

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

FRANCES PERKINS, Secretary

CHILDREN'S BUREAU

GRACE ABBOTT, Chief

THE COUNTY AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE  
UNIT FOR SOCIAL WORK

By

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## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,  
CHILDREN'S BUREAU,  
*Washington, July 28, 1933.*

MADAM: There is transmitted herewith a report on the County as an Administrative Unit for Social Work, which analyzes the present status of county organization in the United States and shows the developments that have occurred since the earlier publications of the Children's Bureau on the same general subject (nos. 107, 167, and 173) in 1922, 1926, and 1927.

Information as to the activities of State departments in the development of county social services was obtained from published reports, from correspondence, and from field visits made in connection with a study by the Social Service Division of the Children's Bureau of the child-welfare work of State departments of welfare. The report was written by Mary Ruth Colby under the direction of Agnes K. Hanna, Director of the Social Service Division.

Experience shows that local public agencies employing a professional staff and serving an area of at least one county are necessary to insure that the rural as well as the urban population is adequately served, that acute social problems do not develop, and that there is a proper distribution of functions and cooperation between State and local agencies. Assistance from a well-organized State department of public welfare and State financial aid have contributed greatly to the success of county social programs.

The Children's Bureau is greatly indebted for assistance given in the preparation of the report by State departments, local county units, and private agencies that have assisted in the development of State social-welfare programs.

Respectfully submitted.

GRACE ABBOTT, *Chief.*

HON. FRANCES PERKINS,  
*Secretary of Labor.*

v

## THE COUNTY AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT FOR SOCIAL WORK

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### LOCAL PUBLIC SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES

In the United States local public responsibility for the social welfare of persons living within a prescribed area was first recognized in the administration of poor relief. In England each parish had been responsible for its own poor; hence it was quite natural that in the new country into which had been carried English traditions and customs the town should be accepted as the local administrative unit. In the New England States the town was the universal unit, but elsewhere a larger area, the county, was generally accepted. The adoption of these two types of local administrative units can probably be explained by the fact that in New England colonization was in compact communities, whereas in the South, West, and Midwest, where there was a paucity of towns, greater need existed for including a wider area in the governmental unit. However, even in these regions the county has not always been the unit within a single State for all purposes. In some States both town and county systems have existed side by side, largely because the early settlers in certain counties were New Englanders and unwilling to give up the town plan. Although in most States many counties are small for an administrative unit in view of present-day transportation facilities, there has been general recognition that it is as yet the most practical unit for the administration of a local social welfare program. The White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, through its subcommittee on the administration of local public units of child care, arrived at the following conclusion:

The county is generally the most practicable unit for the administration of child care. The majority of the problems of handicapped children require study and treatment by an agency which is close at hand. To be effective, service must be immediately available in the neighborhood of the trouble. Only through such close-at-hand service as can be given by a county agency can an early discovery of the case be assured, with home treatment whenever possible, and the development of preventive measures.

The State welfare department, except perhaps in the smallest States, is too far removed to assume case-work responsibility within the counties, or directly to influence conditions which are creating dependency or contributing to physical or mental disorders. The town or township, on the other hand, is usually too small a unit for social-service administration. Expertness in the field of social service, as in any other field, is developed only by practice on a sufficiently large scale to permit familiarity with many types of care and an observation of comparative results. The number of cases to be dealt with in a town is comparatively small, and in addition the basis of taxation is too limited to meet the necessary costs of adequate social service. In States having town administration a group of towns or in States where counties are small in area and popula-

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tion, a group of counties possibly could be combined to form a practicable administrative unit.<sup>1</sup>

The suggestion that several counties be merged into a single administrative unit is in line with the modern political science viewpoint. For some time leaders in political science have urged the union of small counties as economically advisable, and in the present financial crisis union may become a necessity as counties are finding the burden of supporting their local government more than they can carry.<sup>2</sup>

### LOCAL AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

Until the close of the nineteenth century poor relief, or home relief as it is called in some States, was practically the only form of social service other than institutional care. The administrative unit for this type of service has been either the town or the county. When the town has been used the administering agent has most often been a township trustee or supervisor or an official known as the overseer of the poor, and when the county plan is followed a county commissioner. In the large cities, however, the volume of work has made it necessary to employ full-time workers to attend to the administrative details, but even in these urban areas the employment of qualified persons for this type of work has not been general. Too often politics rather than training has been the basis of selection of personnel. Administration of relief in rural sections almost universally has been only incidental to other duties. The major responsibility of the county commissioners is the administration of the business affairs of the county. In most counties with a small population this does not take the whole time of a county commissioner who, therefore, may also undertake to conduct a private business in addition to his official duties. An overseer of the poor is rarely expected to give full-time service. He is often paid on a per diem basis and may even be limited as to the amount of time for which he can expect payment for services.

In more than one third of the States administration of poor relief has been a town or township responsibility, and in these States much interest is being shown in the centralization of relief giving and services to persons in need under a single competent county agency or official also responsible for administration of county institutions for the care of the needy, sick, and destitute. The recent organization of States for the administration of unemployment relief has greatly stimulated this interest.

Mothers' aid, another form of relief to families, has been a more recent development. Since the passage of the first State-wide aid-to-

<sup>1</sup> Organization for the Care of Handicapped Children; report of the committee on National, State, and local organization for the handicapped of the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, pp. 90-91. Century Co., New York, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> A study of the situation in Minnesota produced evidence to the effect that tax rates per \$1,000 valuation and per capita expenditures for certain common services were inclined to be much higher in the counties of small population than in the more populous counties. In fact, per capita ordinary expenses were found to drop rather steadily as one proceeded from the least populous to the more populous counties. A sort of leveling out in per capita expenditures occurred, however, upon reaching counties having from 28,000 to 40,000 inhabitants. Accordingly, it was suggested that, under Minnesota conditions, a county of about 35,000 could have about as economical an administration as one still larger. (See The Reorganization of Local Government in Minnesota, by William Anderson, in Minnesota Municipalities, vol. 18, no. 3 (March 1933), p. 102. Published monthly by the League of Minnesota Municipalities in Minneapolis.)

parents' law in Illinois in 1911,<sup>3</sup> all but two States have enacted similar laws permitting public aid to children in their own homes. In a few States mothers' aid is administered by a central State agency, but the majority of States have designated a local body for administration. The juvenile court and the board of county commissioners are the two local agencies most often designated, although there is an increasing tendency toward making local administration of mothers' aid the responsibility of a county welfare board.

The juvenile-court movement, beginning in Chicago in 1899,<sup>4</sup> spread rapidly, so that within the next 25 years practically every State had made some special provision for hearing children's cases. The area served by these courts has differed, but in the majority of States the county has been accepted as the unit. In a few States the judge hearing such cases serves several counties. In other places the unit is a single city. With a few exceptions it has been only in counties with large populations that courts have been separately organized for children's cases; elsewhere jurisdiction is usually vested in some existing branch or branches of the judicial system, such as the probate court, the circuit court, or the superior court, the court sitting as a juvenile court only when hearing children's cases. A study made by the United States Children's Bureau in 1918 showed that in only 23 of 2,034 courts reporting were the judges giving full time to hearing children's cases.<sup>5</sup> It is known that this number has increased somewhat since 1918, but definite information with regard to this increase has not been available.

Closely associated with the juvenile-court movement there has been developed provision for juvenile probation. Every State except Wyoming has now enacted legislation authorizing the employment of probation officers, although this service may be limited to counties with large cities. In States in which the provision for probation service is State wide, it is rarely mandatory, and hence many counties have not taken advantage of the law. Often volunteer service has been all that was available or part-time service paid on a per diem or per case basis, with the result that such officers have usually been wholly unqualified for their duties.

With the passage of compulsory school laws during the period 1852-1918<sup>6</sup> the problem of enforcement became important, and laws were enacted authorizing or requiring counties and cities to employ attendance officers. The early attendance officers were little more than police officers, and all that was expected of them in the localities where they were appointed was the return of the child to school. In recent years, however, there has come the realization that the child's failure to attend school is an indication of other social problems, and that attendance officers should be skilled social workers with ability to recognize these problems and to help in their solution. In the rural districts, however, the early type of attendance officer usually prevails if any is appointed. A publication of the Office of Education,<sup>7</sup> issued in 1929, shows that in most States some

<sup>3</sup> Illinois, Laws of 1911, p. 126.

<sup>4</sup> Illinois, Laws of 1899, p. 131.

<sup>5</sup> Courts in the United States Hearing Children's Cases, by Evelina Belden, p. 12, U.S. Children's Bureau Publication No. 65. Washington, 1920.

<sup>6</sup> Social Work Year Book, 1929, p. 102. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1930.

<sup>7</sup> Laws Relating to Compulsory Education, by Ward W. Keesecker, p. 16. U.S. Office of Education Bull. No. 20, 1928. Washington, 1929.

legislative provision for the appointment of attendance officers has been made. In nearly half the States appointment is by a county school authority, although frequently exceptions are made for appointment by district school authorities in the larger towns and cities. In other States appointment is limited to the district school authorities. The qualifications of these attendance officers differ widely, as does also the amount of service expected. In the rural districts oftentimes the attendance officer is a part-time worker appointed because of his political service rather than for his ability for this particular position, whereas in the cities higher qualifications are often demanded. It should be noted, however, that in the work of the attendance officer another type of welfare service has been provided on a local basis, which may be the school district or the county. In fact, a single county may have one attendance officer responsible for the rural sections within the county and additional officers serving the town or city school districts.

Local political units have also been made responsible, either alone or in cooperation with the State, for several forms of special relief or pensions. Illinois in 1903 inaugurated special county relief for the blind, and by 1931, 22 other States had enacted similar laws.<sup>8</sup> In 17 of these the county had at least a part in the administration. The first old-age pension law, enacted in Alaska in 1915,<sup>9</sup> was followed by similar laws in other States, so that by April 1933, 23 States had made provision for old-age security. In several of these acceptance of the law was made optional with the counties. In all but two the county either bore the whole burden of administration or shared this with the State. In the administration of special unemployment relief the county has likewise become an important factor. A variety of plans have been followed by the States that have adopted these forms of relief; in some States special county committees or boards have been created for administration, in other States additional duties have been assigned to an already existing welfare board, and in still others the board of county commissioners or some other official group functioning in the county for general purposes has been used.

### SPECIAL COUNTY WELFARE AGENCIES

#### COUNTY AGENCIES PROVIDING SINGLE TYPE OF CARE

The fact that children need a different sort of treatment from adults was first recognized in the early attempts to prevent the continued use of the almshouse as a child-caring agency. Accordingly, private societies and State agencies interested themselves in providing other types of care for dependent and neglected children. Ohio was the first State to place this responsibility upon the counties. A law passed in 1866 authorized counties to establish homes for children.<sup>10</sup> These homes were to be entirely separate from the almshouses and were to be controlled by boards of trustees appointed by the county commissioners. Almost immediately counties accepted the provisions of the law, and during the next 55 years 60 such homes

<sup>8</sup> Social Work Year Book, 1933, p. 44. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1933.

<sup>9</sup> Alaska, Laws of 1915, ch. 64, p. 116.

<sup>10</sup> Ohio, Laws of 1866, p. 45.

were established in Ohio's 88 counties.<sup>11</sup> The county children's home law was supplemented in 1921 when a law was passed giving the county commissioners authority to appoint a county child-welfare board consisting of 4 members, 2 of whom should be women.<sup>12</sup> This board was given the same powers and duties relative to dependent children as the trustees of county children's homes but could be appointed in any county whether or not it maintained such a home. The board of county commissioners was further authorized to pay for the board of children placed in private homes under the general supervision of the county welfare board. As a result of this action the county children's homes in some Ohio counties have been abandoned, and foster-home care has been substituted for children who would otherwise be in the county institution.

Indiana in 1881<sup>13</sup> and Connecticut in 1883<sup>14</sup> likewise authorized the creation of county children's homes. In Indiana boards of unpaid visitors were appointed, but actual control was in the hands of the county commissioners. Later in some counties management of the county children's homes was entrusted to "local associations." In 1931 Indiana had 26 county children's homes in operation.<sup>15</sup> Connecticut in 1883 authorized each county in the State to establish a temporary home for children, and by January 1, 1884, such homes were opened in each of the eight counties in the State.<sup>16</sup> Management in this State has been through a county board of 5 members, each consisting of 3 county commissioners, 1 member of the State department of health, and 1 member of the State department of public welfare. Expense is shared by the State and the towns from which children are committed.

With the creation of State schools for dependent children another type of county service for dependent children was developed. Michigan in 1874<sup>17</sup> opened the first State school for dependent children, to care for all destitute children becoming State charges until they could be placed in free foster homes. From the beginning a system of county agents was established to investigate applications from families desiring to receive children and to visit the children placed in homes in the county from any of the State institutions. Michigan has retained this plan, for county agents, whose services are paid for by the State and who are appointed by the State welfare commission. In 1933 the State school was closed.

Minnesota followed the example of Michigan and established a State school for dependent children in 1885.<sup>18</sup> In the beginning Minnesota did not have county agents, but in 1897 county superintendents of schools were made ex-officio agents of the State school to assist the State agents employed directly by the school. Little use was made of these county agents, however, and with the passage of

<sup>11</sup> Ohio's Dependent Children, by Mary Irene Atkinson. Connecticut Child Welfare Commission Bull. No. 1. Hartford, Oct. 11, 1920. (Reprint from the Survey of July 17, 1920.)

<sup>12</sup> Ohio, Laws of 1921, p. 533.

<sup>13</sup> Indiana, Laws of 1881, p. 580.

<sup>14</sup> Connecticut, Laws of 1883, ch. 126, p. 305.

<sup>15</sup> Forty-second Annual Report of the Board of State Charities for the Fiscal Year Ending Sept. 30, 1931, p. 272. Indiana Bull. of Charities and Correction No. 204, May-June 1932. Indianapolis.

<sup>16</sup> Report of the Department of Public Welfare for the Two Years Ended June 30, 1928, pp. 170, 171. State of Connecticut Public Doc. No. 28. Hartford, 1929.

<sup>17</sup> The law was enacted in 1871 (Laws of 1871, p. 280).

<sup>18</sup> Minnesota, Laws of 1885, ch. 146, p. 172.



the county child welfare board law in 1917,<sup>19</sup> the former provision was repealed. A number of other States created State public schools, but did not follow the Michigan plan for county agents.

Although the plan was never extended widely, at least three States have officially appointed groups of lay persons, known as town or county boards of children's guardians, for the protection of children. In Indiana a law passed in 1891<sup>20</sup> authorized the appointment of boards of children's guardians in counties (original law passed in 1889 was for townships) having a population of more than 75,000. In 1893 the law was made applicable to counties of more than 50,000, and in 1901 it was extended to all counties.<sup>21</sup> The present Indiana county board of children's guardians is composed of 6 persons appointed for a term of 3 years by the court having juvenile jurisdiction and has as its major duty service to this court. It is authorized to appoint the necessary agents to carry out its duties within a county, which duties include general supervision of the county children's home, care of children in the county home, in other institutions, in private homes, and in their own homes, and general responsibility for the protection of children. The county council is required to appropriate and the county commissioners to allow the funds necessary for this work. Each county board of children's guardians, although an independent local agency, is under the general supervision of the State board of charities, to which it must make such reports as are required. The report of the State board of charities for the fiscal year ended September 30, 1931, showed that 88 of Indiana's 92 counties had complied with the law in the appointment of a board of children's guardians.<sup>22</sup>

Maine in 1905<sup>23</sup> passed a law giving the governor and council the right to appoint an agent for the protection of children upon application from the proper local authorities. These agents were paid by the county in which they lived and did their work. In 1917<sup>24</sup> a mothers' aid law was passed providing for administration by a municipal board of children's guardians, which might be the overseers of the poor, ex officio, or a special board appointed for the purpose. In 1919<sup>25</sup> the name of the municipal board of mothers' aid was changed to the municipal board of children's guardians, the law authorizing the appointment of a county agent was repealed, and all guardianship of minor public wards was transferred to the State. At the same time, the municipal boards of children's guardians, together with several other public agents, were given the responsibilities formerly assigned to the county agent in the protection of children. The municipal board of children's guardians in Maine has never assumed great importance, and in reality does little more than to cooperate with the State department of health and welfare in the administration of mothers' aid and the protection of children.

In 1921 a law passed in Arizona required the appointment of a county child-welfare board in each county, composed of 4 persons

<sup>19</sup> Minnesota, Laws of 1917, ch. 194, p. 281.

<sup>20</sup> Indiana, Laws of 1891, p. 365.

<sup>21</sup> Indiana, Laws of 1893, p. 282; Laws of 1901, p. 369.

<sup>22</sup> Forty-second Annual Report of the Board of State Charities for the Fiscal Year Ending Sept. 30, 1931, p. 271.

<sup>23</sup> Maine, Laws of 1905, ch. 123, p. 127.

<sup>24</sup> Maine, Laws of 1917, ch. 222, p. 253.

<sup>25</sup> Maine, Laws of 1919, ch. 191, sec. 1.

and appointed by the superior court for terms of 4 years.<sup>26</sup> It was the duty of this board to investigate the conditions surrounding any child within the county reported to it as being "an orphan, neglected, or abandoned child", and to report such investigations to the State child-welfare board.<sup>27</sup>

Another type of county board appeared in 1913, when Pennsylvania passed an act creating a board of trustees of mothers' assistance fund in counties accepting the provisions of the act for the administration of aid to mothers with dependent children.<sup>28</sup> New York in 1915<sup>29</sup> provided for similar boards in its counties, calling them child-welfare boards. The provision in Rhode Island enacted in 1923<sup>30</sup> differed from that of Pennsylvania and New York, in that the local board of mothers' aid served either a town or city rather than a county. Louisiana, however, in 1930<sup>31</sup> more nearly followed the example of Pennsylvania and New York when a law was passed authorizing the appointment of parish<sup>32</sup> and city boards of trustees of children's aid funds in parishes adopting the law. In the first three States these local boards have functioned throughout practically the whole State, but in Louisiana the law has been inoperative largely because no funds have been available.

Each of these programs was planned to meet the needs of the dependent child only and provided a single type of care, such as institutional care in Connecticut, free foster homes in Michigan, and care in their own homes in Pennsylvania.

#### COUNTY WELFARE BOARDS OR OFFICIALS WITH BROAD RESPONSIBILITIES

##### Child-welfare programs

The need for a comprehensive public program for child care which would provide for children suffering from any form of social, mental, or physical handicap, was emphasized by the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. The report of the subcommittee as to the history and administration of local public units of child care contained the following statement:

No public program of child care and protection is complete which does not include provision for:

1. Children who are:

- Dependent.
- Neglected, abandoned, or abused.
- Delinquent, truant, or wayward.
- Born out of wedlock.
- Physically handicapped.
- Mentally deficient or disturbed.

2. The following types of service:

- Service and relief to families.
- Service and support for children outside their homes.
- Supervisory service to children in their own homes.
- Medical and psychiatric service, including hospital care if necessary.
- Protective service for neglected and abused children and children born out of wedlock.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Arizona, Laws of 1921, ch. 53, p. 96.

<sup>27</sup> This law was repealed in 1933 when a substitute act was passed.

<sup>28</sup> Pennsylvania, Laws of 1913, no. 80, p. 118.

<sup>29</sup> New York, Laws of 1915, ch. 228, p. 690.

<sup>30</sup> Rhode Island, Laws of 1923, ch. 455.

<sup>31</sup> Louisiana, Laws of 1930, ch. 46, p. 107.

<sup>32</sup> The Louisiana parish is similar to the county in other States.

<sup>33</sup> Organization for the Care of Handicapped Children, pp. 87, 88.

No State has as yet reached this standard for public services in every county, although a few States have approached it through the creation of county child-welfare agencies with broad general powers in the interests of children. A private State-wide society, the New York State Charities Aid Association, has led the way. Laws passed in New York between the years 1875 and 1896<sup>34</sup> prohibited care of children in almshouses and authorized poor-relief officials "to provide for their care and support in families, orphan asylums, or other appropriate institutions." In the beginning it was the tendency of these officials to use institutional care only for children who needed to be separated from their own families. It was a desire to assist the public officials in developing other types of care that led to the development of county committees by the State Charities Aid Association, beginning in 1907.

The first committees entered into a joint contract with the local officials (the county board of supervisors and the county superintendent of the poor) whereby it was agreed that the local committee would be responsible for all children referred to the poor officials for care and treatment, the expense of such care to be paid by the board of supervisors and the administrative costs of the county committee to be shared with the county. Later the agreement between the county committee and the county officials was informal, but the practice of the counties has continued much the same as when there were formal contracts. On January 1, 1932, 31 counties, each with one or more well-qualified workers, were still under the general supervision of the State Charities Aid Association. In 20 of these, however, the county was paying all salaries and expenses for the workers, with the county committee of the association serving merely in an advisory capacity. Through the activities of these county committees a real attempt has been made in New York State to select the form of treatment best suited to the child's needs.

In Dutchess County, N.Y., under a special act of the legislature, a board of child welfare was created which was given sole authority with relation to the care, relief, and support of all classes of socially handicapped children, including out-door relief to families in which there were children under 16 years of age. An annual appropriation has been made by the county to the board of child welfare, and the particular need of a child, not the available services, determines the social treatment. The annual report for the year ended October 31, 1930, showed that during that year 263 children had received mothers' aid, 249 children had been maintained in 22 private institutions and 6 State institutions, 167 children had been boarded in private homes, and 311 children had been included in the families given temporary relief.<sup>35</sup> Dutchess County has provided a pattern deserving attention. Too often social treatment is determined by the services most easily available, but in this county every type of service is available within a single organization, the only limitations being those imposed by the total appropriation.

Minnesota was the first State to create by statute a county child-welfare agency responsible for services to all children in need. The

<sup>34</sup> New York, Laws of 1875, ch. 175, p. 150; Laws of 1876, ch. 266, p. 264; Laws of 1878, ch. 404, p. 482; Laws of 1879, ch. 240, p. 320; Laws of 1884, ch. 438, p. 511.

<sup>35</sup> Annual Report of the Dutchess County Board of Child Welfare for the Fiscal Year ending Oct. 31, 1930, pp. 7, 15, 16. Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Children's Code Commission, to which Minnesota is indebted for its county child-welfare legislation, was to some extent influenced by the New York program. The commission desired a program that would be broad enough to insure the protection of "defective, illegitimate, dependent, neglected, and delinquent children."<sup>36</sup> To this end county child-welfare boards were created to serve under the direction of the State board of control. To these child-welfare boards was delegated the local responsibility for all types of children for whom adequate provision had not already been made. In the rural districts this has meant practically any service in the interest of children except mothers' aid and poor relief, and even these may be included at the request of the local authorities legally charged with their administration. In the urban districts service has been somewhat more limited and has been largely confined to the child born out of wedlock, the feeble-minded, and the child placed in a foster home. Only one county in the State has appropriated funds to be used by the child-welfare board for children cared for in boarding homes. In all other counties payments for boarding care are made from the general revenue fund of the county and must be requisitioned each month. In many of the rural counties the child-welfare boards have been greatly hampered by their lack of funds and the corresponding unwillingness of the local boards of county commissioners to approve payments for care of children outside their own homes. Under the Minnesota plan a skeleton has been provided on which might be built a program almost as extensive as that of Dutchess County, although its potentialities have not as yet been realized.

By January 1932, the statutes of six States<sup>37</sup> had authorized the counties to provide a county child-welfare board with broad responsibilities for the care and protection of children. The scope of activities undertaken is more limited in some of these States than in others. (See p. 36.) The creation of county child-welfare units has made possible social services for children never before available. Increasing emphasis has been placed on preventing the separation of a child from his family through the provision of services in the home or temporary local care away from the home when this is necessary.

Although designated as "child-welfare" agencies, these county boards are often authorized to provide case-work services to all officials in the county who are caring for dependent, delinquent, or handicapped persons, whether children or adults. In some counties, therefore, it has been found possible to provide a complete program of social services to the county under the general administration of a county child-welfare board. To give attention to the needs of children is a basic principle in any program of prevention, hence the centering of public interest on the necessity of providing public services to children in rural areas has been one of the most constructive social-welfare measures in the history of social work during the last quarter of a century.

#### General social-welfare programs

Every county is faced with social problems of the aged, the physically handicapped, the sick poor, the offender, and the destitute among its adult population, as well as with problems of child wel-

<sup>36</sup> Minnesota, Laws of 1917, ch. 194, sec. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Alabama, Kentucky, Minnesota, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin.

fare. The county welfare agency or official created by statute in six States<sup>28</sup> has been designated as a "public-welfare" rather than a "child-welfare" agency or official. The county programs in most of these States differ little from those of county child-welfare boards, except that greater emphasis is placed upon the administration of public relief. General or specific responsibility for services to children has been given to all these agencies.

The administration of various forms of public relief has been made one of the major responsibilities of the county superintendent or commissioner of public welfare in Missouri, New York, and North Carolina, and of the county or city board of public welfare in Virginia. In Nebraska and West Virginia administrative authority for relief is not conferred by the statutes, but in some of the organized counties the disbursement of poor-relief funds has been delegated by the county commissioners to the social worker appointed by the county public-welfare board and has been one of his major activities.

In addition to the States that have provided by statute for general county welfare services, such programs have been developed in interested counties, notably in California, Georgia, Iowa, and New Mexico, through the stimulation of a State agency. The centralization of relief giving in the county and the provision of competent personnel to provide case-work services to persons in need have been the major objectives of these programs. In New Mexico special emphasis has been placed on child welfare.

Whether the county agency has been designated as a "child-welfare" or a "public-welfare" agency, it has been found almost universally that when qualified case workers are employed by the county gradually all persons needing care are referred to these workers.

<sup>28</sup> Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia.

## PROGRESS IN COUNTY WELFARE ORGANIZATION

### THE STATE IN COUNTY DEVELOPMENT

The passage of legislation authorizing the organization of county welfare agencies has not in itself meant the immediate establishment of such agencies on a sound, stable basis. Every State that has made real progress either with or without specific legislation has had stimulation and guidance from a State department, usually one of social welfare. Much variation is found, however, in the extent to which State departments have provided personnel for this purpose. A separate division of county organization having one or more workers doing only this work has been created in a few States, but in some of these this division has been discontinued after a few years of service. At present only five States<sup>39</sup> are known to have a special staff to assist the counties in developing their social services. In the remaining States that have developed a county welfare program, county organization is undertaken by members of the State staff who are engaged in supervisory activities or in case-work services.

Different methods are used by the State staff to create interest in adequate social services in the counties. Talks given to organized groups of citizens, conferences on special county problems, and demonstrations of what can be accomplished in individual cases by thorough case-work services are methods that are used universally. In a few States, notably California, Iowa, and Virginia, considerable use has been made of studies or surveys of the conditions and needs of the counties as a basis for an improved plan. In California and Iowa such surveys have been made on the invitation of the county board of supervisors. County surveys made in California have included studies of provisions for children, outdoor relief, and hospital and jail facilities. In Iowa the surveys, made by a representative from the extension department of the State university, have been confined mainly to the administration of poor relief. The Virginia statute makes it the duty of the department of public welfare to

collect and publish statistics regarding the dependent, defective, and delinquent classes, both in and out of institutions, within the State, and such other data as may be deemed of value in assisting the public authorities and other social-welfare agencies of the State in improving the care of these classes and in correcting conditions that contributed to their increase.<sup>40</sup>

This section makes it possible for the division of county and city organization to take the initiative in making surveys if conditions indicate a necessity for such action. The report of a survey of five counties made in 1931 included information with regard to public indoor and outdoor relief, private relief, and the juvenile court.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Alabama, Georgia, Iowa, North Carolina, and Virginia.

<sup>40</sup> Virginia, Ann. Code 1930 (Michie), sec. 1902-1.

<sup>41</sup> Unpublished study of Charles City, New Kent, James City, Warwick, and York Counties, made in July 1931.

Financial assistance from the State has been an important factor in the development of school and health services in rural areas. The need for State aid in the social-service field, however, has received little recognition. Even when the need for more adequate social service has been demonstrated, county officials have been slow in adopting a program because of the additional financial burden. In the few States in which State funds have been made available, the results of outside aid have been surprising, although this is probably partly the influence of State approval as evidenced by State aid as well as because of the aid itself. By 1927 only 14 of the 67 Alabama counties had accepted the provisions of a law passed in 1923 whereby counties were permitted to establish county boards of child welfare. Then the 1927 legislature appropriated \$850,000 for an attendance fund to be distributed annually to the counties on the basis of aggregate daily attendance in schools. As school attendance showed a marked improvement in counties with superintendents of child welfare, it was decided to place a premium on their employment. Accordingly those counties providing joint attendance and welfare service were eligible to receive an additional \$2,000 of the attendance fund for this purpose.<sup>42</sup> As a result, within the next 2 years 42 additional counties provided such service.

North Carolina had a somewhat similar experience. A law passed in 1931 permitted the State as part of its centralized administration of education to assume a portion of the salary and travel expenses of a county superintendent of welfare since he also served as chief attendance officer of the county.<sup>43</sup> The State equalization board accordingly adopted a scheme of allotment based on population; in counties of 32,000 or more the allotment amounted to \$800 to \$1,200 for salaries and \$150 to \$200 for travel expenses. For counties with a population of less than 32,000 the amount of aid possible ranged from \$400 for salary and \$100 for travel expenses in counties of less than 12,000 to \$600 for salary and \$100 for travel expenses in counties of 22,000 to 32,000.<sup>44</sup> The real effect of the measure was not felt until after July 1, 1932, but by October 1932 nine additional counties had made provision for the employment of full-time county superintendents of welfare.<sup>45</sup> The fact that a county received a grant from the State made its officials more willing to appropriate an amount at least equal to the amount received.

The New Mexico Bureau of Child Welfare has been able to use State funds to stimulate county organization and thereby extend its own services throughout the State. A provision has been included in the appropriation bill for the bureau whereby a portion of the funds may be used in payment for local services. Arrangements in the several counties have differed in accordance with the individual situation. In one county the State bureau united with the city schools and the State department of civilian rehabilitation in supporting a social worker, paying \$700 of the total budget of \$2,344.96. In another county the bureau joined with 12 private organizations, the

<sup>42</sup> Annual Report of the [Alabama] State Child Welfare Department, 1927-28, pp. 11, 12, 13. Montgomery, Ala., 1929.

<sup>43</sup> North Carolina, Laws of 1931, ch. 430, sec. 6, p. 732.

<sup>44</sup> Biennial Report of the North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare, July 1, 1930, to June 30, 1932, pp. 49, 50.

<sup>45</sup> Public Welfare Progress, vol. 13, no. 4 (October 1932). Raleigh, N.C.

juvenile court, and the county in a county welfare project. Each agency contributed to the budget of \$6,520, the bureau's contribution amounting to \$500. A similar plan was used in Santa Fe where by combining the resources of service clubs, Red Cross, city, county, court, churches, fraternal organizations, a woman's club, and private individuals a budget of \$6,000 was raised. Only \$100 of this came from the State bureau. In a district made up of three counties the budget of \$3,300 was met from the court funds of each county with an additional \$700 from the State bureau. New Mexico has demonstrated what can be accomplished through leadership and a combination of resources in communities where it would have been quite impossible for any single agency to support a full-time qualified worker.

West Virginia is the only State in which legislation has been passed expressly authorizing State aid in support of the local welfare program. The law provides that the salary of the secretary may be shared by State and county, with not more than half paid by the State board of public welfare. Unfortunately, appropriations have been too limited to make possible any extensive utilization of this provision. In its report for the biennium ended July 1, 1928, the State board of children's guardians<sup>46</sup> reported payments to 3 counties—\$25 a month on the salary of the worker in each of 2 counties and \$50 a month in another.<sup>47</sup> In more recent reports no mention is made of such payments.

Gradually other States have realized that some provision for State aid must be made if there is to be any appreciable increase in the number of counties employing full-time social workers of qualified standing. The biennial reports of the Minnesota Children's Bureau for 1928 and 1930<sup>48</sup> recommend a State appropriation that could be used to assist counties to the extent of \$500 annually for one social worker and \$250 for each additional one. The 1932 report<sup>49</sup> recommends State aid to the extent of one third the cost when a county employs paid service for its child-welfare board.

The use of Federal aid as a direct stimulus toward further development of county social-welfare programs has not yet been tried, although this has proven an effective means of increasing the county health organizations throughout the country. The report of the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection clearly supports the principle of Federal aid in the following recommendations:

Both Federal and State grants-in-aid accepted in the field of education and health should be extended to the field of public welfare, in order to make possible the development of effective local units of service.<sup>50</sup>

The report further states that:

The testimony is overwhelming that Federal assistance has either been the main factor in starting State activities when none had existed before, or has greatly accelerated work which was being ineffectively performed.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Now a division of the State department of public welfare.

<sup>47</sup> Fifth Biennial Report of the [West Virginia] State Board of Children's Guardians, July 1, 1926, to July 1, 1928, p. 8. Charleston, 1928.

<sup>48</sup> Fourteenth Biennial Report of the [Minnesota] State Board of Control, 1927-28, p. 27 (State Prison Printing Department, Stillwater, 1928); Fifteenth Annual Report of the State Board of Control of Minnesota, Period Ended June 30, 1930, p. 50 (State Prison Printing Department, Stillwater, 1930).

<sup>49</sup> Sixteenth Biennial Report of the [Minnesota] Board of Control, 1931-32, p. 48 (State Prison Printing Department, Stillwater, 1932).

<sup>50</sup> Organization for the Care of Handicapped Children, pp. 90, 91.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 280.



## DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES AND STANDARDS

## TYPES OF RECOGNIZED PROGRAMS

Three types of service have been accepted as constituting an organized county welfare program: (1) Employment by the county of one or more qualified case workers; (2) services of a case worker employed by a group of counties having small populations; (3) local volunteer services under the supervision of a State case worker. Practically every State with statutory provision for a county plan for welfare service has made paid services possible when the employment of a social worker is approved by the fiscal body of the county.<sup>52</sup>

**Employment of paid worker by county**

In 8 States, 4 with specific legislation and 4 without legislation,<sup>53</sup> only counties employing a paid worker are recognized as having an organized program, whereas in 7 States<sup>54</sup> counties with volunteer services only have been considered as organized. In North Carolina, counties of more than 32,000 population according to the 1920 census must employ a full-time superintendent of public welfare, but those with a smaller population are only required to have an ex-officio superintendent of welfare to give part-time service with the assistance of a lay board.

In most States the financial resources of the individual counties rather than their need for social services has been the controlling factor in the development of a county program. Few counties with low property valuations and small populations are employing a county social worker unless through the efforts of a State agency some plan of cooperation has been developed between private agencies and public officials whereby part of the salary of the case worker may be paid from private funds.

**Employment of paid worker by district**

The district plan has been accepted in some States, in the hope that a social worker might be provided for a group of counties each of which would be unable to finance a program independently. The plan is one of considerable merit and is growing in favor. Three of the four States<sup>55</sup> that have enacted legislation specifically authorizing the creation of county welfare agencies within the last 5 years have provided for the union of two or more counties in the employment of a social worker. The Nebraska law is particularly interesting in that it permits only counties of less than 15,000 population to join in a district plan, thereby indicating that in the opinion of the legislature a county of more than 15,000 should be able to support its own worker.

New Mexico, however, is the only State that has used the district plan to any extent. In this State the judicial district has been accepted as a unit of administration. Since 1926 three district organizations have been established—the sixth, ninth, and fifth judicial

<sup>52</sup> The Texas law does not specifically provide for executive service for its county child-welfare boards, but a recent statement (Apr. 1, 1933) from the division of child welfare indicated that several county boards expected to employ a worker as soon as funds were available.

<sup>53</sup> Alabama, Missouri, New York, and Virginia; California, Georgia, Iowa, and New Mexico.

<sup>54</sup> Kentucky, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

<sup>55</sup> Kentucky (1928), Wisconsin (1929), Nebraska (1931), Texas (1931).

districts containing 3, 4, and 3 counties, respectively. Two of these have ceased to function, but the fifth judicial district organization has remained active. Three counties—Eddy, Lea, and Chaves—compose this district. Their combined population is 41,535.<sup>56</sup> Organization was stimulated by the offer of the State bureau of child welfare to give \$600 toward financing the unit, provided the court would appropriate an additional \$1,200 and also pay traveling and office expenses. The offer was accepted, and a worker appointed by the district judge from several candidates nominated by the State department. The expense has been budgeted among the three counties with Chaves paying 53 percent, Eddy 27 percent, and Lea 20 percent. Although an honest attempt was made to budget services in accordance with the amount paid by each county, this has been found impossible.<sup>57</sup>

An interesting experiment, tried by the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare in an effort to supply professional services to county mothers' aid boards unable to finance a full-time worker, might well be tried out with county welfare boards under the same circumstances. An itinerant worker under the direction of the State supervisor of mothers' aid has been made available to counties willing to meet her salary and expenses for a short period of time, usually 1 to 3 months in a year.<sup>58</sup> Such a plan is similar to the district plan used in New Mexico, but differs from it in that counties not adjacent to each other may use the same social worker, and in that the service is usually concentrated into a short period of time, with none the rest of the year.

#### Use of volunteer worker

The use of board members for the performance of social service has never been considered a satisfactory substitute for the full-time professional worker but has been accepted in several States as a valuable resource when no other type of service was available. In general, experience has shown that the value of volunteer workers is largely dependent upon the extent to which their services are accompanied by expert assistance and guidance from the State. The county welfare board consists of a selected group of persons in whom can be centered information as to the social resources of the State and to whom the members of the community can go for advice. With supervision from the State department such a board can be used successfully for certain case-work problems in the community. In a county where no one has felt any responsibility for social welfare a county welfare board can be a real leavening influence.

In Minnesota and Wisconsin extensive use has been made of the volunteer services of the county board; Texas is starting its program on a volunteer basis. Each of these States has had an active, interested State department with a staff to make frequent visits to the counties and to advise them by correspondence. In 1932 Minnesota had one State case worker to each 13 counties, and Wisconsin had

<sup>56</sup> Eddy 15,842, Lea 6,144, Chaves 19,549.

<sup>57</sup> For the past year court funds have not been available, and at the present time, June 1933, the salary of the worker is met from State funds with each of the three counties paying its own administrative expenses.

<sup>58</sup> Fifth Biennial Report of the Secretary of Welfare, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1929-30, pp. 38, 39. Harrisburg, 1930.

one to each 17 counties. The number of counties per State worker is much greater in Texas, as the State staff has not been increased with the appointment of child-welfare boards in the counties. These case workers attend board meetings, do difficult case work, and make suggestions to the board members as to the next steps for cases under care. It is these supervisory case workers who keep the boards alive and active in most counties. In fact, the explanation for the limited activity of the county welfare boards in certain States doubtless lies in the absence of this State case-work supervision. Only two county welfare boards without secretaries were reported as active in West Virginia in September 1932. The State child-welfare commission of South Dakota, in its biennial report for the period ended June 30, 1932, listed 65 county welfare boards for the State's 71 counties. No report of the activities of individual boards was given, but in a State survey of handicapped children the boards in only 21 counties were named as being especially active in following up cases of children referred to them. The secretary of the commission, however, considers the boards active in 37 counties.

It is clear that each of the States recognizing volunteer work as acceptable for a county agency intended that it should simply precede the ultimate employment of a full-time social worker. This has been the case in some counties in which the boards have led the campaign for a full-time worker. In other counties where the board or individual members of the board have done an especially good piece of work, it is possible that their work may have delayed the employment of a paid worker, as the county officials have been quite well satisfied with what they have. Another real difficulty that has arisen out of the volunteer plan has been that when funds for the employment of a worker are available there is a tendency on the part of counties to employ on a full or part-time basis a former board member who has done an especially good piece of work. Oftentimes this has been done as a reward for services already rendered, but rarely has it proved successful. No matter how interested a board member has been, unless he has social-work training he is not qualified to do the necessary case work and supply the necessary leadership in developing approved social practices.

#### USE OF PAID WORKERS

In spite of the general recognition that a full-time paid executive of professional grade is essential in the administration of a first-rate county agency, relatively few counties have accepted the principle in practice. As counties have felt the need for effective social work the number of county social workers has slowly but steadily increased, although the quality of the workers has varied from persons with no training or experience in social work to those of excellent professional standing. Less than one fifth of the 1,537 counties in the 16 States with a county plan for social service were employing one or more full-time workers in January 1932. These 16 States differed widely, however, in the extent to which their counties had adopted paid service. Only Alabama, California, and New York had county social workers in two thirds or more of their counties, Alabama leading with only three counties without a worker. In North Carolina full-time workers were available in half the coun-

ties, and in Iowa and Minnesota one fourth to one seventh of the counties had such service. A few counties in Georgia, Missouri, New Mexico, South Dakota, Virginia, and West Virginia have county social workers, but in Kentucky, Nebraska, Texas, and Wisconsin the county program has been established so recently that few if any counties have succeeded in obtaining full-time paid service.

#### Qualifications

In the average rural community the name "social worker" has little meaning. It does not mean that the person has completed a course of training which makes him eligible to membership in the American Association of Social Workers. Any kindly person willing to help his fellows is considered qualified to undertake the social services needed by the community. As a result, one of the most difficult problems undertaken by State departments in furthering the development of county social work has been to convince county officials and the local public of the necessity of employing qualified case workers. In several States safeguards to assure the appointment of qualified county workers have been provided in the statutes. The methods outlined in the law have been of four types:

1. Certification of workers according to qualifications set by the State department.
2. Statutory definition of qualifications for appointees.
3. Requirement of approval of appointments by the State department of welfare.
4. Appointment from an eligible list submitted by the State department of welfare.

Alabama is the only State that has provided for certification of workers, and its experience through several years has proved that the plan accomplishes the desired result provided the State sets high standards. Persons receiving certificates must have fulfilled the following requirements: (1) Graduation from a recognized college or university; (2) 3 years' teaching experience, or 3 years' experience with some recognized social agency; (3) definite training for social work. Because of the local scarcity of applicants having training in social service, provisional certificates have been issued to persons without previous social-work training, upon completion of a short course in social work. This course lays particular emphasis on rural case work, family welfare, community organization, and social legislation. A permanent certificate is not granted until the worker has in addition to this preliminary short course attended some school of social work for 2 summers out of 3. The result has been that with but few exceptions county superintendents of child welfare in Alabama are college graduates, and each has had a minimum of 3 months' training in social work.

Qualifications of county workers are fixed by statute in Wisconsin and Nebraska. The Wisconsin law leaves no chance for misunderstanding, as it provides that executive agents of the county children's board "shall have the qualifications specified for probation officers employed by counties having a population of less than 150,000." This means

training equivalent to that represented by graduation from an institution of recognized standing, including specialized courses in social science, 5 years' experience of such character as to demonstrate knowledge and ability to carry

on this type of social service investigational work; familiarity with the requirements, methods, and practices of various occupations and employment; knowledge of modern criminology, deliberate and discerning judgment; resourcefulness; tact; initiative; reliability; firmness; good physical condition.<sup>59</sup>

The Nebraska law is much less definite. Its only stipulation is that workers must be "qualified by training and experience."<sup>60</sup>

The laws of Kentucky, West Virginia, and North Carolina provide that appointments of county workers must be approved by the State department. In West Virginia an additional requirement is made that the county welfare secretary be "properly qualified" with regard to education, training, and experience. Little progress has been made in county organization in Kentucky, and qualifications for workers have not been established. The requirements for appointees formulated by the North Carolina Board of Charities and Public Welfare in 1922 were very general in character. In addition to desirable personal qualifications and an age limitation of 45 years for applicants having no special training in social work, the requirements set were that applicants for positions should have:

1. At least high-school education and preferably some college work.
2. Shown some desire to do social work by having been actively interested in Red Cross work, church, charity, educational, or civic work, and so forth.
3. Been willing to take the training provided each summer at the University of North Carolina by the school of public welfare of the university and the State board of charities and public welfare.

Virginia is the only State that has undertaken to control appointment through requiring selection from a list of eligible persons proposed by the State department. The Virginia State Department of Public Welfare has found it all but impossible to keep an active list of eligible candidates available, and, therefore, when a county worker must be found the Virginia department, like the State departments of several other States, endeavors to find the worker who will best fit the needs of the particular county and proposes this worker to the county board of public welfare. Sometimes the county group suggests persons for the eligible list, but the major burden is placed on the State.

In practically every State without statutory provisions to insure qualified workers, the State department has given advisory service to counties seeking workers. In New Mexico the bureau of child welfare is usually able to insist that the county worker meet certain qualifications, since it may pay a portion of the worker's salary. Standard qualifications as set by the bureau for such workers are (1) a college education, (2) special training in a school of social work or in a university that provides instruction and field experience in social case work, and (3) at least 4 years' experience in a recognized social-service agency of high standards. The extension division of the University of Iowa, under whose guidance the "Iowa plan" has developed, has likewise succeeded in maintaining high qualifications.

<sup>59</sup> Letter received from director of the juvenile department of the State Board of Control of Wisconsin, Feb. 15, 1932.

<sup>60</sup> Nebraska, Laws of 1931, ch. 121.

In 22 of the 27 Iowa counties organized in 1930 the social workers employed were eligible for membership in the American Association of Social Workers. The Georgia Department of Public Welfare has constantly sought to improve standards of training and experience for county social workers, although selection has been left to the local communities. In California the standards of Alameda County have been recommended to county officials who have consulted the State department before a secretary is chosen. These call for: (1) Training: Some degree of social training from a recognized authority, such training to include a working knowledge of the principles and methods of relief as endorsed by modern relief organizations. A knowledge of California laws regarding State and county aid is also desirable. (2) Experience: Practical experience in relief organization or similar social service. (3) Fitness: Ability to give to and obtain from other workers a friendly cooperation and to keep the agency in touch with the general public; should have a thoroughly sympathetic interest in the work.

#### Conditions affecting employment

As has been noted previously, few counties having a small population and low property valuation will employ a county worker unless financial assistance is received from the State. The fact that a number of counties with populations of less than 20,000 have organized their resources so that alone or in combination with other similar counties a paid worker has been employed indicates that size alone is not the deciding factor. A high level of social understanding in the county and the leadership of local persons with appreciation of what can be accomplished by case-work services may lead to the appointment of a paid worker even in a small county.

Public provisions for persons in need are vitally affected by the extent to which private organizations have succeeded in rendering the necessary services to the community or to the county. Many instances are found of counties with adequate financial resources and large populations which nevertheless are not employing a county social worker. Most of these counties include a sizable city in which public and private welfare services are available. The needs of the rural or semirural areas in these counties may be met by organized private social-work programs or there may be a complete lack of service in these areas.

Some idea of the probability of employment of full-time county social workers in counties belonging in different population groups is to be found in table 1. The nine States included in this table were those in which the employment of county social workers had developed the furthest. Of the counties in these States having 30,000 or more population 85 percent were employing paid workers, as compared with 42 percent of the counties of 20,000 but less than 30,000 population, and 9 percent of the counties having less than 20,000 population.

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TABLE 1.—*Counties of specified population in 9 States employing county social workers for child-welfare or general social-welfare activities in January 1932*

State	Total counties	Counties with less than 20,000 population		Counties with population of 20,000 but less than 30,000		Counties with population of 30,000 or more	
		Employing case worker	No case worker	Employing case worker	No case worker	Employing 1 or more case workers	No case worker
Alabama.....	67	9	0	25	13	30	0
California.....	58	2	22	4	3	26	1
Georgia.....	161	4	115	4	24	11	3
Iowa.....	99	10	51	9	12	8	9
Minnesota.....	87	4	50	2	20	6	5
New Mexico.....	31	5	21	2	2	0	1
New York.....	57	2	3	6	0	44	2
North Carolina.....	100	5	33	8	15	37	2
Virginia.....	100	1	64	6	17	5	7

<sup>1</sup> 1 of these counties has since secured a worker.

<sup>2</sup> 3 of these counties are part of a district organization.

<sup>3</sup> 2 of these counties have since secured a worker.

<sup>4</sup> Excluding 5 counties in New York City.

<sup>5</sup> 5 more counties secured workers after July 1, 1932.

<sup>6</sup> 2 more counties secured workers after July 1, 1932.

<sup>7</sup> 1 more county secured a worker after July 1, 1932.

In comparing the achievements in these nine States a number of situations must be taken into consideration. In Alabama, Iowa, New York,<sup>6</sup> and Virginia practically all the persons counted as "county social workers" had received some special training in social work in addition to a good general educational background. In the remaining States some of the county workers, although employed for full time, were not social workers. North Carolina and Virginia present special problems. In North Carolina counties of less than 32,000 population are authorized by the law to avail themselves of part-time services of the county superintendent of schools. This provision may have had some influence on the limited employment of a full-time worker in counties having small populations. In Virginia a city of 10,000 or more population may by vote decide to become independent of the county in which it is located, which means that Virginia counties do not include cities as do many counties in other States. For example, the city of Richmond is independent of Henrico County, which almost surrounds it. Private social agencies from Richmond have served the county, which, doubtless, is the reason why a public county program has never been established.

#### Standards in services

County social-work programs have developed largely through the initiative of individuals or local groups. Many of them have been frankly experimental in character or have been carried out under serious financial limitations which have prevented the employment of sufficient staff to provide the services really needed. Gradually, through the accumulative experiences of State departments working on county welfare problems, a body of general information as to desirable practices, procedures, and standards is evolving. Progress

<sup>6</sup> Every county in New York, except those with special legislation, must have a full-time county superintendent of public welfare elected by popular vote. This group of persons is not included in table 1, which gives information as to county social workers employed for services to children.

in the formulation of standards has been handicapped by the lack of carefully controlled demonstrations which would provide authoritative information regarding such problems as the extent of need for services in rural and semirural areas, the relative values of generalized and specialized services under specified conditions, and minimum and desirable budgets for county welfare agencies.

The desirable proportion of social workers to a given population is still largely a matter of conjecture. Dr. C. E. A. Winslow, professor of public health at the Yale School of Medicine, in his appraisal of the work of the Cattaraugus County, N.Y., Health Demonstration, makes the following statement:

It seems probable that a ratio of at least one case worker to 10,000 people might be fixed as a minimum; and one dreams of a staff of, say, seven such case workers in Cattaraugus County (population, 72,398), providing a decentralized service correlated closely with the nursing service in each local district. \* \* \*

The fundamental conclusion from the Cattaraugus experience is that a rural county needs approximately the same amount and kind of health and social service that is required in an urban area. This conclusion would seem fairly obvious, but it is one which is consistently ignored, particularly as a minimum program is frequently all that an economically handicapped rural county can support. Essential human needs are not, however, necessarily related to financial resources. The pangs of hunger are not allayed by assuring the victim that he has eaten all he can pay for.<sup>62</sup>

In reality a single social worker rarely serves a population as small as 10,000. A single social worker served an average population of 30,000 in 138 counties in 6 States<sup>63</sup> during 1931, varying from 1 generalized worker to 20,000 for 7 Iowa counties to 1 children's worker to 36,000 in 33 New York counties.

Only to a very limited extent have standards been set as to the maximum case load a single social worker should be expected to carry in a rural area. The Pennsylvania Children's Aid Society has set 40 cases as the maximum for each of its county workers. In its study of county welfare work in Alabama the Child Welfare League of America fixed the number at 60 cases, provided full time was devoted to case work.

In the social-welfare field county programs, except in counties including a large city, have usually been launched when the services of a single case worker have been assured. It is conceivable that in some localities greater initial effort to set up a more complete program might prove to be more effective in the end. In the field of public health a different situation exists. A full-time county health service means the employment of a staff composed of a medical health officer, 1 or more nurses, 1 or more sanitary inspectors, and 1 or more office assistants.

A well-organized and comprehensive program cannot be provided without adequate funds. Budgets of county welfare agencies are usually sadly limited. In Alabama the usual budget of the county child-welfare board is only \$2,500, which cares for the salary of the worker, traveling expenses, and a small amount for miscellaneous expenses. In one Minnesota county the budget includes some funds for child care. Few of the other Minnesota counties have adopted a budget, but when they have it has been restricted to sal-

<sup>62</sup> Carrying Health to the Country, in Survey Graphic, vol. 65, no. 11 (Mar. 1, 1931), p. 640.

<sup>63</sup> Alabama, Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota, New York, and Virginia.



aries, travel and office expenses. No agreement has been reached as to what constitutes a fair per capita expenditure for the support of a county welfare program. In 12 Minnesota counties the county welfare boards were employing one or more full-time workers in 1930, and their per capita expenditures varied from 5 cents to 15 cents, with the average at 9½ cents. The Dutchess County (N.Y.) program, on the other hand, which provided for all public aid, including mothers' aid as well as services to children, cost each person in the county \$1.45 in 1930. In an Alabama county with a population of 25,000 and a budget of \$2,500, the cost would be only 10 cents per capita for services alone.

The cost of a county welfare program must vary with the extent of the work and the size of the county, but according to the report of the subcommittee on the local public unit of the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection,<sup>64</sup> the budget of even a small county should be sufficient to provide clerical service, at least one social case worker, traveling and office expenses, and funds for care of children. An automobile for each field worker has come to be considered a necessity also. A suggested minimum budget for a county with a population of from 15,000 to 20,000 starting a program is given below:

Service expenditures .....	\$3, 700
Salary of social worker.....	1800
Salary of clerical worker.....	900
Automobile.....	500
Travel expenses.....	400
Office expenses.....	100

Many counties are spending public funds for the care of children in subsidies to private agencies, in refunds to the State for care in State institutions or in supervised foster homes, for maintenance in county institutions, or for boarding care. The importance of placing administration of such funds in a county agency providing services to children is evident, as without adequate social services such expenditures may be excessive and may be used for types of care that do not meet the needs of the children. An average of 15 to 20 children per 10,000 population are being maintained in institutions or boarding homes; for large cities the rate is higher. In many localities the entire expenditures for such care must come from public funds.<sup>64a</sup>

It is of interest to compare this suggested county budget and actual per capita expenditures for social-welfare services with those for public-health services in counties of the same type. The United States Public Health Service<sup>65</sup> proposed for one State two budgets for county health units in counties with limited resources which are adapted to the needs of rural counties of different sizes. These budgets provide for the smaller counties \$7,000 per year and for the larger \$9,000 per year. In 1929 the cost of operating 443 full-time county health units in 31 States averaged 32 cents per capita.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Organization for the Care of Handicapped Children, pp. 88, 105.

<sup>64a</sup> County expenditures for dependent children in 1930 in 13 Ohio counties of less than 20,000 averaged \$3.500 per 10,000 population, providing for an average of 19 children to this same unit of population.

<sup>65</sup> Health Departments of States and Provinces of the United States and Canada, p. 52. U.S. Public Health Bulletin No. 184 (revised). Washington, 1932.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

## COUNTY WELFARE PROGRAMS IN 16 STATES

Development of State-wide county welfare programs has followed two different plans. In several States a publicly supported county welfare agency has been created through specific legislation to perform certain functions for which the county is responsible. In a few other States, through the efforts of the State agency, some form of county organization has been achieved by the union of several social-welfare groups, either public or private, into a single organization, jointly supported. Certain general similarities exist in a number of these States; 16 have a plan for the development of a county welfare program which is in accordance with the following general principles:

1. Receive support from local public funds for at least part of the cost of administration.
2. Have coordinated two or more types of service on a county-wide basis for persons living within the county.
3. Are controlled by a local board, which may be administrative or advisory or may have an executive officer who is under the general supervision of a State agency.
4. Include on the advisory or administrative board some public official or persons appointed by local or State public officials.

No uniform plan has been followed in the type of organization developed or in the functions delegated to the local administrative unit, although certain likenesses appear in some States. Instead, each State has developed a plan suited to its particular local situation.

## COUNTY WELFARE AGENCIES ESTABLISHED BY STATUTE

### EXTENT OF APPLICATION OF THE LAWS

In 12 States mandatory or permissive legislation has been enacted authorizing counties to create county welfare agencies to perform certain specified duties.<sup>67</sup> The laws of North Carolina and South Dakota clearly make it mandatory that county welfare boards be appointed, and in North Carolina and New York it is also mandatory for counties to have a county superintendent or a county commissioner of public welfare. In Virginia and West Virginia the statutes might be interpreted as mandatory, but since appointments in the counties of these two States are dependent upon the submis-

<sup>67</sup> Alabama, Code 1923, secs. 143-152. Kentucky, Carroll's Stat., Ann. 1930, secs. 331 (1-16) to 331 (1-19). Minnesota, Mason's Stat. 1927, secs. 4457-4459, sec. 4460 as amended by Laws of 1931, ch. 242. Missouri, Rev. Stat. 1929, secs. 14182-14197. Nebraska, Laws of 1931, ch. 121. New York, Cahill's Consolidated Laws of 1930, Public Welfare Law, secs. 1-167; secs. 40, 57, 86, 154, as amended by Laws of 1931, chs. 196, 88, 481, 197; sec. 165-a, as added by Laws of 1931, ch. 356; and sec. 126, as amended by Laws of 1932, ch. 482. North Carolina, Ann. Code 1931 (Michie), secs. 5014-5018. South Dakota, Comp. Laws of 1929, secs. 10004-A to 10004-C. Texas, Laws of 1931, ch. 194, secs. 4 and 5. Virginia, Ann. Code 1930 (Michie), secs. 1902-1 to 1902-o. West Virginia, Code 1931, ch. 49, art. 6, secs. 1-8; Laws of 1931, ch. 2. Wisconsin, Stat. 1931, secs. 48.29 to 48.31.

sion of a list of eligibles from the State department a permissive element has crept in, with the State department making the decision as to whether or not a county is ready for an organized program.

Permissive laws which make it the responsibility of the county to decide whether a county welfare board shall be appointed are in force in six States.<sup>68</sup> In Missouri, where the acceptance of a county welfare plan means the employment of a county superintendent rather than the appointment of a board, the law is also permissive. In New York State every county public-welfare district is required to have a county commissioner of public welfare, but the extent of his administrative power rests with the county board of supervisors. In four States (Kentucky, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Texas) all counties are included in the provisions of the act whether or not they include a large city. In each of the other four States special provisions have been made for the organization of certain counties, which have been exempted from following the general plan for the State.

Alabama has made an exception of the three counties containing the cities of Birmingham, Mobile, and Montgomery. The law provides that in counties with a population of more than 75,000 the juvenile court, which in these counties is a special court, may appoint an advisory board made up of persons known to be interested in the welfare of children and may provide a paid staff of probation officers.<sup>69</sup> The duties of the juvenile-court advisory board are not as extensive as those of the county welfare boards provided in other counties, as they are concerned only with problems of children referred to the court. Probation officers appointed by the court, like county superintendents of welfare appointed in other counties, must be selected from candidates who have been certified by the State child-welfare department.<sup>70</sup> However, if any of these three counties should decide that the provisions of the county welfare law were more acceptable to them than the alternative plan, nothing would prevent any or all of them from adopting the uniform act. Under such conditions the advisory board of the juvenile court would be superseded by a county welfare board.

The Wisconsin law is applicable only to counties of less than 250,000 population, which means that Milwaukee County is excluded.<sup>71</sup> A previous law had provided that counties of more than 250,000 should have a manager of county institutions, directed by a board of five trustees appointed for overlapping 4-year terms. Three members of this board are appointed by the county board of supervisors, one is elected from the membership of the county board, and the fifth is appointed by the governor. The organizations under the care of the manager and board of trustees include county hospital, county poor farm, almshouse, department of outdoor relief, home for dependent children, hospital for the insane, asylum for the chronic insane, tuberculosis hospital, and school of agriculture and domestic science.<sup>72</sup>

The Missouri statutes make special provisions for the organization of cities of different classes as well as for counties. Counties includ-

<sup>68</sup> Alabama, Kentucky, Minnesota, Nebraska, Texas, and Wisconsin.

<sup>69</sup> Alabama, Session Laws of 1923, no. 295, sec. 15; (Code 1923, secs. 3550, 3551).

<sup>70</sup> Alabama, Code 1923, sec. 3536 as amended by Laws of 1931, no. 315, sec. 7, p. 361.

<sup>71</sup> Wisconsin, Stat. 1931, sec. 48.29.

<sup>72</sup> Wisconsin, Stat. 1931, sec. 46.21.

ing cities of the first class (Kansas City and St. Louis) are required to provide a nonpartisan, nonsectarian social-welfare board composed of 6 members, 3 of whom are appointed by the county court and 3 by the mayor and common council. The provisions for the remaining counties are permissive and may apply only to a particular city or to the county. In counties of less than 50,000 population the county court (the fiscal body of the county) may appoint an official known as a superintendent of public welfare, who is made responsible for all social-welfare activities of the county. The law also provides that cities of the second and third class may create a social-welfare board at the option of the mayor and common council, which may serve the city only or the entire county.<sup>73</sup>

In New York centralization has been achieved by means of the public-welfare law of 1929, which was to a considerable extent the culmination of the efforts of the State Charities Aid Association to centralize county care for children. This law to some extent put into documentary form the procedures developed by the State Charities Aid Association in its county societies. It provided for the mandatory centralization of administration of all relief except home relief (outdoor relief) and medical care in the home. This transferred to the county public-welfare district all responsibility for children needing public support, including destitute children, neglected or abandoned children, delinquent children, defective and physically handicapped children, and children born out of wedlock. A permissive clause in the law made it possible for a county to include home relief in its centralization as far as the towns were concerned, and the cities also if they voted to be so included. It is also permissive with the county to decide whether costs of care shall be centralized or shall be charged back to the towns. A county, however, may assume certain costs without assuming the whole cost, even though administration may be entirely centralized. In certain specified town and city public-welfare districts exceptions were made which in some instances removed the conflicts between special laws previously passed for these districts and the public-welfare law, and in others removed the district from the provisions of the act.

Experience seems to indicate that a permissive law provides a better basis for sound development than does a mandatory law. Under the former it is possible to prepare counties for organization so that when this is accomplished an agency is ready to function effectively. If a mandatory provision is accepted literally by counties, it is all but impossible for a State department with a small supervisory staff to furnish the direction that individual counties need in the initiation of a welfare program best suited to the local needs. However, it makes little difference whether legislation is permissive or mandatory, or, in fact, whether there is specific legislation, provided there is an active State department stimulating and educating the counties to the advantages of a local body for the development of a local social-welfare program.

#### COUNTY WELFARE BOARDS

In nine States an unpaid board or committee has been created by the statutes as the administrative authority responsible for all or part

<sup>73</sup> St. Joseph and Springfield are classified as second-class cities. Cities of between 3,000 and 30,000 population may by election become cities of the third class.

of the publicly supported social-welfare work of the county.<sup>74</sup> The law of North Carolina also provides for a county welfare board, but its duties, except for administration of mothers' aid and services provided to the State department, are advisory rather than administrative.

#### Membership of boards

The size of the county welfare board is not particularly important provided the members are a representative group carefully chosen for their interest in and knowledge of the problems to be considered. However, at a conference of State representatives called by the Child Welfare League of America in 1928 it was decided that a membership of five was the preferable number for such a board. The different States have provided for boards of 3 to 12 members, as follows:

State	Number of board members	State	Number of board members
Alabama -----	7	South Dakota -----	5
Kentucky ----- <sup>75</sup>	3	Texas -----	7
Minnesota ----- <sup>76</sup>	5	Virginia -----	3-7
Nebraska -----	5	West Virginia -----	6-12
North Carolina -----	3	Wisconsin -----	5

Considerable variation also exists among the States as to length of term for board members. Two States (Minnesota and Texas) have an indefinite term whereby members serve "during the pleasure" of the appointing agent. Minnesota, in practice, however, makes its appointments on an annual basis; Texas has as yet set no precedent for its provision, for county organization in this State is still very new. In Wisconsin county board members are appointed annually. Three States (Alabama, South Dakota, and West Virginia) have a 2-year term; three (Kentucky, Nebraska, and North Carolina) have a 3-year term; and Virginia has a 4-year term. All the States with terms of more than 1 year have made provision for overlapping of terms so that there will be a continuing group with knowledge of the board's work. Such a provision has distinct advantages, for constant and complete changes in a policy-making body such as a county board would be a decided handicap. Nevertheless, the fact that a State does not have a plan for extended and overlapping terms need not mean complete turnover in board personnel. An analysis of the continuity of service of Minnesota board members made in 1929 showed that of 70 counties only 15 had had continual change in membership during a period of from 5 to 10 years operation.

Relatively short overlapping terms with State supervision to stimulate activity appears to be the soundest policy. This offers an opportunity for the removal of inactive members without great difficulty through changes in appointment, and need not effect the stability of the group, since satisfactory members may be reappointed. It is essential, however, that the State agents who maintain direct contact with the county keep the appointing agent well informed of the relative merits of existing board members, so that reappointment may not become a habit irrespective of the desirability for continuation of service of individual board members.

<sup>74</sup> Alabama, Kentucky, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

<sup>75</sup> Five in counties containing a first- or second-class city.

<sup>76</sup> Seven in counties containing a first-class city.

It is generally agreed that the board should be representative of general county interests as well as of the various communities in the county if it is to be aware of county conditions and cognizant of the local attitude toward county problems. The importance of having both men and women on the board has been recognized in the laws of 7 of the 10 States with provisions for a county welfare board,<sup>77</sup> and in 2 (North Carolina and Virginia) of the other States women have been appointed consistently throughout the State. The first appointments in Texas have also included both men and women. It is not infrequent for county welfare boards to have more women serving than the minimum required by law. The legal requirements, however, usually place the men in the majority, although South Dakota is the only State in which the law does not require the appointment of more than one woman.

*Method of appointment.*—The methods of appointment for board members, outlined in the statutes, differ quite widely in the 10 States with legal provision for a county board, but they can be classified under three general plans:

1. Appointment by a State agency.
2. Appointment by one or more officials or local official bodies.
3. Joint appointment by State and local authorities.

In three States (Minnesota, North Carolina, and South Dakota) all the appointive members are named by the State agency. In Minnesota this means the majority on the board (3 out of 5 or 5 out of 7); in North Carolina the whole board (3); and in South Dakota the minority (2 out of 5). Experience has shown that it depends largely on the methods employed in the selection of the board whether appointments by a State department are more satisfactory than by a local agency. It is probable that the framers of the Minnesota law felt that since the county child-welfare boards were to carry on the State's program in the counties, it was essential that the State select a majority of the board members. In North Carolina the board has no duties other than advisory, except to assist the State department and to approve applications for mothers' aid, for which the State also is partly responsible. The duties of the South Dakota county welfare boards are also closely related to the work of the State child-welfare commission, which has the right to appoint 2 of the 5 members of the county child-welfare board. In each of these three States, doubtless, it was also felt that appointment by a State group would avoid local political difficulty.

Three States leave the appointment of county boards to a local agency. Appointment of the county welfare board in Alabama is by the judge of the juvenile court, in Nebraska by the county commissioners acting with the judge of the juvenile court, and in Texas by the commissioners' court. Only Alabama has functioned under this plan for a sufficient length of time to permit of any judgment as to its advantages or disadvantages. In its annual report for 1927-28 the State child-welfare department described the local appointment of child-welfare boards as a distinct effort to place the community on its own responsibility for developing resources to meet its needs and for promoting self-government.<sup>78</sup> Satisfactory boards

<sup>77</sup>Alabama, Kentucky, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.  
<sup>78</sup>Annual Report of [Alabama] State Child Welfare Department, 1927-28, p. 9. Montgomery, 1928.

have resulted under Alabama's plan, but some credit for this should go to the State department, which through its agents watches the local situation closely and advises with the judge.

Four States appoint their county boards through joint action of State and local agencies. The Kentucky system is somewhat cumbersome; the county judge and county superintendent of schools must submit a list of 9 names, or 15 if the county be one containing a city of the first or second class, to the State children's bureau. From this list the State bureau selects 3 or 5 persons whose appointment is recommended to the local judge and superintendent of schools. It is then the duty of these two local officials to make the formal appointment. Both Virginia and West Virginia provide for appointments by local officials (the circuit court in Virginia and the county fiscal body in West Virginia) from a list of eligibles submitted by the State department. It was found that in practice this sometimes meant the State department really selected the entire board for the list presented to the court was often limited to the number to be appointed, although local people were usually consulted in the preparation of the list and their wishes considered in the selection. Wisconsin has an ingenious plan whereby two members are appointed by the State department, one by a local official (the juvenile-court judge), and these, together with the chairman of the county board of supervisors, who is designated as the fourth member, elect the fifth member at their first meeting in the calendar year. The Wisconsin plan has only been in operation since August 30, 1929, and those familiar with its operation are not ready to suggest any radical change. In practice the State department has pursued the policy of consultation with local groups before making its appointments, and the local appointing agents have usually reciprocated by consulting with the State department before action is taken. The State department has also made an effort to guide judiciously the election of the fifth member, as it often happens that the four members have little knowledge of potential members in an unrepresented section of the county. When appointments are dependent upon three sources real danger exists that they may be so delayed as to interfere with the welfare program in a county. However, a study of 10 Wisconsin counties showed that with the exception of one county there had been no serious delay in appointments.

Each plan has proved to have advantages and disadvantages. Under the State appointment system, unless the State agency has a real understanding of the local situation, persons may easily be selected who, from the standpoint of their own communities, are totally unfitted for the responsibilities involved in such a position. On the other hand, the State department that selects its appointees carefully is often without the prejudices which may influence a local appointing agent. The State department also may be more inclined to weigh the local situation and search out individuals who will fill the particular need in a county than is a local official to whom the appointment of county board members is a very minor detail as compared with his other duties. Casual inquiry may suffice when the local appointing agent suddenly realizes that it is necessary to act if the county welfare board is to function. The danger

of political influence depends upon the attitude of the appointing agent, whether local or State.

In a State in which local feeling is strong and local independence zealously guarded, it would probably be a great mistake to attempt State appointment of even a minority of county board members, for it is doubtful whether such appointments would ever be cordially accepted. Even in States where counties have accepted certain control, a county sometimes rebels and the welfare board may cease to function as a result.

It has not been possible to arrive at a definite conclusion as to whether a county feels more local pride in a board of its own selection than in one with the prestige of State selection back of it. Confidence and respect for the local board apparently do not depend upon the appointing agency but rather upon the membership and the subsequent activity of the board. Appointment by joint action is an attempt to satisfy both State and local interests, but it is uncertain whether or not this is actually accomplished. In principle, the general idea would seem to have merit, but until it can be given adequate trial in practice its acceptance cannot be urged.

*Ex-officio members.*—Five States have provided for certain ex-officio representation on the county welfare board. Of these, four States (Minnesota, Alabama, West Virginia, and Wisconsin) have a representative from the local body responsible for the county expenditures. Wisconsin and West Virginia have designated that this member be the chairman of the body, but in Minnesota and Alabama the commissioners select the member to serve on the county welfare board. The reason for including a representative from the group holding the purse strings seems self-evident. Theoretically at least, it should be advantageous to have one member to carry back to this group an interpretation of the purpose, accomplishments, and future plans of the county welfare board. But actually the man who can satisfactorily manage the business affairs of a county may not necessarily be interested in its welfare program, nor can he always take back an unprejudiced interpretation of its activities. If he has obtained his official position through election by the people, he may hesitate to declare himself in any controversial matter for fear of injuring his political strength. In States where the chairman automatically becomes a member of the county welfare board, even less chance may exist of obtaining a person with a sincere interest in social welfare than when certain selection is permitted. On the other hand, when selection is left to the fiscal board itself there is sometimes the tendency to pass the honor or responsibility along. This oftentimes means frequent changes in the membership, with insufficient time for a member to gain a real knowledge of the work before he is supplanted by someone else. An enlightened, genuinely interested representative from the group in charge of county expenditures is without doubt a real asset, and legislation needs to be sufficiently flexible to make it possible to secure this.

In three States (Minnesota, South Dakota, and Alabama) the county superintendent of schools has been made a member of the welfare board. In general the basis for such a provision appears to be relatively sound, for it seems fair to assume that the superintendent of schools has a wider knowledge of conditions affecting



children in the rural districts than any other single individual. However, the official duties of a county superintendent of schools are arduous, and he may have neither time nor inclination to assume additional ones. In Minnesota, and in South Dakota since 1931, there has been an added drawback in that the office is elective, and the superintendent is often overconscious of the political effect of his activities. In Alabama, where the superintendent of schools is chosen by the county board of education, an elected body, the political influence is felt to a certain degree although not so directly.

The judge having juvenile jurisdiction has been made an ex-officio member of the county welfare board in three States (Alabama, West Virginia, and South Dakota). Alabama has even designated the judge as chairman of the board. In view of the fact that seven States (Alabama, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin) either have given to the board certain duties with relation to the juvenile court or have allowed it to cooperate with the court by providing probation service when requested so to do, it is of interest that in only three States has it been deemed wise to make the judge a member of the board, although in some of these States it is the practice of certain individual judges to attend the county board meetings.

No uniformity is found in the five States with relation to the number of ex-officio members as compared with other members of the county welfare board. In Alabama 4 of 7 members are ex-officio; Minnesota provides for 2 ex-officio members whether the board is composed of 5 or 7 members; in South Dakota, as in Alabama, the ex-officio members are in the majority and include 3 of the 5 members; West Virginia has 2 ex-officio members on a board that varies from 6 to 12 members; and Wisconsin has only 1 ex-officio member on its board of 5. Limited ex-officio representation is undoubtedly of real value, but experience has shown that a board attempting to carry on an active administrative program is often seriously handicapped when overloaded with ex-officio members.

#### Functions of county boards

The activities of county welfare boards vary in different States and in individual counties. In general the functions of these boards are of three types: (1) To provide social planning for the county, including advisory services and assistance to local public officials and social agencies; (2) to further in every way possible the provision of funds for the care of children and for the employment of qualified social-case workers; and (3) to serve on case committees or to do case work under the supervision of a State agency when funds are not available for the employment of a case worker.

A board composed of representative citizens can have great weight with the fiscal authorities at the time yearly appropriations are being made. The board or a committee of the board and not the worker should present the financial needs of the county agency, although the worker may be called upon to supply the members with exact information as to those needs. If public funds are not available in sufficiently large amounts to support the agency adequately, the appeal for private funds to supplement the regular appropriation should come from the board.

It has proved helpful for county welfare boards to keep other non-official groups in the county acquainted with the work and the plans for progressive development. If the membership is representative, it will naturally follow that the members of the board are likewise members of other organizations in the county—social, civic, and religious. By interpreting to these organizations the work of the board, a body of public opinion may be built up which can be of great help. The members of a county welfare board can often be of real assistance in the passage of desirable social legislation within the State. Their contact with other organizations can be equally helpful in this as well as in other promotional work, and should not be overlooked.

The county board, with the help of the State department, usually plans the county program which the worker is to direct. Only through regular meetings can the board keep in close touch with the work of its executive so as to interpret this to the several communities of which its members are a part. It has been found that it is neither necessary nor always advisable that the executive be the only one chosen to speak to groups over the county about the work being done. Board members who are in close contact with all that is happening within the organization often have a real grasp of the situation throughout the county and are well able to explain the agency to the community. The board working with its executive should determine the policies of the agency regarding intake, division of work with other agencies, and other matters affecting its functions.

In some counties the whole board or, when that is impracticable, a committee of the board acts as a case committee for the worker. Through this service boards have an opportunity to consider the problems of individual cases in the county and to assist with plans for social treatment. A knowledge of the work so gained can often be put to good purpose later when definite policies of social treatment must be determined and there is a need for educational interpretation. Often the board can be of great help by giving volunteer service in certain selected cases. This is particularly true in a large county where transportation is an item. By using the board members for certain designated pieces of work the time of the executive may be conserved for other services. In addition, such procedure helps to keep the work vital to the individual members of the board and thereby aids them in their understanding of the problems involved in the county program. The board that permits its executive to do all the case work sometimes may find that it has lost all power of independent action when for some reason or another the worker is discontinued.

The program of the county welfare board in counties where no paid service is available requires careful planning by the State department and the local county group. A board of lay persons, no matter how interested they are, needs guidance in determining just what their work is to be. Such a board cannot be expected to care for all the needs of the county, and it is important, therefore, that a careful selection be made so that the board may understand just what its responsibility is. In some States the records of certain counties

indicated that the lack of an understood program was largely the explanation for the board's disinterest and ultimate failure. Possibly the explanation why the Minnesota child-welfare boards have remained active over so long a period lies in the fact that much of their work has been assigned to them by the children's bureau of the State board of control.

When it is necessary for the county welfare board to accept responsibility for case work it is usually more satisfactory to limit it to a few particular types of cases, as supervision is much more easily provided under such conditions than if a generalized program is adopted. However, even though limitations are set up, the State worker must assist the local board so as to prevent it from becoming too heavily loaded with case-work problems. A volunteer board given careful supervision may do a fairly creditable piece of work with a few cases, but when the load becomes large they rarely know how to select the essentials from the nonessentials, and in consequence practically all work is poorly done.

An accurate account should be kept of all cases that the board is unable to handle, either because of its already heavy case load or because the cases do not fall into the classification of types accepted. It has been found that this record can be of real value when the time comes to request a full-time worker or there is a movement to create additional social-service resources.

#### COUNTY WELFARE OFFICIALS

Three States (Missouri, New York, and North Carolina) have made provision for the appointment or election of a county official in whom responsibility has been centered for the administration of certain specified social-welfare activities. In North Carolina the statutes have also provided for an advisory committee for this official, and in New York the local committee of a State-wide private agency frequently acts in an advisory capacity insofar as work with dependent children is concerned. Experience has shown that such advisory service has been effective and further that assistance or supervision from a State department charged with the responsibility for developing welfare services throughout the State is desirable.

*Missouri.*—The first combined city and county board of public welfare was established in 1913 in Buchanan County, Mo., where the city of St. Joseph is located. In 1917 the Missouri Children's Code Commission recommended a general extension of the plan throughout the State. However, when legislation was finally passed in 1921 the provision for a county board of public welfare had been eliminated and, instead, the county court of any county in the State with a population of less than 50,000 was authorized to appoint a county superintendent of public welfare. Although the original bill set up certain qualifications for these superintendents, the legislature rejected these entirely. As a result counties that have accepted the provisions of the statute have frequently been handicapped by the employment of unqualified superintendents. Had provision been made for an advisory committee in each county it might have resulted in higher standards for appointments throughout the State and in better standards of service within the individual counties. The purpose of the Missouri provision was to furnish in the county

government one department responsible for all social work done by the county. It was intended that close cooperation should exist between the county superintendent of public welfare and the State board of charities and corrections. If this cooperation had developed the lack of advisory service in the counties might not have been so unfortunate, but instead the relationship between the State department and the county superintendents of welfare has grown more and more remote until it had become practically nonexistent by 1932.

*New York.*—Like Missouri, New York has provided for a single official in each county to direct the public-welfare work as it relates to the general relief problems of both adults and children. Through the public-welfare law passed in 1929 provision was made for a county commissioner of public welfare in each county public-welfare district. This official is selected by popular vote and is, therefore, an independent official with no local board either to direct or to supervise his work. In many counties, however, the agent of the State charities aid committee assists the commissioner in cases involving children, thereby establishing an advisory relationship between the commissioner and the county committee.

*North Carolina.*—In North Carolina the plan is a cross between the Missouri plan and that of States with a county welfare board. A county board of charities and public welfare, appointed by the State board of charities and public welfare, is required for each county. Likewise, there is a provision whereby each county is supplied with a county superintendent of public welfare. In all counties of more than 32,000 by the 1920 census, this superintendent must be a full-time employee, selected jointly by the county board of education and the county commissioners for a 2-year term. In counties of less than 32,000 the employment of a full-time superintendent is permissive, but in those not employing one the county superintendent of public instruction becomes ex officio county superintendent of public welfare.

Under a ruling of the State board of charities and public welfare, the county board of public welfare must approve the applicants for positions as superintendent of public welfare. The board also serves in an advisory capacity for the county superintendent, who in turn acts as secretary to the board.

#### COUNTY PROGRAMS DEVELOPED WITHOUT SPECIAL LEGISLATION

In California, Georgia, Iowa, and New Mexico plans for county organization have been developed by a State agency without specific legal authorization, although in three of these existing legal provisions have been interpreted so as to make possible county programs.<sup>79</sup> In each of these States the major purpose in county or-

<sup>79</sup> North Dakota and Pennsylvania likewise have legal provisions that can be interpreted as authority for developing county welfare services. The children's bureau of the State board of administration of North Dakota is authorized "to cooperate with the board of county commissioners in the selection of child-welfare workers and boards" (Supp. to Comp. Laws, 1925, sec. 283b6-k), but as yet no county has been successfully organized. The Pennsylvania law gives the department of welfare the power "to promote the organization of county councils of social agencies, and county welfare boards, the purpose of which shall be to coordinate the social-welfare activities of the counties" (Laws of 1929, P.L. 293, no. 175, sec. 2306).

ganization was to further the employment of qualified case workers for services to families needing relief and care. The county welfare programs in California and Iowa were especially concerned with services to families needing relief as well as with safeguarding the distribution of public funds. In Georgia and in New Mexico administration of relief held a minor place until the last two years. The development of services for children and the coordination of all public and private welfare activities in the county have been of major interest in these States.

*California.*—The California poor-relief law<sup>80</sup> makes it the duty of the board of supervisors of every county to have a committee, a person, or a society to make investigations of applications for relief and to keep records. Accordingly, the department of social welfare, in an effort to have a certain amount of uniformity throughout the counties, has drawn up a model ordinance which counties have been urged to adopt. As an alternative, a resolution was prepared, but the ordinance has usually been recommended as preferable. Although this model has been varied to fit local situations, on the whole the same general plan has been followed. This plan calls for a board of welfare consisting of seven members and a secretary, with such other assistants as may be necessary. The board of supervisors, the fiscal body of the county, is given authority to appoint the members of the welfare board. Two of the supervisors are appointed annually to serve as members of this board. The term of the other five members is 4 years, but a provision for overlapping terms gives continuity to the department. The county welfare board appoints its secretary and necessary assistants, but the salaries for these workers are subject to the confirmation of the board of supervisors. Although the reason for organization in California has been to improve the administration of public aid, other services have frequently been coordinated with this in the county welfare department, such as probation, child-placing, administration of county institutions, inspection of boarding homes, and local administration of aid to the three groups for whom State aid is provided, the needy blind, the needy aged, and dependent children.

*Georgia.*—The legal authority for county organization in Georgia is not quite so clear as that in California. The act creating the board of public welfare in 1919<sup>81</sup> gave to the board certain educational responsibilities throughout the State and further provided for the appointment of a local committee of visitors in each county or city. The board realized that such local committees could supplement its work, which included visits and inspections of jails, almshouses, and private institutions and agencies. In addition, in its work as the official investigator and advisory agent of the State the board had become interested in the administration of relief, in the probation work of the juvenile court, and in school attendance, all of which pointed to the need for a professional social worker. Stimulated by this local need together with its own need for local service the board undertook the development of a plan for county organization.

<sup>80</sup> California, Stat. 1901, p. 636, sec. 5, as amended by Laws of 1917, p. 445 (Gen. Laws of 1931, act 5814, sec. 5).

<sup>81</sup> Georgia, Laws of 1919, p. 222, sec. 9.

The type of program established in individual counties under the Georgia plan has been dependent upon the local situation. Owing to the strong local feeling in Georgia, the part of the State department has been to assist and advise but never to control in the organization of a county social-welfare program. An effort has been made to educate the local people and to stimulate them to solve their own problems.

In 1931 the law relating to the board of public welfare was repealed, and a board of control of eleemosynary institutions was created instead. However, the public-welfare department became a division of the new board and has continued its work. With the repeal of the board of public welfare law the slight legal authority for county organization also disappeared, but the program has continued nevertheless. Selection of workers has been left to the local community, but the department of public welfare has been greatly interested in improving the standards of training and experience and in 1930 reported a growing recognition in the counties of the need for trained, skilled workers, and their unwillingness to employ untrained local people.

*Iowa.*—County welfare organization in Iowa has been accomplished without legal authority. However, unlike any other State, stimulation has come from an educational institution, the extension division of the State university, rather than from a State department of welfare. About 1912 the University of Iowa became interested in the methods then in use for administration of poor relief and came to the conclusion that it was an educational function to demonstrate to counties a program for more constructive administration of these funds. The poor-relief statute had provided for overseers of the poor<sup>82</sup> in the counties, hence this was used as a wedge in persuading counties to employ qualified workers who might serve as overseers. The "Iowa plan" further proposed a combination of public and private relief with family-welfare service, on the basis of county jurisdiction.

The uniform general plan for organized counties includes a board of directors with representation as follows:

1. All or part of the county board of supervisors are members of the board. Fourteen counties out of 25 in 1931 had from 1 to 5 members of the board of county supervisors on the county welfare board.
2. A few ex-officio members, representing such organizations as the county medical society, board of education, farm bureau, chamber of commerce, women's clubs, or civic clubs, are included.
3. A group of 8 to 10 contributors elected from their own group completes the board. The term of office varies, but it is usually 3 years. In a few counties board members are elected for 2 years, and several others have a 1-year term. The size of the board is decided locally, but a group of 15 to 20 members has proved to be the most effective.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Iowa, Comp. Code 1919, sec. 3289.

<sup>83</sup> The Iowa Plan for County Organization of Social Work, pp. 5, 6. University of Iowa Extension Bulletin No. 260, Jan. 15, 1931. Published by the University, Iowa City, Iowa.

In counties accepting the Iowa plan, the board of directors employs a full-time social worker to serve as executive secretary of the Social Welfare League, the usual name of the private relief organization in a county. The county board of supervisors then appoints this same person overseer of the poor, thus making her responsible for the administration of relief collected from private sources as well as that from public funds.

The division of funds for financing the organization varies from county to county, but in the main the most desirable has been 50 percent from the county and 50 percent from the private organization, raised through contributions. The public department has tended to assume a larger and larger share of the executive's expense. In eight counties the entire cost is borne by the counties, but even in these the necessity for the interest of a private group has been stressed.

There is no direct relationship between the county organizations set up under this plan and the bureau of children in the State board of control, although mutual cooperation has developed to a limited extent. The Iowa Child Welfare Commission in 1924 recommended legislation permitting any county in the State to create a county welfare board under the general supervision of the State board of control.<sup>84</sup> Under this bill in counties already organized the existing machinery could have been utilized, the directors serving as the county welfare board. Although the measure failed to pass the legislature, the principles embodied in it are still recognized as sound. The demonstration made by the extension service of the value of an organized county welfare program should lead eventually to a State-wide program developed in coordination with State welfare services.

*New Mexico.*—In New Mexico broad responsibilities have been granted to the board of public welfare. Likewise, the activities of the bureau of child welfare, which is under the board, have been neither limited nor clearly defined in the laws. The bureau has assumed, therefore, that it might carry on any activities in the field of child welfare that were not actually prohibited. The wide expanse of territory in the State made decentralization of services seem a necessity. Hence the bureau has stimulated the development of local welfare organizations which could serve as extensions of the bureau itself. Organization has varied with the local situation, and has sometimes extended to districts composed of several counties rather than been confined to a single county. Schools, courts, and social agencies have all cooperated with the bureau of child welfare in its program of organization over the State. In one community 21 different groups participated in the county organization. New Mexico, like Georgia, has not followed a uniform plan, but has adapted its program to the local situation.

#### SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES OF COUNTY WELFARE AGENCIES

Although the laws of several States differentiate between the duties of the county welfare board and the executive agent, it has seemed inadvisable to separate them, since practically all States with

<sup>84</sup> Report of Iowa State Child Welfare Commission, p. 95. Des Moines, 1924.

specific legislation have in practice combined the two. In a few States the duties of the county welfare agency are not outlined in the law but are prescribed by a supervisory body. For example, in South Dakota and Minnesota, a State department has been largely responsible for the character of the county program, whereas in Texas the commissioners' court of the county in cooperation with the State department defines the duties of the local child-welfare board. In States without specific legislation it is somewhat difficult to determine the scope of activity of county welfare organizations, as there has been less uniformity throughout the individual counties than in States with specific legislation.

The activities of county welfare agencies in the 16 States with coordinated county programs may be divided into two general classes:

1. Special services for which no previous provision has been made in the county, such as the discovery and investigation of conditions affecting children and the establishment of special services for dependent, neglected, and physically and mentally handicapped children.
2. Services, previously the responsibility of other county officials or agencies, which have been transferred to the county welfare agency either (a) by mandate, which makes these duties automatically the responsibility of the new county agency whenever it is set up, as in Missouri and North Carolina; or (b) by a permissive provision, which allows transfer of activities to the county welfare agency on request of other county officials, as in Nebraska and Wisconsin.

It has proved advisable to have legislation prescribing duties for county welfare agencies flexible enough to permit broad interpretation by the individual county and yet definite enough so that no question exists as to certain primary functions. Authority merely to cooperate and advise with county officials offers little on which a welfare board can develop a real county program. The welfare agency should provide an opportunity for the coordination of all publicly supported social services. In the rural county where private social work is practically nonexistent, the county welfare agency has a broad field of service and should be set up so that it can supply the welfare needs of all persons requiring aid.

#### SPECIAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

In eight States<sup>55</sup> the statutes specifically provide that the county welfare agency shall have general responsibility for the welfare of defective, dependent, neglected, and delinquent children. In the four remaining States services for children are less clearly defined. In North Carolina it is the duty of the county superintendent of welfare to oversee dependent and delinquent children, "especially those on parole or probation" and dependent children placed in the county by the State board of charities and public welfare. An additional provision authorizes the county superintendent to investigate the "causes of distress", under the direction of the State board, and to make such other investigations in the interest of social welfare as

<sup>55</sup> Alabama, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin.



the State board may direct. A section of the Nebraska law authorizing the superintendent to perform such duties as shall be necessary to promote the public welfare of the county would seem to make possible a general family-welfare program. The superintendent of welfare in a Virginia county is responsible for the investigation of "causes of distress" and such other investigations as the State board may direct. In West Virginia the county welfare board is to advise and assist the State board of children's guardians<sup>86</sup> in its work in the county and to make such visitations and reports as the State board of guardians may request.

Protective work for children is likewise expected of the county organizations in the four States without specific legal authority for county programs, although there is considerable variation in the emphasis on this work from State to State and county to county. In New Mexico and New York the emphasis is probably stronger than in the other States.

#### Probation

The statutes of nine States<sup>87</sup> permit the county welfare executive to serve as probation officer when appointed by the court. Such a provision makes it possible for a county with a small population and a small number of court cases to have qualified services when otherwise only part-time, untrained persons, or volunteers only, would be available. Adequate investigations and supervision can be carried on only by a person well grounded in the principles of case-work treatment and acquainted with the resources of the community. Not only the probationer himself must be helped to use the resources available to him—educational, vocational, recreational—but his family, too, may need assistance so that they can supplement the work of the probation officer.

Thorough investigations are essential to the judge in making his decisions about a case. The county worker often knows many of the families appearing before the court. Thus she is able promptly to present to the court pertinent information regarding the family. Even in a county employing more than one social worker it has sometimes proved an advantage to have probation service as a part of the general welfare work of the county. Much duplication in travel can be avoided under such a plan, and the unfortunate stigma caused from having an officer from the court visit the family is eliminated. Instead, the worker simply represents the county welfare department.

In the States without legal provisions for county development less tendency has existed to coordinate probation work with other county welfare activities. A few county social workers in Iowa and Georgia have at the request of the court accepted responsibility for supervision of selected children on probation, and in some California counties probation has been made a part of the work of the county welfare department. In New Mexico the juvenile court may be one of the agencies included in the county organization and is accordingly entitled to services.

<sup>86</sup> Now the division of children of the department of public welfare.

<sup>87</sup> Alabama, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

### School attendance

Alabama and North Carolina are the only States in which school attendance is one of the major duties of the county agency. In Alabama county workers have been expected to give a large part of their time to school attendance because 60 percent of the support for the county welfare program has come through the county board of education. In a recent study in six Alabama counties the percentage of cases referred as school-attendance problems in the total number of active cases ranged from 10 percent in one county to 54 percent in another, with an average of 33 percent.<sup>ss</sup> Doubtless many of these cases would have eventually come to the attention of the county superintendent of child welfare had they not come through the school-attendance channel, but the opportunity for constructive work would probably have been considerably lessened if the difficulties had been allowed to run on until they became serious. On the other hand, attendance problems may demand such a large proportion of the worker's time that other equally important problems will be neglected.

In North Carolina school attendance is possibly not as heavily emphasized as in Alabama, but it constitutes one of the important functions of the county agency. In the less populous counties, where the superintendent of schools acts as superintendent of welfare, it is almost inevitable that school attendance should be accentuated in the county program. It is possible, too, that additional emphasis will be laid upon this function as counties take advantage of a provision passed by the 1931 legislature, whereby school equalization funds were made available to counties employing full-time county superintendents of welfare. (See p. 12.) In four other States<sup>ss</sup> legal provision has been made authorizing the executive of the county welfare agency to assist in enforcing compulsory school attendance under certain conditions.

Two types of activities are involved in any effective school-attendance program: (1) Routine clerical work and (2) case-work services. A county welfare agency with a general program of social work can be of real assistance in the case-work problems uncovered in the enforcement of school attendance, which often include dependency and neglect, feeble-mindedness, and delinquency, but it may lose its social-welfare value if it becomes too much involved in the other aspect of the program. The experiences of North Carolina and Alabama have shown the advantage of including school attendance in the duties of a county welfare agency, for through it an entering wedge into the social difficulties of a family has often been provided. In these two States the danger that attendance work may crowd out other types of social work has also been apparent.

In none of the four States without specific legal authority has any general effort been made to include school attendance in the county welfare program, although in a few localities in New Mexico the schools have united with other local agencies in the financial support of the program and have accordingly received case-work services.

<sup>ss</sup> Unpublished report of study made by the Child Welfare League of America in 1930.  
<sup>ss</sup> Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, and Nebraska.

**Parole**

Six States<sup>80</sup> have empowered the executives of their county welfare boards to act as parole agent for persons in the county paroled from State institutions. Alabama, Kentucky, and Wisconsin limit this function to juvenile parolees. No evidence has been found that much use has been made of this provision, although a few cases may have been handled in most of the six States. Undoubtedly more satisfactory parole can be carried on by the close-at-hand service of a qualified county welfare worker than by the occasional visits of a parole agent. However, it is essential that the local worker have the benefit of the institution's knowledge of the individual and that the State parole agent assist in planning and in giving general supervision during the period of parole. This is particularly necessary if the county worker must care for persons paroled from institutions for the insane, as is possible in North Carolina and Virginia.

In Minnesota the county welfare agencies are sometimes expected to give supervision to persons on parole from the State institution for the feeble-minded, and they are often asked to supervise feeble-minded wards of the State board of control who have had no institutional experience.

**Other services to children**

In Alabama and West Virginia one of the duties of the county welfare agency is to cooperate with the State labor inspectors. Alabama limits this provision to child labor, but West Virginia apparently expects the worker when requested to give aid in cases of both adults and children.

Alabama and North Carolina expect the county worker to aid in the promotion of wholesome recreation. By this provision it is apparent that these two States have recognized the relationship between wholesome recreation and a reduction of social problems. However, although it may be admitted that many social difficulties grow out of unwholesome recreation or a lack of any recreational opportunities, it should also be recognized that few county social workers have any training for recreational work. Experience has shown that with the multiplicity of other duties the social worker has little time for more than a general interest in this specialized work.

Counties in Wisconsin have been specifically authorized to make appropriations to the county welfare agency for the purchase of clothing, payment of medical services, expense of boarding, and other special aid for children. A few Wisconsin counties have made appropriations, but in no county has the amount been sufficient for more than incidental items of expense.

In New York State it has long been the practice to provide support from public funds for dependent, neglected, delinquent, and all other types of handicapped children, but not until the passage of the public-welfare law in 1929 was it mandatory that this responsibility be assumed by the county or public-welfare district.

Isolated instances can also be found in other States where counties have permitted the county welfare agency to administer certain funds for the support of children, but as a general rule each child's case

<sup>80</sup> Alabama, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

must be accepted by the fiscal authority of the county or town if public aid is to be administered.

#### OTHER COUNTY SERVICES

##### Home relief

Administration of relief is the duty of the county welfare workers in Missouri, New York, North Carolina, and Virginia; in North Carolina final responsibility for relief is still vested in the county commissioners; and in New York the services of the county welfare worker are limited to administration of relief to nonresident poor except in counties accepting the county plan. In three other States (Minnesota, Nebraska, and Wisconsin) the worker may upon request assume this responsibility but is seldom asked to do so. As it was to a great extent the need for an improved relief administration that stimulated county organization in California and Iowa, it is only natural that the work in the organized counties in these States should be closely related to this particular service.

Poor-relief administration has shown great improvement in counties having a qualified county welfare executive responsible for its administration. Not only has the cost of relief been reduced through careful investigations, which have uncovered hitherto unknown resources, but relief grants have been made more adequate to the need, and other constructive services have been given to clients leading toward rehabilitation and permanent economic independence.

##### Mothers' aid

Mothers' aid is both a child-welfare and a family-welfare measure, and eight States (Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin) have quite logically included certain duties connected with its administration among the legal responsibilities of the county welfare agency. In Kentucky, Missouri, and Virginia the county welfare executive has been designated as the administrator of aid to mothers, and in North Carolina the county board of public welfare is required to recommend to the board of county commissioners the amount to be allowed to a mother and her children.

In the remaining States it is the duty of the county welfare agency to make investigations of, and to give supervision to, the families, on request of the agency authorized to administer aid. In none of these States has there been uniform county acceptance of this assistance from the county welfare agency. In some counties the judge or other person responsible for administration has realized that the county superintendent of public welfare is much better equipped to make the necessary social study of a family and its needs than any one else in the county and has been glad to be relieved of the responsibility for everything except the actual granting of aid. In other counties the administering agent has asked for help only on selected cases, and in still others the county social worker may never be called upon to assist. The tendency to call upon the county welfare agency for investigations and supervision of mothers' aid families is much greater in counties with a paid executive than in counties with a volunteer board. Possibly as the county executive becomes a more permanent element in county organization administrative duties for mothers' aid will be gradually transferred to this worker.

Mothers' aid in California is administered by the agencies authorized by the county commissioners to administer relief, usually the county welfare organizations. In Iowa the county social worker may be called upon to assist in administering mothers' aid, which is the responsibility of the juvenile court. The mothers' aid law passed in New Mexico in 1931 gave administrative powers to the State bureau of child welfare; hence it is assumed that whenever an appropriation is available the bureau will call on the county organizations to assist in administration.

#### Other services

A number of scattered duties are also included in the several States with county welfare programs. Usually a local reason exists for these inclusions, and yet they are suggestive of the uses to which a county agency may be put. Cooperation with the State board of health is one of the duties of the Alabama county superintendent of welfare. In both Missouri and New York the superintendent of welfare is required to assist in making investigations for blind relief, and in Minnesota the county welfare boards may be called upon to assist in work for the blind. The county welfare worker in Missouri, North Carolina, and Virginia is authorized to assist with the problems of employment, and when deputized a Missouri county superintendent of welfare can perform the duties of factory inspector in the county. The commissioner of public welfare in New York is authorized to give old-age relief to persons meeting the qualifications of the law. A provision in the Nebraska law gives the county welfare worker the right to investigate "all cases of divorce and legal separation in which rights of children are affected when so requested by the judge." General cooperation with juvenile courts, public and private agencies, and other social-service agencies is usual.

#### COORDINATION OF COUNTY AND STATE SERVICES

It is obvious that the county cannot provide all the social services required for children or other individuals. That the State should provide institutional care for certain groups and special types of case-work services has been generally accepted. With the growth of understanding of the needs of the individual, and the development of local services, the need for close coordination between the activities of the State and of county welfare agencies is assuming increasing importance. The subcommittee on Local Public Units on Child Care and Protection of the White House Conference was especially concerned with this problem and came to the following conclusions in regard to State and county programs for children:

In recent years the county has been advocated as the most practicable administrative area for general child care. A county unit should be provided with case-work service and with facilities for case-work treatment of handicapped children. The question as to whether temporary or permanent care is required should be determined primarily in the local unit. Case-work responsibility should rest administratively with the county for all services to any child unless, after adequate case-work treatment, it has been decided that for given reasons he requires specialized care that only the State can provide.

Children who need only temporary care should not be accepted for State care. There is danger that a local unit will take the easy course of turning children over to the State because the State will support them, rather than because the State alone can render the best service to these particular children.

A local decision that a child is to be turned over to the State for free home placement, or for any other type of care, therefore, should be subject to review by the State itself before the child is accepted; when a court is contemplating the commitment of a child to the State for any cause, the State should be represented at the hearing.

There should be a clear-cut division of responsibilities between the State and the county and a decision as to what service is to be rendered by each and whether the local worker in rendering service is acting as an agent of the State or the local officials. There also should be a clear agreement between the county and the State as to which is responsible for the support in each type of case, the allocation of costs never, of course, determining the form of treatment accorded to any child.<sup>21</sup>

In many States with county welfare programs the county agency is specifically authorized to assist the State in its services to State wards and to other persons in need. Through provision of county social services to persons paroled from institutions for delinquents and the insane, the State and county are able to provide continuing services through a period of readjustment to community life. Two interesting examples of coordination of State and county services are the program for dependent children in Alabama, and the care of feeble-minded persons in Minnesota.

The work of the children's aid division of the State child-welfare department of Alabama has changed decidedly as counties have established county child-welfare boards. The State department has continually encouraged the counties to care for their own dependent children, especially when the dependency seems likely to be of a temporary nature. It is the plan of the State department that when its program of child care has been fully developed most of the work for dependent, neglected, early delinquent, and otherwise handicapped children will be done in the county where the children belong, and only in exceptional cases will it be necessary to transfer the responsibility for plans to the State department. This program in Alabama follows very closely the recommendations made by the White House Conference committee.

In Minnesota the State and county are cooperating in the care of feeble-minded persons committed to the guardianship of the State board of control. Until 1917 the only provision for the care of the feeble-minded was the State school for the feeble-minded to which admission was voluntary. The law enacted in 1917 made possible compulsory commitment to the care and custody of the State board of control of any person so mentally defective as to be a menace to himself and the community. This provision has resulted in the commitment of many persons needing special care and assistance for whom institutional care is not necessary or is not available. By making use of the county child-welfare boards Minnesota was able to give creditable supervision under a single State supervisor to more than 600 persons outside the institution during the biennium ended June 30, 1932.<sup>22</sup> More and more the responsibility for general supervision of feeble-minded persons outside the institutions is laid upon the county child-welfare boards, but the State has accepted as its own responsibility the extrainstitutional supervision of feeble-minded persons residing in districts in which they do not have settlement.

<sup>21</sup> Organization for the Care of Handicapped Children, p. 91 and 92.

<sup>22</sup> Sixteenth Biennial Report of the State Board of Control of Minnesota, period ended June 30, 1932, p. 42. Stillwater, 1932.

## STATE SUPERVISION

Experience has shown that the appointment of a county welfare board or official means little unless it is followed by a program of friendly supervision and counsel by the State department. In counties using either the volunteer services of board members or an inexperienced paid worker such supervision to be effective must be close enough to give real direction to the local welfare program. The State supervisor is responsible for furnishing stimulation, education, leadership, and guidance, and for setting the standards by which the local agency can measure its program. In counties with full-time professional workers the need for supervision is considerably less, but, nevertheless, the State department should be in a position to serve these counties in an advisory capacity.

The first year of the county agency's existence is frequently the most important, for this is the time when the purpose of the agency must be defined and it must establish its place in the community. During this formative period it has proved worth while for the State department to maintain a closer relationship to the county agency than is necessary later. The agency must be assisted in planning its future program; proper relationships between the agency and the public and private social agencies in the community must be built up; a satisfactory record system must be initiated; and the board must be helped to understand its responsibility in the welfare program of the community. The future of a county program of social work depends largely upon its success at the beginning. Therefore, it is essential that the beginning be made under the most favorable circumstances that can be created.

The number of visits of State supervisors and the length of the visits will depend, of course, entirely on the situation within the county. For the first year, at least, bimonthly and preferably monthly visits should probably be made, even if a qualified worker is employed. After that time quarterly or even semiannual visits will probably suffice for the county with a qualified worker, but more frequent visits to the county without full-time professional service will need to be made. Minnesota and Wisconsin have felt that bimonthly visits were not too often. Visits should be of sufficient length to allow the State agent time to attend a board meeting, to study the quality of the case work, to confer with board members and cooperating agencies, and to follow the progress of social welfare throughout the county. The more infrequent the visits the longer the State agent will need to remain in the county to understand the situation thoroughly.

Satisfactory supervision from the State department cannot be accomplished unless the supervisory staff is composed of persons of high professional qualifications who can command the confidence and respect of the local citizens and officials with whom they are associated. Unless a supervisor is in whole-hearted sympathy with county welfare organization she cannot be expected to stimulate interest and enthusiasm in others.

To a competent supervisor each county represents a case-work problem with assets and liabilities that need to be studied with the same sort of skill and intensity as those of families. Just as a case study of a family may reveal existing resources, so a case study

of a community may often result in the development of new social resources or the broadening of existing agencies to meet a newly discovered need.

Record keeping has been accepted as one of the first principles of case-work treatment. Likewise, the necessity for having a careful record of all supervisory contacts within a county has been demonstrated. Satisfactory records will show in detail the steps taken in the course of supervision, so that a new supervisor taking over the work will have a picture of the county's progress, together with the methods that have been used to accomplish the present result. A county social history may be just as illuminating as a family social history.

An interesting type of county record was found in the county division of the Pennsylvania Children's Aid Society in Philadelphia. Chronological entries had been made after each visit to the county, and at the close of each year a careful summary had been made showing to what extent the county had accomplished the goals set for it during the year. A brief account of the personalities involved in the county welfare work was included, with a statement of their attitude toward the agency program. Goals were set toward which the agency should strive for the next year. A financial statement was made, as well as a record of the total visits and the total number of days spent by the supervisor in the county. A similar procedure in a State department would enable it to evaluate the work of the county agency and its own contact with it, as is not possible when only scattered chronological entries of visits have been made. It may also offer an opportunity for the supervisors to record the picture of the county welfare program as a whole, which is difficult when only brief reports of visits are entered in the record.

Minnesota has developed a county face sheet on which certain general information can be entered, such as area, population, names of county officials, date of court terms, names of county welfare board members with the date of appointment, and dates of visits of supervisor. The form of any face sheet would necessarily differ with each State, yet the plan could well be put into general operation.

Although the term "supervision", to a certain extent, implies control, in practically no State has the State department attempted to control the work of a county organization. Instead, supervision has usually been interpreted in its broadest sense as advisory and consultant service, guidance, and assistance. It is to the interest of the State public-welfare authority that services in the local communities be maintained according to high standards and that additional resources be developed where they are needed. It is essential, therefore, that the work in each county be thoroughly understood, so that the constructive experiences of one county welfare agency can be passed on to other counties and the mistakes of one county will not be repeated in another.



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is generally recognized that social problems exist in rural and small urban communities as well as in large cities, and that there is equal need in these communities for early discovery of persons needing care and skillful treatment that will provide for immediate needs and prevent the development of more serious difficulties and problems. Such services must be immediately available, and this is possible only through local employment of qualified social workers. Local responsibility for certain public services for the dependent, the delinquent, and the handicapped is provided for in the statutes, but the division of such responsibility among a number of public officials or agencies has prevented the employment of qualified workers in most of the less populous areas of the country. County welfare programs having as their objective the coordination and development of social services in the county and the employment of one or more qualified county social workers have been developed in a number of States to meet these needs.

The county has been generally accepted as a more practical local administrative unit than the individual town or township. Counties throughout the United States vary widely in area and population, however, and in many counties the population is too small, and financial resources are too limited, to make them effective governmental units. In a few States this situation has been recognized, and provision has been made in the county welfare program whereby a group of counties may combine their resources and employ a district social worker.

The organization of county welfare services has been accomplished in most States that have developed such programs through the enactment of legislation, either mandatory or permissive, which authorizes counties to establish county social-welfare agencies. These agencies have been given special new responsibilities for the protection and care of children, and they are authorized to provide social services to public officials charged with the care of dependent, delinquent, or handicapped persons. In a few States without such legislation a State department has carried on an educational program, the purpose of which has been to improve administration of local social services or to develop local services for persons for whom the State has some responsibility. The real accomplishments that have been made in these States have demonstrated the fact that the stimulation and assistance of the State are the vital factors in the development of county social services.

By the beginning of 1932 about one third of the States had developed a county welfare program, although much variation existed in the extent to which such programs had been accepted by individual counties. In only four States (Alabama, California, North Carolina, and New York) had county social workers been

employed in a majority of the counties. In the remaining States with a county welfare program counties were either wholly unorganized or social services were being carried on by a board of lay members.

No attempt has been made in this report to set out any one State program as an example of a perfect plan adapted to all States and to all types of local communities. Yet the study of these State programs shows that certain of the provisions have been of paramount importance in the development of sound local social services throughout the State. Important among these is the quite generally accepted use of a board composed of representative citizens, including, often, some public officials, as the administrative body responsible for the activities of the county agency. By including representatives from all parts of the county and various social groups, this board may take a dominant part in planning the welfare activities of the county. The use of a board is also of great value in preventing political interference with the work of the agency. Some provision for State participation in local organization is to be found in all the effective county welfare programs. The services rendered by the State to the county are of three types: (1) Grants in aid to assist the counties in providing for a qualified staff; (2) establishment of standards of education, training, and experience for county social workers and assistance to counties in obtaining eligible persons; (3) assistance to local groups in making plans and in stimulating interest in county organization and consultation and case-work services to assist the county agency when it is established.

The need for State financial assistance to assist the county in providing satisfactory education and health services has been generally accepted, but only a few States have realized the need for State funds to assist in providing social services. Almost every State has areas economically unable to support an adequate social-work program. Often these areas have the greatest need for social services, and if these are to be provided it will probably mean a combination of resources including those of the county, the State, and even the Nation.

The necessity for insuring qualified personnel for county social work has been recognized in practically all States, but relatively few have set up a satisfactory system to bring this about. Since the character of any social-welfare program is largely dependent upon the quality of the social workers employed to administer it, it is important that the standards set by the State be high enough to assure the appointment of qualified persons. A few States have done this, and the character of their work shows the effects of such standards.

At almost every point in the development of county social-welfare programs the need for State leadership is apparent; first, in demonstrating to the county the fact that its social problems are worthy of attention; second, in assisting the county in perfecting an organization that will be effective in meeting these problems; third, in guiding the organization so that its progress from year to year will be in the right direction; and fourth, in providing such supervision as may be necessary to assure to every child and his family throughout the entire State a high standard of service. The States that

have accomplished most in county organization have recognized these needs and have met them through the employment of a State staff of high professional standing.

Much of the work that has been done on the organization of public social services on a county basis has been experimental in character. Programs in most rural counties have been limited by having inadequate funds. Owing to heavy case loads services have been rendered on the basis of expediency rather than on a planned basis. Few guides are available to a county starting on a new program. For example, what should be a desirable budget for a county of a certain size and character of population? How large a case load should the social worker be expected to carry? If several social workers are to be employed should the work be organized on a generalized or a specialized basis? What should be the proportion of social workers to the population? Studies and demonstrations that will show actual activities under specified conditions are much needed in the field of county social-welfare organization.

