

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

JAMES J. DAVIS, Secretary

CHILDREN'S BUREAU

GRACE ABBOTT, Chief

PUBLIC AID TO MOTHERS WITH
DEPENDENT CHILDREN

EXTENT AND FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

BY

EMMA O. LUNDBERG



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CONTENTS

	Page
The adoption of an idea.....	1
Beginnings of the mothers' aid movement.....	2
Status of legislation in 1926.....	2
Principles of mothers' aid legislation.....	3
Administration and supervision.....	9
Extent to which the laws are applied.....	15
Standards of aid.....	16

MAPS

Public aid to children in their own homes—persons to whom aid may be given.....	5
Public aid to children in their own homes—ages under which aid may be given.....	7
Public aid to children in their own homes—local administrative agencies acting alone or in cooperation with a State agency.....	9
Public aid to children in their own homes—State supervision.....	12

III

AID TO MOTHERS WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN

THE ADOPTION OF AN IDEA

The Conference on the Care of Dependent Children—commonly referred to as the White House Conference—called by President Roosevelt in 1909, was responsible in large measure for focusing attention on the desirability of conserving the child's own home. In the words of the conclusions of this conference:

Home life is the highest and finest product of civilization. It is the great molding force of mind and of character. Children should not be deprived of it except for urgent and compelling reasons. Children of parents of worthy character, suffering from temporary misfortune, and children of reasonably efficient and deserving mothers who are without the support of the normal breadwinner, should, as a rule, be kept with their parents, such aid being given as may be necessary to maintain suitable homes for the rearing of the children.¹

The experiment of granting public aid in their own homes to children deprived of the support of the natural breadwinner was begun almost simultaneously in Kansas City and in the State of Illinois. The passage of the Missouri law of 1911, applying at first only to Kansas City, was promoted by a fraternal organization. The Illinois law, also enacted in 1911, was proposed by Judge Merritt W. Pinckney as a result of his experience in the Chicago juvenile court. After these beginnings the idea spread rapidly, fostered by the Mothers' Congress and other organizations of women, juvenile courts, and child-welfare agencies.

So far as legislation was concerned, the principle of "home care of dependent children" met with more ready response than any other child-welfare measure that has ever been proposed. Administration, however, has not kept pace with the enactment of laws, largely because public interest in many States became dormant once a law was passed and because appropriations were inadequate in all but a very few localities.

The ideal that has dominated the movement for public aid of a character better fitted to make home life possible for children than the poor relief commonly administered is shown in the following excerpts, the first from the report of the New York State Commission on Relief for Widowed Mothers, and the second by the Pennsylvania State Board of Education, when State supervisory agency for mothers' aid:

The normal development of childhood is one of the main functions of government. The best education requires a proper home training, and it thereby becomes the duty of the State to conserve the home as its most valuable asset whenever factors, other than the improper guardianship of the parents, threaten its destruction.

* * * * *

¹ Proceedings of the Conference on the Care of Dependent Children, held at Washington, D. C., Jan. 25-26, 1909. Sixtieth Congress, second session, Senate Document No. 721, p. 8, Washington, 1909. See also Foster Home Care for Dependent Children, pp. 207-212 (U. S. Children's Bureau Publication No. 136, Washington, 1926).

The [mothers' assistance] law has two reasons for its existence—a humanitarian and an economic one. There are in our communities a large number of women with dependent children who can not maintain their homes without assistance. We have come to believe that as a principle of justice no home should be broken up for poverty alone. * * * Experience has shown that private resources are not adequate, especially in cases of long-continued dependency. The State therefore came to feel responsible for the support of this group. * * * It is actually cheaper in dollars and cents to maintain children in their own homes than to support them in institutions, and "homemade" children, cared for by their own mothers, have the best chance of becoming healthy, normal citizens.²

BEGINNINGS OF THE MOTHERS' AID MOVEMENT

Before mothers' aid laws were enacted a number of States and localities had recognized the wisdom of the principle of such aid and had applied it in a limited way. As early as 1906 the juvenile courts of some counties of California granted county aid to children in their own homes; in 1911 the State began to reimburse counties for such aid given to half orphans. An Oklahoma law of 1908 provided for "school scholarships" to be paid by counties upon recommendation of the school authorities to children whose widowed mothers needed their earnings. A Michigan law of 1911 also authorized payment from school funds to enable children of indigent parents to attend school. Through a resolution by the county board of Milwaukee County, Wis., in 1912, aid to mothers for the care of children in their homes was given through the juvenile court. In New Jersey some aid to dependent children in their homes had been granted from county funds prior to the enactment of the special law in 1913.

The first definite legal provision of aid to mothers of dependent children was passed by the Missouri Legislature in 1911, applying at first only to Jackson County (in which Kansas City is located), and later in the same year to the city of St. Louis. The first statewide mothers' aid law was enacted in Illinois in 1911. Colorado adopted by popular vote the "mothers' compensation act," submitted at the election of 1912. The law became effective early in 1913.

In 1913 a total of 18 States enacted mothers' aid laws. The experimental character of much of this early legislation, due largely to the haste with which the idea was adopted, is seen in the revisions and numerous amendments found necessary as the laws were put into operation. The first Illinois act was completely revised in 1913; in five States the 1913 laws were completely revised and in eight others amended in 1915. Similar changes have been made in the later legislation, but the majority of these later amendments have been for the purpose of improving the administration, making the application more inclusive, and increasing the amount of the grant or of the total appropriation available.

STATUS OF LEGISLATION IN 1926

Laws authorizing assistance from public funds for dependent children in their own homes had been adopted by 42 States and Alaska and Hawaii at the beginning of 1926.³ The following States

² Report of the New York State Commission on Relief for Widowed Mothers, p. 1. Albany, 1914; circular issued by the State Board of Education under the supervision of the State Supervisor of the Mothers' Assistance Fund of Pennsylvania, April, 1916, p. 3.

³ An act providing mothers' aid for the District of Columbia was passed by Congress in June, 1926.

have such laws, variously termed, "mothers' pensions," "mothers' allowances," "mothers' assistance fund," "widows' compensation," "aid for dependent children," "aid to mothers of dependent children," and (in New Jersey) "an act to promote home life for dependent children."

Arizona.	Kansas.	New Hampshire.	Tennessee.
Arkansas.	Louisiana.	New Jersey.	Texas.
California.	Maine.	New York.	Utah.
Colorado.	Maryland.	North Carolina.	Vermont.
Connecticut.	Massachusetts.	North Dakota.	Virginia.
Delaware.	Michigan.	Ohio.	Washington.
Florida.	Minnesota.	Oklahoma.	West Virginia.
Idaho.	Missouri.	Oregon.	Wisconsin.
Illinois.	Montana.	Pennsylvania.	Wyoming.
Indiana.	Nebraska.	Rhode Island.	
Iowa.	Nevada.	South Dakota.	

Not all these States, however, have translated the legal theory into practice. It may be said fairly that the principle of home care for dependent children is generally accepted in this country, but the 15 years' experiment does not by any means indicate that the need has been met.

In Maryland (except for two counties) the mothers' aid legislation has become inoperative because of defects. In several other States practically no use has been made of the legal provision; and in many States where excellent work has been done in certain localities, in others the intent of the law has been ignored or the appropriations made have been so inadequate as to be of little avail.

PRINCIPLES OF MOTHERS' AID LEGISLATION⁴

ESSENTIAL ITEMS IN THE LAWS

Although mothers' aid legislation must be drawn with due consideration of the conditions existing in each State or other division of government, and especially with regard to laws on related subjects, certain fundamental principles must be observed if such laws are to be effective child-welfare measures. These may be summarized as follows:

1. Application broad enough to permit aid whenever by such means a suitable home may be maintained.
2. Age limitation to conform with education and child labor laws.
3. Amount of aid to be based on the needs of each individual family, with due regard to other available resources.
4. Inquiry in each case to determine the home conditions and the assistance needed for the proper care of the children.
5. Continued oversight in order that the welfare of the children may be protected and the aid adjusted to meet changing conditions.

⁴ See A Tabular Summary of State Laws Relating to Public Aid to Children in Their Own Homes (U. S. Children's Bureau Chart No. 3, Washington, 1925).

6. Provision of safeguards necessary to protect the public treasury against fraudulent or unwarranted claims and against burdens that should be borne by other communities or by individuals legally responsible and able to furnish support.

7. Administration lodged in the public agency best fitted to carry out the provisions of the law as a constructive child-welfare measure.

8. Appropriation adequate to carry out the purpose of the law, with respect both to funds required for aid and to expenses of administration.

9. Some form of general oversight by the State combined with educational activities to develop high standards in the work of the local administrative agencies.

PERSONS TO WHOM AID MAY BE GIVEN

The central idea in the theory and early discussion of aid to dependent children in their own homes and the most common inclusion in the earlier laws was aid to widows.⁵ Gradually the conception widened, and the trend of legislation in the various States has been toward increasing the application of the law, giving the benefit of the aid to dependent children wherever the circumstances were such that the home should be maintained. Though a few States still limit the aid to children of widows, the prevailing method is either to permit aid to be granted to any mother with dependent children or to define certain types of case, including those where the father is dead, deserting, divorced, physically or mentally incapacitated, or imprisoned, with necessary restrictions pertaining to cases of desertion and divorce. (See map, p. 5.)

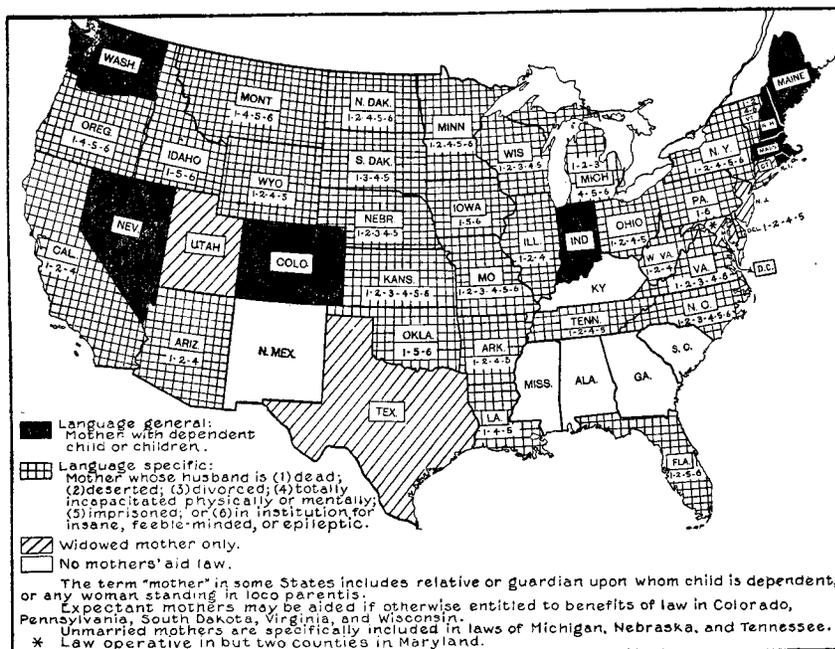
In the State of Washington the law is applicable to any mothers who are needy; in Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, to mothers with dependent children; in Nevada and New Hampshire, to mothers dependent on their own efforts to support their children. The Colorado law provides that aid may be granted to any parent or other person designated by the court. The Indiana law permits aid for any child found by court to be dependent or neglected and committed to a county board of children's guardians, when it appears to be for the best interests of the child to remain with the mother.

In addition to these eight States in which all types of need may be met the laws cover various types of family conditions. In 21 States children of deserted mothers may be granted aid, and in 8 States children of divorced mothers. Families where the father is totally incapacitated may be helped in 24 States; 16 States have specific provisions authorizing aid if the father is in an institution for the insane or is feeble-minded, and 22 States if the father is in a penal institution. Michigan, Nebraska, and Tennessee specifically authorize aid to unmarried mothers, and in some other States the law may be so applied. A few States give assistance to relatives or guardians having custody of a dependent child as follows:

⁵ The first Illinois act was entitled "Funds to Parents Act," and the law that followed shortly after in Colorado included a parent, or parents, who because of poverty were unable to provide properly for a dependent child. In Illinois, however, revision has limited the application of the law to dependent children whose fathers are dead, deserting, or totally incapacitated.

Any woman standing in loco parentis to a dependent child or children may be the recipient of aid in Delaware and Rhode Island; a guardian, female relative, or custodian upon whom a child is dependent in Florida, Idaho, Virginia, and Wisconsin; a woman who has assumed the responsibilities of mother when both parents are dead, New Jersey; a relative within the second degree of either parent if the mother is dead in New York; stepmother in Minnesota and Virginia, a grandmother in Minnesota and Wisconsin; in Colorado, Idaho, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Oregon payment may be made to the mother or other person designated by the administering agency; and in Arizona and California aid may be granted for whole orphans as well as for half orphans who are living in private homes.

PUBLIC AID TO CHILDREN IN THEIR OWN HOMES
PERSONS TO WHOM AID MAY BE GIVEN
(INCLUDES LEGISLATION IN EFFECT JAN. 1, 1926)



Aid may be granted to expectant mothers in Colorado, Missouri, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

In 1926 only 5% of the 42 States having mothers' aid laws limited the grant to children of widows, though all 42 included widows, directly or by implication.

RESIDENCE AND CITIZENSHIP

The eligibility requirements as to residence and citizenship vary in the different States from a minimum of one year in the county to citizenship in the United States together with five years' residence

^o Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, Texas, and Utah.

in the State and two years in the county. Most States do not require citizenship or declaration of intention to become a citizen of the United States, the laws of only 11 containing such a provision. Thirty-nine of the 42 States having mothers' aid laws require residence in the State. Such requirement is satisfied by one or two years' residence in 14 States, by three years in 5 States, and by four or five years in 4 States. Five States require that the father must have been a resident of the State at the time of his death or when he became incapacitated. In three States time of residence is not specified. Thirty-two States require residence in the local political unit for six months, one, two, three, or five years.

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY

In the majority of the States no specific mention is made of ownership of property, but in several laws there is either a prohibition of such ownership or a more reasonable provision limiting the amount of such property. For example in the Wisconsin law "The ownership by a mother of a homestead shall not prevent the granting of aid * * * if the rental thereof would not exceed the rental which a family of the same size as the family of such parent, receiving aid, would be obliged to pay for living quarters," or in the Nebraska law, "A mother shall not receive such relief who is the owner of real property or personal property other than the household goods of more than two thousand dollars."

CONDITIONS OF ALLOWANCE

Conditions determining the granting of aid refer mainly to economic need and the mother's ability to give the children proper care. Examples of good provisions are found among the requirements in the laws of Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming. The following is quoted from the Arkansas law:

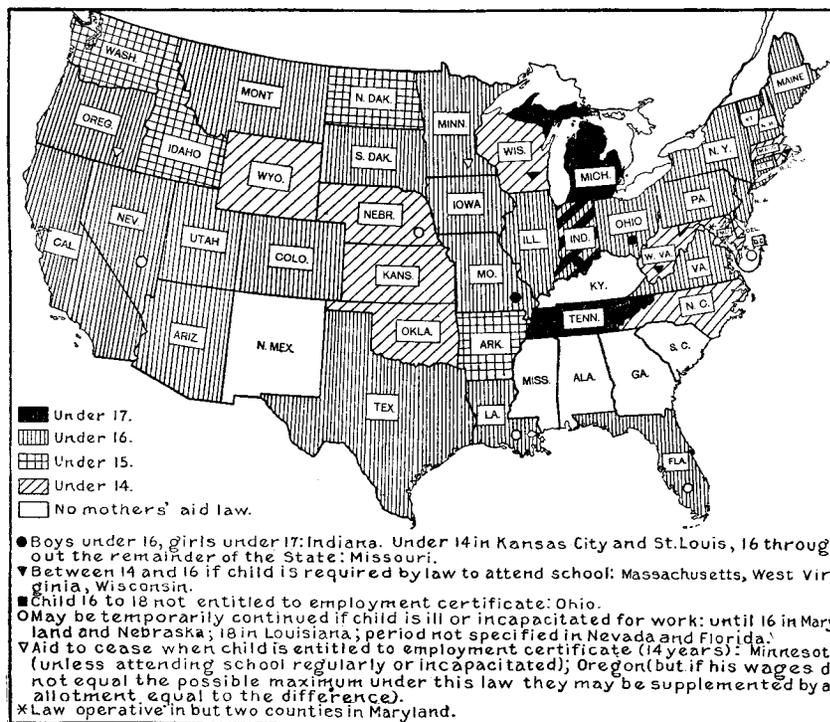
Such allowance shall be made * * * only upon the following conditions: (1) The child or children, for whose benefit the allowance is made, must be living with the mother of such child or children; (2) * * * and when by means of such allowance, she will be able to remain at home with her children; (3) the mother must, in the judgment of the court, be a proper person, physically, morally, and mentally, for the bringing up of her children; (4) such allowance shall, in judgment of the court, be necessary to save the child or children from neglect.

Important items are included in the laws of two States (Pennsylvania and West Virginia) in regard to safeguarding the education of the children receiving this form of public aid. Pennsylvania provides that "no payment shall be made on account of any child of proper age and physical ability unless satisfactory report has been made by the teacher of the school in which such pupil is enrolled stating that such child is attending school," and West Virginia requires that "satisfactory reports must be given by the teacher of the district school stating that the children of the recipient of this fund are attending school, provided they are of proper age and physically able to do so."

AGES OF CHILDREN WHO MAY BE GIVEN AID

The most important consideration in regard to the age to which a child may be granted aid is that it shall be in conformity with compulsory school attendance and child labor laws. Michigan and Tennessee have placed the age limitation at 17 years. Indiana permits aid up to 17 for girls and 16 for boys. In 25 States children may be granted aid until they are 16 years of age, sometimes with the proviso that aid shall cease when the child is eligible for an employment certificate, unless it appears to be desirable to permit

PUBLIC AID TO CHILDREN IN THEIR OWN HOMES
AGES UNDER WHICH AID MAY BE GIVEN
(INCLUDES LEGISLATION IN EFFECT JAN. 1, 1926)



him to continue his education. Provision is also made in a number of States for continuance of aid when a child over the age limitation is incapacitated for work. (See map above.)

The following States permit assistance until the child is 16 years of age:

- | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|-----------|
| Arizona. | Iowa. | Nevada. | Texas. |
| California. | Louisiana. | New Jersey. | Utah. |
| Colorado. | Maine. | New York. | Vermont. |
| Connecticut. | Minnesota. | Ohio. | Virginia. |
| Florida. | Missouri. | Oregon. | |
| Illinois. | Montana. | Pennsylvania. | |
| Indiana. | New Hampshire. | South Dakota. | |

Because of inadequate appropriations it is doubtful, however, whether a very considerable number of children above the compulsory education age are beneficiaries of these acts.

AMOUNT OF AID PERMITTED

Experience in the administration of mothers' aid laws has shown that it is desirable to avoid strict limitation of grants and instead to permit assistance to be based upon the needs of each individual family. In determining the amount of the grant required due consideration should be given to the needs of the family as determined by its composition, as well as to available resources from earnings of members of the family, aid from relatives, and other sources.

The laws of six States—Arizona, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Virginia—do not specify the amount of aid that may be granted to each child or each family but provide that the amount may be fixed by the administrative agency in accordance with what is needed in each family to provide properly for the children. In New York State also the amount is not specified, except that the law states that it shall not exceed the cost of institutional care.

In order to make a comparison possible the maximum amounts specified in the laws of the various States are here reduced to the maximum amount which might be allowed for a family with three children, grouping the States as follows:

Maximum, \$50-\$70 a month: 8 States.—California, Connecticut,⁷ Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio.

Maximum, \$40-\$49 a month: 7 States.—Florida, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

Maximum, \$30-\$39 a month: 10 States.—Illinois,⁸ Iowa, Louisiana, Missouri,⁹ Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

Maximum \$20-\$29 a month: 10 States.—Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Texas, Vermont, and Washington.

The laws of 11 States contain a maximum limitation for a family of any size ranging from \$40 to \$60 a month—Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, and West Virginia.

INVESTIGATION AND CASE SUPERVISION

The laws of most of the States include a statement relating to investigation of each application to determine eligibility under the law, the character of the home, and the amount of aid required; and continued oversight of the families granted aid is provided for in accordance with the principles of social case work. In order to adjust the allowances to changing conditions it has been found desirable in some States to provide for review of the grants at regular intervals—in most instances once in six months.

⁷A maximum weekly budget is given in detail in the law. This budget provides for the widowed mother (aid is limited to children of widows) and for different amounts for children of different ages.

⁸A special provision relating to Chicago permits \$55 a month for three children.

⁹Missouri has three different provisions in its law. In Kansas City the maximum allowance for three children is \$20 a month; in the city of St. Louis \$3.50 a week for each child—approximately \$47 a month.

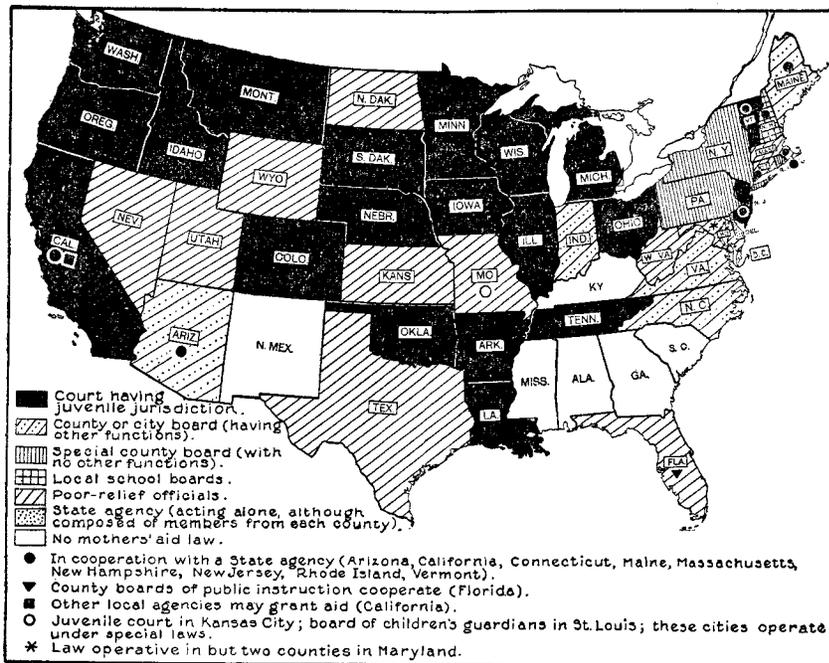
ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

ADMINISTRATION

The agencies which have been given responsibility for the administration of mothers' aid laws have varied in accordance with the period in which the law was first passed and the opinion of its sponsors regarding the existing agencies best fitted to undertake the new work. In only four of the 42 States having such legislation (Delaware, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island) has a new agency been established.¹⁰ The majority of the States have placed the administration of the act in an agency of county-wide jurisdic-

PUBLIC AID TO CHILDREN IN THEIR OWN HOMES
LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCIES ACTING ALONE OR IN COOPERATION
WITH A STATE AGENCY

(INCLUDES LEGISLATION IN EFFECT JAN. 1, 1926)



tion, but in nine States a State board has been given certain administrative functions which it exercises in cooperation with a county or town agency, and in one State (Delaware) administration is solely in the hands of the State.¹¹ (See map above.)

Local administrative agencies.

Chiefly because the mothers' aid movement was in the beginning an outgrowth of the juvenile court movement, 20 States¹² have

¹⁰ The Maine law (Laws of 1917, ch. 222) originally provided that local boards might be specially constituted for mothers' aid work or be composed of overseers of the poor, but a 1919 amendment (Laws of 1919, ch. 171) constituted these boards as boards of children's guardians also, with general powers relating to the investigation and prosecution of cases of cruelty or violations of laws for the protection of children.

¹¹ In two other States the laws give the State agency certain administrative powers which have not been generally exercised, and in 14 additional States there is some form of State supervision of mothers' aid laws.

¹² In one other State (Missouri) administration is in the juvenile court in one large city (Kansas City).

placed administration in courts having jurisdiction over cases of delinquent, dependent, and neglected children. The type of local administrative agencies in the States having mothers' aid laws may be summarized as follows:

Local administrative agency	Number of States
Total	42
Court having juvenile jurisdiction.....	20
County or city child-welfare board, board of children's guardians, or board of public welfare.....	5
Special county board (with no other functions).....	3
School board.....	1
County officials granting poor relief.....	12
No administrative authority vested in local agency.....	1

Administration in juvenile court.—The 20 States¹³ in which administration of mothers' aid has been placed in a court having juvenile jurisdiction are:

Arkansas.	Iowa.	Nebraska.	South Dakota.
California. ¹⁴	Louisiana.	New Jersey. ¹⁰	Tennessee.
Colorado.	Michigan.	Ohio.	Vermont. ¹¹
Idaho. ¹⁵	Minnesota.	Oklahoma.	Washington.
Illinois.	Montana.	Oregon.	Wisconsin.

Administration in county or city board having other functions also.—The 5 States¹⁸ in which administration is in a county or city board having other functions, also, with reference to child welfare or public welfare are: Arizona (State board also has administrative authority), Indiana, Maine (State board also has administrative authority), North Carolina, and Virginia.

In Arizona county child-welfare boards investigate applications for aid and report their findings to the State child-welfare board. In addition to their duties in connection with the mothers' aid law the county child-welfare boards investigate the case of any orphan, waif, neglected or abandoned child and report conditions to the judge of the supreme court and also to the State child-welfare board.

Aid to dependent children in their own homes is administered in Indiana by county boards of children's guardians, which are also responsible for placing dependent and neglected children in family homes. In Maine municipal boards of children's guardians having general powers relating to the investigation and prosecution of cases of cruelty or violation of laws for the protection of children make investigations of applications for mothers' aid. They transmit reports and recommendations to the State board of charities and corrections (constituted ex officio a State board of children's guardians), and supervise the families granted aid by the State board.

In North Carolina administration is placed in the county boards of charities and public welfare, which are boards with very general duties. Cases are investigated and supervised by the county superintendent of public welfare (in effect the executive officer of the

¹³ In Kansas City, Mo., also, the juvenile court is the administrative agency.

¹⁴ In some counties the aid is administered by courts and in others by county poor-relief officials. A State agency has certain administrative powers.

¹⁵ The court acts upon approval of the county commissioners.

¹⁶ Aid is granted by courts and supervision of families is by a State board.

¹⁷ Children are committed by courts or overseers of the poor to the State department for care in their own homes.

¹⁸ In St. Louis, Mo., also, administration is vested in the city board of children's guardians.

county board). The State board of charities and public welfare has general oversight of the administration of the law.

Administration of the Virginia mothers' aid law is placed in county or city boards of public welfare, which have general powers as in North Carolina. If no such boards exist, juvenile or domestic-relations courts serve as administrative agencies. The State board of public welfare has general supervisory authority.

Administration in special county boards.—The States in which special county boards have been created to administer mothers' aid are New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island (in cooperation with a State agency which is not independent).

Under the New York law county child-welfare boards have been especially created for the administration of mothers' aid, but a law passed in 1922 provides that they may be reorganized and given additional powers relating to dependent children.¹⁹

Pennsylvania has special county boards of trustees of the mothers' assistance fund. In New York the State board of charities and in Pennsylvania the State department of welfare are given general supervision of the administration of the law.

City or town boards of mothers' aid in Rhode Island make investigations and administer the law in cooperation with the State bureau of mothers' aid, which functions as a division of the State home and school for children.

Administration in local school boards.—New Hampshire has made local school boards, in cooperation with the State board of education, the administrative agencies.

Administration by officials granting poor relief.—The States in which county or town officials granting poor relief administer the mothers' aid law are: Connecticut (selectman, warden, mayor, or other local officials, make recommendation to State agency), Florida (county commissioners act upon report and recommendation of county board of public instruction), Kansas, Maryland (act operative in only two counties), Massachusetts (in cooperation with State agency), Missouri (except in St. Louis and Kansas City), Nevada, North Dakota, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

State administrative agencies.

Of the 10 States with State agencies having administrative responsibility (usually in cooperation with a local agency), only 1 (Delaware) has a special mothers' aid board.²⁰ The agencies in the remaining 9 States may be classified as follows:

Agency	States
State child-welfare board (having other duties in addition to mothers' aid work).....	2 (Arizona and New Jersey).
State board of public welfare or board of charities and corrections.....	4 (Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont).
State department of finance.....	2 (California and Connecticut).
State board of education.....	1 (New Hampshire).

¹⁹ In three counties—Dutchess, Suffolk, and Westchester—administration of the law is placed in boards with other duties in relation to public welfare, in accordance with special legislation.

²⁰ It has been difficult in some cases to decide on the basis of the law whether the function of the State agency is administrative or supervisory. For purposes of classification a State agency has been designated as having administrative functions if approval of grants in individual cases or visits to families receiving aid are required. In addition to the 10 States listed here, the laws of Minnesota and Virginia give State departments certain administrative powers and authorize reimbursement of a portion of the expenditure from State funds, but no State appropriations have been made and administrative responsibility has not been generally exercised.

Delaware.—A special mothers' pension commission has been established, composed of nine members, three from each county. Application for aid is made to the State commission and referred to the members of the commission from the county of the mother's residence for investigation and report. The commission determines the amount and duration of aid.

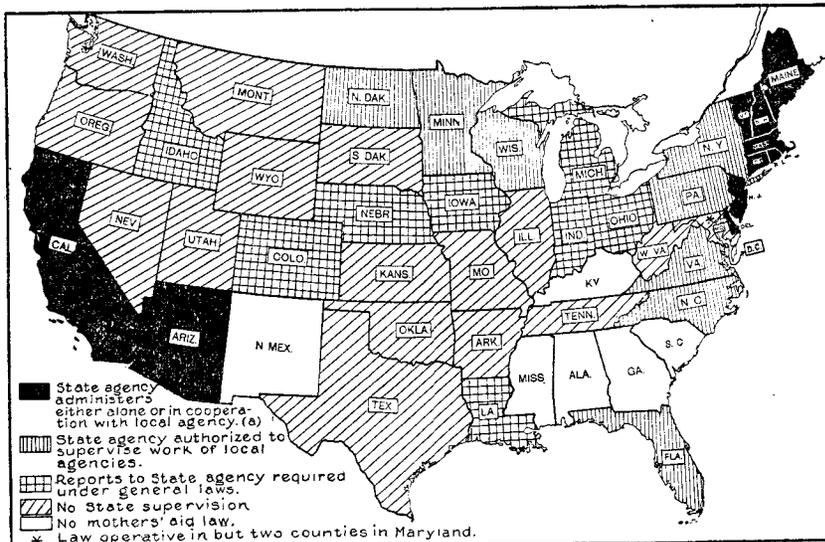
The agencies in the remaining nine States in which a State agency exercises administrative authority are the following:

Arizona.—State child-welfare board which acts upon reports of county child-welfare boards.

California.—State department of finance, bureau of children's aid, working in cooperation with courts or county officials.

PUBLIC AID TO CHILDREN IN THEIR OWN HOMES
STATE SUPERVISION

(INCLUDES LEGISLATION IN EFFECT JAN. 1, 1926)



(a) State agency acts alone in Delaware; in cooperation with local agency in the other nine States.

Connecticut.—Department of State agencies and institutions, connected with the office of the State treasurer who appoints a State agent for the administration of the mothers' aid and State pauper laws; acts upon report and recommendation of local officer.

Maine.—State board of charities and corrections constituted ex officio a State board of children's guardians, working in cooperation with municipal boards of children's guardians, either especially constituted or composed of overseers of the poor.

Massachusetts.—State department of public welfare and local overseers of the poor.

New Hampshire.—State board of education, acting upon recommendation of local school boards.

New Jersey.—State board of children's guardians, which supervises the families; aid is granted by courts.

Rhode Island.—State bureau of mothers' aid (established by State public-welfare commission and functioning as division of State home and school for children) and local boards of mothers' aid.

Vermont.—Department of public welfare; children are received for care by the department through the juvenile courts or the overseers of the poor.

The division of authority in the nine States in which administrative responsibility is shared by State and local agencies may be summarized as follows: The State agency determines whether aid shall be granted and the amount, acting upon report and recommendation of local agency, in Arizona, Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. In California local authorities granting aid may be reimbursed by the State, within specified limits, the State agency investigating applications for aid and supervising homes where aid is granted. The local agency in New Jersey determines whether aid shall be given and the amount, committing family to State board of children's guardians which pays the allowance from county funds and supervises the family. In Massachusetts and Rhode Island the local agency determines whether aid shall be granted and the amount, the State board being required to cooperate with and supervise the work of local agencies, visit families in receipt of aid and approve expenditures before the local treasury may be reimbursed from State funds. (For provisions in Minnesota and Virginia see footnote 20, p. 11.)

SUPERVISION

In addition to the 10 States in which administration is by a State agency or department working alone or with a local agency, 16 States have some form of State supervision of the administration of mothers' aid laws. (See map, p. 12.) In 8 of these States rather general supervisory powers are given to a State agency, and in 8 the only provision for State supervision is that the local agency must make annual reports concerning all its work, including mothers' aid, to the State department.

State supervisory agencies.

The States in which the law gives the State agency rather general supervisory powers are the following:

Florida.—The bureau of child welfare and education of the State board of health is directed to cooperate with local agencies in investigating cases and to supply necessary blanks for use in obtaining data. A history of each case, including recommendation, must be filed with this bureau.

Minnesota.—The State board of control is directed to promote efficiency and uniformity in the administration of the law, to advise and cooperate with the courts, supply forms, visit and inspect families granted aid (through its agents), have access to records of courts and other agencies concerning allowances, require reports, and approve cases in which reimbursement is to be made by the State for moneys expended. (No State appropriation has been made.)

New York.—The State board of charities is vested with general supervision over local boards of child welfare and may require reports and revoke allowances obtained in violation of law.

North Carolina.—The law provides that the State board of charities and public welfare shall have general oversight of the administration of the law, furnish necessary blanks, give advice and help, receive reports on each case, and give approval or disapproval of reimbursement from State funds.

North Dakota.—The board of administration is directed to promote efficiency and uniformity in the administration of the law.

Pennsylvania.—The State department of public welfare is charged with the supervision of the administration of the law. The State supervisor on the staff of this department is to promulgate rules of procedure, visit each county board at least twice a year, and act as general field organizer under the law.

Virginia.—The State board of public welfare is authorized to supervise local administrative agencies as to methods of investigation, supervision, and record keeping. It may require reports, and is directed to visit and inspect families granted aid and to approve reimbursement from State funds if State appropriations are made therefor. (None appear to have been made.)

Wisconsin.—Approval of State board of control is necessary before any county may be reimbursed from State funds.

The eight States in which annual reports only are required are *Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Nebraska, and Ohio.*

REIMBURSEMENT FROM STATE FUNDS

State appropriations to supplement local funds have been made in some cases with a view to encouraging local grants and raising standards of relief. States in which the application of mothers' aid laws was originally left to the initiative of local officials have frequently found it desirable to amend the laws so as to make appropriations mandatory instead of permissive and to apply some form of assistance or supervision by the State to carry out the intent of the laws.

Twelve of the 42 States having mothers' aid laws are authorized to share with the counties or municipalities part of the expense of aid,²¹ and in New Jersey the cost of administration is borne by the State. In two other States (Arizona and New Hampshire) the entire expenditure is made from State funds. In Delaware, Maine, North Carolina,²² Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont the State divides equally with the town or municipality the expenditures for aid. In California the State furnishes one-half or more of the aid granted. In Connecticut and Massachusetts the State furnishes one-third, and local units two-thirds, of the expenditures. In Wisconsin a portion of the expenditure is from State funds, the amount available being limited by the maximum annual appropriation of \$30,000 fixed by law. In Minnesota and Virginia the county may be reimbursed by the State (in Minnesota to the extent of one-third of the amount expended and in Virginia if appropriations are made for this purpose), but no State appropriations have been made. In

²¹ In two of these States no State appropriation has ever been made.

²² The law also limits the maximum State aid permitted, the amount specified being apportioned among the counties on a per capita basis.

Maine and Massachusetts all of the aid paid to families in which the mother has no legal settlement in any town is chargeable to the State.

EXTENT TO WHICH THE LAWS ARE APPLIED

The unevenness of the application of the principles expressed in the mothers' aid laws is evidenced by the results of a survey made by the Children's Bureau in which information in regard to administration was gathered, applying to conditions in 1922. Data were obtained for 38 States.²³ On the basis of the data reported on the number of children granted public aid in their own homes the ratios of children aided per 100,000 of the general population²⁴ of each State ranged from 331 to 1.4. New York, Nevada, California, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Montana, Minnesota, New Jersey, Delaware, Maine, and North Dakota were at the top of the list in the order named, reporting aid given to more than 200 children per 100,000 of the total population. South Dakota, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, Iowa, Colorado, Connecticut, Michigan, Utah, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Arizona, and Ohio reported ratios of 100 to 200 per 100,000 of their populations. Oklahoma, Washington, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Florida, West Virginia, and Vermont had ratios ranging from 31 to 95. Arkansas, Indiana, Texas, Tennessee, and Virginia reported less than 20 children aided per 100,000 of their populations, the figures for the last three States almost reaching the vanishing point—8.5, 4.4, and 1.4, respectively.

Even in the States reporting the highest proportions the possibilities of constructive application of this aid has by no means reached its limit. It is probable that the ratios would be found to approach 500, in comparison with those given, if funds were available for the full application of these laws designed to promote home life for children. It must be taken into account that conditions in some States are such that not only this form of dependency but also the need for care of dependent children in institutions and by child-placing agencies is less prevalent. In general, however, these ratios can be taken as indications of the adequacy of the provision made by the State. Considering the highest ratios reported as representing the needs—though it is recognized that they are in general understatements—in 11 of the 38 States reported upon two-thirds or more of the need was met; in 14 States from one-half to one-third of the need; and in the remaining 13 States the numbers reported ranged from less than a third to less than one two-hundredth of the highest ratio reported by any State. It will be seen that the chief problem at the present time is not to obtain new State legislation or amendments to existing laws, but to obtain appropriations and to raise the standards of administration so that the laws may mean something to the children they were intended to benefit.

²³ Of the 42 States having such laws in 1926 Louisiana and Maryland were not included because their laws were operative in so few counties; Rhode Island and North Carolina enacted mothers' aid laws in 1923, and data could not be included, therefore, in regard to administration.

²⁴ The ratio per 100,000 of the general population is used rather than the more common and more accurate ratio based on 1,000 of the population under 18 years of age, in order to afford comparison with the census data on dependent children in institutions, contained in a volume now in press giving data gathered in 1923.

Mothers' aid administration offers the most obvious evidence of the seriousness of placing laws on the statute books, but failing to make them practically effective through adequate appropriations and proper administration. It is estimated that at this time, on any one date, approximately 130,000 children are receiving public aid in their own homes. If estimate were made of the total number of children in the United States for whom aid should be granted in their own homes, it would be closer to 350,000 or 400,000 and probably beyond even this if all types of more or less permanent family disability were included.

STANDARDS OF AID ²⁵

Questions are often asked in regard to the comparative cost of care of a child in his own home and in an institution. Though it can be demonstrated easily that home care—either in a child's own home or in a boarding home in which he is placed by a child-caring agency—is more economical financially than care in an institution of fairly adequate standards, this should not be the point that is given emphasis. The important consideration is what it costs the child. Deprivation of his own home is a very serious thing for any child, and it is in line with the best principles of work for dependent children that every effort should be made to conserve the home.

The New York City Board of Child Welfare, the agency administering the mothers' allowance act in that city, in 1923 cared for 23,108 children and 8,440 widows in their own homes at a cost of \$4,500,000. Compared with this, the city paid \$4,000,000 to provide for 13,680 children in institutions. It cost New York City \$28.40 a month to care for a child in an institution and a little over \$15 a month to care for a child in his own home.

The most desirable form of provision does not limit the amount of the grant for each family, but makes it possible to supply such aid as is necessary in view of other resources and the budget needed for the proper maintenance of the family. Most families have some other resources, such as assistance from relatives or others who have a logical responsibility or interest, earnings of older children or of the mother, saving of rental through ownership of the house, or garden products raised by families in small towns or rural districts.

The maximum amounts specified in the law, therefore, rarely fit the situation, being either too small to cover the needs and requiring supplement from some other source, or, in more unusual instances, being larger than the family would require if other possible resources were developed. It is probable that an actual saving occurs when the law permits such leeway that the administering agency can apply modern principles of family case work.

Small as are the amounts specified in the laws, in actual application the grants are frequently very much less than this, either because appropriations are inadequate or because the officials in charge of administration of this aid grant a small arbitrary amount without special reference to the needs of the family.

²⁵ See Standards of Public Aid to Children in Their Own Homes, by Florence Nesbitt (U. S. Children's Bureau Publication No. 118, Washington, 1923).

It has been shown in various studies—the most extensive being made by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics²⁶—that the cost of living of workingmen's families is considerably greater than the amounts available for aid to dependent children in their own homes according to the laws of most of the States. According to this study, the average cost of living for 1918 was \$1,434.37 for a family consisting of father, mother, and three children under 14 years of age.²⁷

To arrive at the expenses of a family consisting of a mother and three children under 14—the group taken as the basis of the foregoing comparison of maximum grants permitted by the laws of the various States (see p. 8)—the cost of the husband's food and clothing has been deducted from the \$1,434.37, in accordance with data contained in the cost-of-living study cited. The amount thus arrived at is \$1,197.78. Assuming that the expenditures for some other items should also have been deducted, \$1,000 may be considered as the amount required for a mother and three dependent children, on the basis of actual expenditures reported by more than 12,000 families in almost 100 cities in the United States in 1918.

The maximum expenditures permitted by the laws of 35 of the 42 States having mothers' aid laws would amount to less than \$800 a year for a mother and three children. In 20 of these States the amount would be less than \$480 a year. It has been stated that the inadequacy of the appropriations available or careless administration reduces the aid considerably below even the low amounts permitted under the law. Because of the different resources available to the families it is obviously impossible to fix a general amount that would provide properly for the needs in all cases. The solution is found in the laws that permit the administrative agency to furnish aid that, in the words of the Massachusetts law, shall "be sufficient to enable the mothers to bring up their children properly in their own homes." When a maximum amount is stated in the law it should be such that the need of any family may be provided for in accordance with these same principles and should never be construed to mean an arbitrary amount to be granted in each case, either in the maximum stated in the law or any fraction of it, as is frequently the case.

Many administrative agencies, both under the general type of provision and the form limiting the grant to a certain arbitrary amount, work out family budgets after careful study of the needs of each family being considered for aid. The grants are then made on the basis of the requirements, so far as appropriations make this possible, supplementary aid required being secured from other public or private agencies. It is only in this way that the welfare of the children can be assured, and it is found that economy in the use of public funds results when family needs and resources are given proper consideration.

²⁶ Cost of Living in the United States. U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin 357. Washington, 1924. The periods covered by this study ranged from the year ended July 31, 1918, to the year ended February 28, 1919.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5 (as reported, the average size of families was 4.9 persons). Taking the year 1913 as a base the cost of living index for June, 1925, is reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as 173.5, as compared with 174.4 in December, 1918, so that the figure given may be taken as representative of present costs. See "Prices and cost of living," in *The Monthly Labor Review*, August, 1925, p. 76.

The effective administration of mothers' aid was summarized by the conferences on child welfare held under the auspices of the United States Children's Bureau in 1919 as follows:

The policy of assistance to mothers who are competent to care for their own children is now well established. It is generally recognized that the amount provided should be sufficient to enable the mother to maintain her children suitably in her own home, without resorting to such outside employment as will necessitate leaving her children without proper care and oversight; but in many States the allowances are still entirely inadequate to secure this result under present living costs. The amount required can be determined only by careful and competent case study, which must be renewed from time to time to meet changing conditions.²⁸

²⁸ Minimum Standards for Child Welfare Adopted by the Washington and Regional Conferences on Child Welfare, 1919, p. 11. U. S. Children's Bureau Publication No. 62. Washington, 1920.

