfare and its knowledge of good standards of service in estimating the number of cases the caseworker can handle satisfactorily at any given time.

In public assistance, the mother often comes to the agency after the birth of the child and after making her decision to care for the child herself. Here again, the agency can draw upon its experience in making a social study, establishing eligibility, and providing the ongoing services needed by the mother and child.

The Children's Bureau has recently published a statement of *Suggested Classification of Services in a Public Child Welfare Program.* The methodology for determining workload standards described in this document should be of help to the State agency in this area of administrative planning.

**Restrictive Proposals or Enactments**

In the process of developing a policy base for services to unmarried parents, the State department of public welfare will want to review all program resources in public assistance and in child welfare in order to clarify and describe the services that are specifically needed by unmarried parents and to deal with the related policy questions and issues that may facilitate or impede services in individualized cases.

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As conflicts in policy are identified, the State agency has the responsibility for resolving these differences in order to give workers a sense of direction and an understanding of what they are expected to do.

The most troublesome issues with which the State agency must deal are proposals that would restrict ongoing program resources, such as aid to dependent children, from being used to meet the needs of children born out of wedlock or to help their parents. These restrictive proposals when enacted do great harm because of their disregard for child life and the mother's health.

**Suitability of home**

The courts are empowered in most States to remove a child from parents whose home situation is hazardous to him and his well-being. Nevertheless, some States have tried to control the socially unacceptable behavior of certain parents by denying financial assistance to children living in homes classified as unsuitable, without first assuring that the child's needs are met by some other arrangements. In these States, a birth out of wedlock, after assistance was granted, was regarded as evidence that the home was "unsuitable."

Public welfare agencies are in general agreement that the suitability of the home for the proper care of a child should not be an eligibility factor in the aid to dependent children program. The standards of suitability should be no different for families assisted through the aid to dependent children program than they are for the general community. If a home is unsuitable, regardless of the financial circumstances of the family, the community has a responsibility to take steps to improve conditions and to protect the children through its established social and law enforcement agencies. If these efforts fail, a determination should be made by a court of competent jurisdiction as to whether the children should be removed from the home and other arrangements made for their care.

The functions of courts and public welfare agencies should be kept separate and distinct, and social agencies should not be required to make determinations of a judicial nature.

After carefully considering the hardships these restrictions were causing children, the Commissioner of Social Security approved the following statement* effective July 1961, (Extended by Public Law 87-31 to Sept. 1, 1962):

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"A State plan for aid to dependent children may not impose an eligibility condition that would deny assistance with respect to a needy child on the basis that the home conditions in which the child lives are unsuitable, while the child continues to reside in the home. Assistance will therefore be continued during the time efforts are being made either to improve the home conditions or to make arrangements for the child elsewhere."

In transmitting the Commissioner's statement, the Director of Public Assistance said:

"It is of great importance that State agencies should be concerned about the effects on children of the environment in which they are living and that services be provided which will be directed toward affording the children maximum protection and strengthening their family life. Whenever there is a question of the suitability of the home for the child's upbringing, steps should be taken to correct the situation or, in the alternative, to arrange for other appropriate care of the child. It is completely inconsistent, however, to declare a home unsuitable for a child to receive assistance and at the same time permit him to remain in the same home exposed to the same environment."

Residence requirements

Residence requirements are also a stumbling block to the unmarried pregnant woman. Despite her natural tendency to move from the community where she is known, she frequently finds herself ineligible for medical care or support in the new community to which she has fled. Agency policy which permits payments out of State for financial assistance and medical services will enable some unmarried mothers to receive the services they require. State financial participation in general assistance and in payments for medical services is important in overcoming local residence restrictions.

Confidentiality

The unmarried parent needs the assurance of the agency that information of a personal nature given in privacy will not be made public and that confidentiality, as far as is realistically possible, will be observed in all planning. Public assistance agencies must safeguard personal information given to the agency by applicants and recipients. Some States, however, are required upon request to open lists of recipients for inspection. Knowledge of this provision may in itself cause some unmarried parents to withdraw or to decide against agency services despite their need for help.

The provisions in some States which require a determination of the ability of legally responsible relatives to support may operate in a way that violates confidentiality. Fear of the agency's way of working may lead the unmarried mother to ignore the services needed...
or to hide away until she is taken to a hospital in labor. In some States, the older woman may have her situation made known to various relatives as the agency routinely attempts to determine whether or not the relatives will contribute to her support. However, one State has recently enacted legislation to permit public welfare officials to provide public assistance and maternity services to an unmarried mother and her child without being legally required to communicate with her parents.

**Employment of mothers**

The employed woman who becomes pregnant may wish to continue working until the latter part of her pregnancy and may be encouraged by her physician to do so. Some women have continued to work even to the last month of pregnancy because they were without other financial resources.

Agency attitudes or policies that require mothers on assistance rolls to work outside the home frequently cause hardships. Some local agencies arbitrarily remove mothers of needy children from the assistance rolls on the assumption that work is available. Experience, however, indicates that the mother herself is usually the person best suited to decide whether or not she has the strength and ability to work outside as well as in the home. If her decision is to try employment, the advice of the physician and plans for the adequate care of the children are important. State policy should provide for individual determinations and decisions with ample safeguards for the care of the children.

**Establishment of paternity**

The purpose of legal action establishing paternity should be to secure for the child any rights accruing to him under State law, including the right to support by his father. However, decision to take legal action should be based on a good casework plan and legal advice and in no instance should it be made a requirement of financial assistance to the unmarried mother or a condition of planning for the child.

An acknowledgment that the child has two parents, both of whom may be important to his future, is basic in planning. Where the father is himself a married man, legal steps to establish paternity may disrupt the life and security of his family.

**Support requirements**

The primary interest of the public assistance agency in establishing paternity of children has often been to secure a support order.

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* Laws of New York, Chapter 448. 1959.
A recent study of support from absent fathers indicated that difficulties were encountered in establishing paternity through any of the available means, i.e., judicial determination, formal acknowledgment, or informal admission. This study indicated that voluntary acknowledgment of paternity and voluntary agreements to support proved to be the more reliable and satisfactory means of securing financial support.

Information is needed as to the situations that contribute to parental estrangement and the broken home. The impact upon children of the father’s attitude and role, whether present or absent, must be understood and taken into account in planning agency services. The imprisonment of fathers on nonsupport charges is handicapping to everyone involved—the father, his children—and to the community. Support payments made by the absent father to the court or to the agency should always be reported to the mother and children.

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VIII | WHAT THE COMMUNITY CAN DO

THE CHILD OF UNMARRIED PARENTS is born in a community where he and his mother can be deeply hurt or protected and helped. Local attitudes and decisions made by people he will never see influence what happens to him. Although important insights have been gained into the difficulties of unmarried parents through working with them, too often decisions affecting their welfare and the welfare of their children are made by persons who lack these insights. What steps can citizens living in a community take to understand these problems and to work out better solutions?

In communities where life is segmented and daily contacts between people are largely impersonal, individuals have difficulty in establishing associations that give them identity and a sense of belonging. In such communities, opportunities have to be created for people to work together on common needs, problems, and objectives. The conditions under which people live and work, what happens to mothers, children and youth, are matters of concern to all persons in the community.

In many localities, associations of citizens have been formed to initiate ways of working together to develop resources and to improve social conditions and relationships. A small number of representative citizens come together to form a health and welfare council, a neighborhood council, or other voluntary association. With this beginning, the association can be expanded so that all groups in the community can be informed and participate in decisions and projects.

In communities where citizens are working actively together in this way, plans can be developed to relieve many of the conditions that contribute to social problems such as births out of wedlock. In almost every community, men and women of outstanding leadership with natural ability and a real warmth for people in trouble can be found to work on eliminating such conditions. Often, too, women in the community can be interested in taking time to find out what is happening to unmarried mothers and their children and to work...
individually and in groups on policy questions and issues. They can
serve as volunteers working with professional persons. Often these
women develop enough insight to see through the pretensions and
shortsightedness of those who would deny financial assistance, medical
care, and other essential services to unmarried parents and their chil-
dren—and move the community toward constructive action.

In some metropolitan centers where births out of wedlock are
found to be high, citizens have become so absorbed in national and
international affairs that they give scant attention to local problems
and services. People who work in the city but live in the suburbs
sometimes take little responsibility for conditions in either locality—
the one in which they live and the one in which they work.

In such metropolitan centers, housing deteriorates, and budgets
for hospitals, maternity and welfare services are cut. Public interest
in the problems of unmarried mothers is aroused only in flurries,
usually when a family is asked to leave a housing project because a
young daughter becomes pregnant, or a young mother not knowing
where to turn abandons her baby or dies as a result of an abortion.
Although the problem of births out of wedlock may be debated as a
social issue, few people seem concerned about what happens to the
unmarried mother who is ruled out of public services under restrictive
policies, or, having relinquished her child, is cast adrift in the commu-
nity to make her way as best she can without medical followup or help
in planning for her future.

Neighborhood associations can help to develop the capacity of
citizens to work together on their problems and, when organized in
these congested areas, serve as communicating links with the larger
community to assure that all essential services are maintained and
prompt attention given to problems as they arise.

Social planning groups in a number of communities are study-
ing the problems of unmarried parents and are developing community
projects for improving services. An analysis of the essential services
needed by every mother—prepartal, postpartal, and confinement—will
clearly reflect the importance of communication and cooperative
planning among physicians, hospital administrators, nurses, and social
workers. Any consideration of “a place to live” for an unmarried
mother points up the scarcity of foster family and maternity homes
and the importance of coordinating agency efforts to expand as well
as to make better use of these facilities.

Similarly, legal problems require the services of an attorney
and, in many instances, a judge. It is for these reasons that the func-
tions of each agency and the points at which cooperation is essential
must be understood by everyone in the community. Specific profes-
sional roles also require description. Such coordination and descrip-

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tions help social agencies and social workers to appreciate the specific contributions of the various professions and the need for joint community planning of services to unmarried parents.

The public agency, in addition to participating actively in the work of community planning councils, has a responsibility for initiating or stimulating planning groups where no formal organization exists. The State agency, as part of its leadership function, can be instrumental in bringing into closer working relationships the many agencies, groups, citizens, and professional persons who are actively interested in constructive services for unmarried parents and their children. With the help of such groups, the State agency can gather and prepare the information necessary for an understanding of the problem and of the services needed on a broad front.

Factfinding and studies are essential to sound planning. This has been amply demonstrated in a number of States. In one southern State, the Conference of Social Work and the Youth Commission undertook the task of bringing together all of the existing information on births out of wedlock in their State and presenting their findings to the public. This report prepared by a technical committee working with a citizens advisory committee has been widely studied throughout the country.

In a western State, a legislative committee employing a very competent research person made a study of Indian unmarried mothers receiving ADC. The report gave the legislature a picture of such utter poverty and deprivation that the State was stimulated to provide more adequately for those mothers and their children.

Another western State has made substantial progress in case-finding and reporting of services to unmarried mothers. Beginning in the 1920's, this State has formed statewide citizens committees to study the problems of unmarried mothers. Meetings are convened of representatives of the health and welfare agencies offering services to discuss standards and cooperative planning. The most recent study conducted in 1957 shows that almost all unmarried mothers were offered services through a network of agencies, and social services were actually received by 84 percent of these mothers. This development is the outgrowth of many years of careful work under the leadership of the State agency.


DOES ADC ENCOURAGE ILLEGITIMACY? Pierre, S. Dak.: South Dakota Department of Public Welfare, 1958. 27 pp. (February) (Processed.)

The State agency also can assume part of its leadership role through focusing attention on discussions, written agreements and understandings, the working out of referral procedures, and guides for cooperation—all to the end of assuring adequate services, promptly available, to unmarried parents.

Unlike the voluntary agencies, many State and local public agencies have been slow to seek citizen participation in their programs. To overcome this problem, some State and local departments of public welfare employ a properly qualified social worker to serve as a consultant on citizen participation and community planning. This consultant helps the agency to clarify the areas of work in which citizens can participate effectively and develops a plan for encouraging and facilitating their work in the agency. He also helps staff at all levels of agency operation to improve their community contacts.

As citizens participate more actively in health and welfare programs, they often use their understanding in ways that modify the dynamics of community life. For example, as they come to understand the problems of unmarried parents, they speak up in support of the board of education in working out a plan for the continued education of unmarried mothers of school age or protest policy decisions in public welfare that oppress unmarried parents and deny to them and their children the necessities of life.

One of the problems common to unmarried parents is the sense, often deeply felt, of not belonging. An understanding of this problem on the part of citizens can lead the community to insist that professional services be staffed in schools, hospitals, clinics, and social agencies by warm, friendly persons who are sensitive to the deeper feelings of people and interested in the things that are important in the lives of individuals and the community.

An educational program directed to mass media, as well as for parent and youth organizations, is long overdue. The White House Conference on Children and Youth recommended that a preventive program include identification of youngsters most likely to become unmarried parents and that educational measures, sensitive to their moral and emotional development, be instituted.40

It is efforts such as these that eventually can result in a battery of community services for unmarried parents and their children that will, in the long run, do much to counteract the conditions that lead to births out of wedlock.

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