

Children Served by Public Child Welfare Programs, 1946-57

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More children were receiving child welfare casework services from public welfare agencies at the end of March 1957 than ever before in the history of the public child welfare programs. At the same time, they made up a slightly smaller proportion of the Nation's child population than they did 12 years earlier. The trends during the past 12 years, as well as the situation in 1957, are examined in the following pages.

ALL the States provide some types of child welfare services through their State and local public welfare agencies, with the help of Federal funds under the Social Security Act. Casework services to individual children and their parents form a substantial part of these child welfare programs.¹ On March 31, 1957, almost 330,000 children—49 out of every 10,000 children under age 21 in the Nation—were receiving such services; the number was the largest in the program's history (table 1). Furthermore, almost 1.8 million children were in families receiving public assistance under the programs established by the Social Security Act and administered by the States and localities. It is estimated that not more than 30,000 children were counted in both categories.

The increase in the number of children receiving child welfare casework services has not kept pace, however, with the recent rapid growth of the child population. In the 40 States that made complete reports during the years 1946-57, the rate per 10,000 children under age 21 has dropped from 55 to 51. In 1957 the rate for the individual States varied widely—from a low of 5 out of every 10,000 children in the population in Texas to a high of 263 per 10,000 in the Virgin Islands.

Both the national trend in the

* Division of Research, Children's Bureau. For more detailed statistics, see the Children's Bureau report (Statistical Series, No. 45). *Children Served by Public Child Welfare Programs, 1957, With Trend Data, 1946-1957*, 1958.

¹ See *Child Welfare Services, How They Help Children and Their Parents* (Children's Bureau Publication No. 359), 1957.

public child welfare program and the variation among the States are the result of complicated factors of growth in child population, economic and social conditions, varying organization of public and voluntary services and the relationships between them, and different methods of financing and administering public welfare programs. The methods of statistical reporting also contribute to apparent variations.

The statistical reports on which the figures in this article are based are limited, by definition, to a part of the entire public child welfare program and, beyond that, to a part of the services to individual children and their parents. Only two groups of children are included—those served by full-time child welfare workers and those served by general welfare workers if the children are not in families receiving public assistance. They thus exclude most of the children in families receiving public assistance.

The reports are also limited, by definition, to the work of public welfare departments, and accordingly they exclude the services of juvenile courts and probation departments as such. Some of the children who are counted, however, are served by public welfare departments at the request of juvenile courts either for purposes of investigation and report and recommendation to the court or on the basis of continuing planning and supervision through a court order.

The statistical reports show only child welfare casework services. Institutional care is reported only if the child (and/or his parent) is re-

ceiving casework service from a public welfare department. In a number of States, children committed by the courts to public training schools for delinquent children are counted in these reports while they remain in the institution (and also during a period of aftercare in their own homes or elsewhere) because the public welfare agency continues to be responsible for service to the child and his parents. The reports also include what is perhaps a larger number of children whose care in a voluntary institution is arranged for or purchased by a public welfare department that remains responsible for some service to the child and his family. Such voluntary institutions may include residential treatment centers for emotionally disturbed children, maternity homes, schools for the blind and deaf, detention homes, and other specialized institutions. Children in public institutions that employ their own caseworkers are, however, rarely included in the count since public welfare departments usually are not responsible for services to children in such institutions.

These reports indicate the nature of the child welfare casework program of State and local departments of public welfare. If the community elects to place certain responsibilities for child welfare casework service upon such departments rather than upon other public departments or upon voluntary agencies, the statistics reflect that decision. Many of the variations from State to State can be explained only on this basis.

The children covered in the report are those whose problems have been given individual consideration and who are receiving casework service. If they reside in an institution, they are included only because they are being given some casework service by a child welfare worker of a department of public welfare. Most of them, however, live with their parents or relatives or in foster homes.

Services in 1957

Children in Their Own Homes

Child welfare services are provided to children in their own homes or in the homes of relatives when the home appears to hold positive values for the child and growth and improvement seem to be possible. Among these services are help to parents who seek it, protective services when the agency receives a complaint that children are neglected or abused, investigations requested by courts, homemaker service, day-care counseling and arrangements for day care, and supervision following discharge from an institution. Children who remain in their own homes while arrangements are being made for their foster-care placement are also counted here.

On March 31, 1957, children receiving services in their own homes or the homes of relatives numbered 126,261 and made up 38 percent of all children receiving child welfare casework service. Information from the 40 States reporting completely and consistently during the past 12 years indicates that the proportion has changed only slightly during that time (table 2). About 22 percent more children were served in their own homes or the homes of relatives in 1957 than in 1946, and the total number of children receiving services increased 25 percent.

Children Away From Home

Although child welfare services and other community programs help many children to remain in their own homes, State and local public child welfare programs still serve more children away from their own homes than at home. As many as 203,029 children—62 percent of all children reported by State and local public welfare agencies on March 31, 1957—were away from home; 44 percent were in foster-family homes and 18 percent in institutions or elsewhere.

Foster-family homes.—Most of the 143,906 children in foster-family homes at the end of March 1957 were served directly by a public welfare agency; some were served also by voluntary agencies through purchase of care or other arrangements. Children for whom a public agency

exercises only legal custody under court order and for whom casework service is actually given by a voluntary agency are excluded from the count.

Although the finding, investigation, approval, and licensing of foster homes are often part of the child welfare worker's job, children for whom this work is done are not included in these reports. During the

placement process a child may be considered as receiving service in his own home, but only after he is actually placed with a foster family is he counted as a child receiving service in a foster-family home.

If the child is in an adoptive home in which the public agency has placed him, the casework service is devoted to making certain that the placement is the best possible for him and for

Table 1.—Children receiving child welfare casework services from State and local public welfare agencies, by State and by living arrangements, March 31, 1957

State	Total	Rate per 10,000 child population ¹	In homes of parents or relatives		In foster-family homes		In institutions and elsewhere ²	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
United States, total	329,688	49	126,261	38	143,906	44	59,123	18
Alabama	9,694	69	6,581	68	2,116	22	997	10
Alaska	851	127	296	35	271	32	284	33
Arizona	3,317	69	1,301	39	1,812	55	204	6
Arkansas	2,419	32	1,318	54	962	40	139	6
California	18,079	37	2,923	16	14,020	78	1,136	6
Colorado	2,859	44	1,469	52	1,151	40	233	8
Connecticut	6,460	81	1,213	19	4,062	64	1,053	17
Delaware	1,271	80	560	44	609	48	102	8
District of Columbia	4,062	161	1,433	36	1,169	29	1,400	35
Florida	3,138	22	915	29	2,033	65	190	6
Georgia	4,029	25	1,230	30	2,320	58	479	12
Hawaii	1,563	63	688	44	665	43	210	13
Idaho	283	10	154	54	61	22	68	24
Illinois	4,763	14	805	17	3,462	73	481	10
Indiana	12,999	71	5,606	45	5,047	40	1,846	15
Iowa	2,494	27	2,227	76	443	15	250	9
Kansas	1,928	24	618	32	616	32	683	36
Kentucky	8,952	69	6,398	72	1,367	15	1,187	13
Louisiana	5,188	39	1,193	23	3,554	69	441	8
Maine	3,179	87	1,228	39	1,699	54	224	7
Maryland	6,654	61	1,619	24	4,305	66	640	10
Massachusetts	6,251	37	849	13	4,720	76	667	11
Michigan	2,430	8	1,164	48	1,126	46	140	6
Minnesota	12,239	93	8,502	70	2,922	24	743	6
Mississippi	7,980	79	7,110	89	535	7	335	4
Missouri	4,612	30	2,466	53	1,893	41	253	6
Montana	827	30	383	46	373	45	71	9
Nebraska	1,780	32	808	45	386	22	586	33
Nevada	282	28	122	43	135	48	25	9
New Hampshire	2,385	115	1,068	45	958	40	359	15
New Jersey	7,820	41	1,890	24	4,987	64	943	12
New Mexico	1,497	38	632	42	766	51	99	7
New York	39,374	72	4,228	11	21,454	54	13,692	35
North Carolina	15,233	78	8,281	54	4,036	27	2,916	19
North Dakota	4,827	652	652	100	89	100	86	100
Ohio	20,032	57	7,120	36	8,840	44	4,018	20
Oklahoma	2,622	30	984	38	665	25	973	37
Oregon	4,433	66	2,293	52	1,928	43	212	5
Pennsylvania	31,500	79	5,000	16	14,000	44	12,500	40
Puerto Rico	12,893	106	9,347	73	800	6	2,746	21
Rhode Island	1,615	55	597	37	761	47	257	16
South Carolina	4,470	40	2,867	64	712	16	891	20
South Dakota	968	33	469	48	382	40	116	12
Tennessee	3,486	24	1,473	42	1,669	48	344	10
Texas	1,993	5	1,104	55	667	34	222	11
Utah	1,085	28	515	47	507	47	63	6
Vermont	1,716	116	718	42	795	46	203	12
Virgin Islands	315	263	166	53	87	27	62	20
Virginia	10,910	72	3,768	35	6,051	55	1,091	10
Washington	6,246	61	2,210	35	3,197	51	839	14
West Virginia	7,505	88	4,704	63	2,172	29	629	8
Wisconsin	9,808	66	4,703	48	4,329	44	776	8
Wyoming	442	33	293	66	130	30	19	4

¹ Preliminary. Civilian population under age 21, as of July 1, 1957, estimated by the Children's Bureau on the basis of data from the Bureau of the Census.

² Data for children in institutions represent only those served by State or local public welfare workers and not all children receiving institutional care.

Includes 10,109 children living elsewhere.
³ Includes some children whose whereabouts are unknown (less than 1 percent of the total).

⁴ Incomplete report. Excluded from computations for national rate and for percentage distribution.

⁵ Estimated by the State department of welfare.

the adoptive parents. Casework service also helps parents and child to adjust to the new relationship. It usually ends when the final adoption order is issued by the court. Service at the request of a court may, however, involve only investigation of an adoptive home into which the child was placed independently of a social agency.

For children in other types of foster homes, the kind of service depends on the problems presented. Service may be aimed at returning a child to his own home or at finding him a permanent home through adoption. The service a child receives may be direct, if the agency has continuing personal contact with him and his parents until there is no need for further service, or it may be indirect, if the public welfare agency purchases service from a voluntary agency. In these instances the public agency remains legally responsible for the adequacy of the service provided.

Foster-family care has increased generally in the 40 States reporting comparable data for the past 12 years, as shown in table 2. The proportions of children receiving this type of care have declined slightly in recent years, however, as the proportions receiving services in their own homes have increased.

Institutions.—Services by State and local public welfare departments to children in institutions are of varied types. The data analyzed here do not represent all children in institutions—public or voluntary—but only

Table 2.—Children receiving child welfare casework services from State and local public welfare agencies in 40 States reporting completely: Percentage distribution by living arrangement, 1946–57

Year	Percentage distribution of children served, by living arrangement		
	In homes of parents or relatives	In foster-family homes	In institutions or elsewhere
1946.....	42	38	20
1947.....	41	39	20
1948.....	40	41	19
1949.....	40	42	18
1950.....	39	43	18
1951.....	39	43	18
1952.....	39	43	18
1953.....	39	43	18
1954.....	40	42	18
1955.....	40	42	18
1956.....	41	42	17
1957.....	41	42	17

those who receive continuing casework service from the public welfare agency while they remain in institutions. In most instances a child welfare worker in an agency is continuing to work with the child and his parents, helping them to adjust to separation or to prepare for eventual reunion.

The institutions in which children are living while they receive public child welfare services are of various types. According to reports received from 36 States in a special survey made in April 1957, they include voluntary institutions for dependent and neglected children, State training schools for children committed by the courts as delinquent, maternity homes, hospitals, institutions for the mentally and physically handicapped, residential treatment centers for emotionally disturbed children, small group homes, and schools of various kinds.

Only 49,000 children, about 15 percent of the total number receiving child welfare casework services from State and local public welfare agencies, were reported as living in institutions on March 31, 1957. The proportion in the 40 States reporting completely for the past 12 years has declined steadily but slightly.

Elsewhere.—Some older children also receive service in independent living arrangements described as "elsewhere." They represent about 3 percent of all children receiving service. For the most part they are youths old enough to earn their own living; a few are in the Armed Forces but are still under the legal custody or guardianship of the public welfare agency.

State Variations

Rates of service.—On March 31, 1957, the 15 States classified as most rural in population had a higher average rate of service in relation to their child population than the 23 semirural States or the 15 urban States. (States are classified according to the percentage of the population living in urban areas as defined in the 1950 Census.) On the average, 63 per 10,000 child population in rural States received services, 44 per 10,000 in semirural States, and 48 per 10,000 in urban States. Probably the most important factor in

interstate variations in child welfare services is the extent to which the States differ in the proportions of their rural child population. Since State per capita income tends to vary inversely with the proportion of rural population, the States with the highest proportions of children served by the public child welfare programs are also States with relatively low per capita income.

Within each of these groups of States, however, there are wide variations. They are most marked among the semirural States and are largely the result of differences in methods of organizing public child welfare services. States with long-established programs tend to serve relatively more children. In a few States, comparatively large voluntary resources for child welfare services may result in small public child welfare programs, but this condition is by no means usual. In general, those States in which public child welfare services are most highly developed are also those in which voluntary child welfare services have been highly developed. Of the 23 States exceeding the national average in the extent to which public agencies provided casework services to children in 1956, 10 also exceeded the average in voluntary services.

Kinds of service.—The type of service also varies considerably from State to State. In 1957, children living in their own or in relatives' homes made up more than half of all children served by public child welfare departments in 17 States and 70 percent or more in five States (Mississippi, 89 percent; Iowa, 76 percent; Puerto Rico, 73 percent; Kentucky, 72 percent; and Minnesota, 70 percent).

Fifteen States reported that more than half the children served by public welfare departments were in foster-family homes. In three States, 70 percent or more were in such homes (California, 78 percent; Massachusetts, 76 percent; and Illinois, 73 percent).

The public child welfare departments were serving relatively large proportions of children in institutions in Pennsylvania (40 percent), the District of Columbia (34 percent), New York (31 percent), Alaska (30 percent), Nebraska (29 percent),

Table 3.—Children receiving child welfare casework services from State and local public welfare agencies: Estimated total number and index, 1946-57

As of March 31	Estimated total	
	Number (in thousands)	Index (1952=100)
1946.....	250	90
1947.....	255	91
1948.....	260	93
1949.....	265	95
1950.....	270	97
1951.....	277	99
1952.....	279	100
1953.....	282	101
1954.....	289	104
1955.....	296	106
1956.....	305	109
1957.....	330	118

¹ Reported by 53 States.

Kansas (25 percent), and Oklahoma (25 percent).

Caseworker classification.—Thirty-nine States replied to a special inquiry on June 30, 1956, concerning the classification of the workers providing child welfare casework services. These States reported that 82 percent of the children receiving services were served by a full-time child welfare worker and 18 percent by a general welfare worker. Of the group served by full-time child welfare workers, about 9 percent were in families receiving assistance; of those served by a general welfare worker, none were in families receiving public assistance.

Whether a child receives services from a full-time child welfare worker or a general welfare worker depends upon policies and administrative organization. In 14² of the 39 States, all or nearly all the children were provided services by a full-time child welfare worker. In Kansas and New Jersey, in contrast, practically all the children received services from a general welfare worker. The practice was divided fairly evenly between the two types of workers in Georgia, North Carolina, and Wyoming.

Children in families receiving public assistance.—Only 9 percent of all the children reported as receiving child welfare casework service in 39 States on June 30, 1956, were in

² The District of Columbia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, the Virgin Islands, and West Virginia.

families receiving public assistance. The proportion is necessarily small since, by definition, children receiving services from a general welfare worker are counted only if the family is not receiving public assistance.

The proportion of children receiving child welfare services in families receiving public assistance ranged from none in Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Texas to 25 percent or more in Puerto Rico, Missouri, and Alabama.

In most of the States that reported children receiving child welfare services in families on the public assistance rolls, the families were receiving aid to dependent children under the Social Security Act. In Minnesota a larger proportion of children were in families receiving general assistance.

Trends, 1946-57

About three-fourths of all children reported as receiving child welfare casework services from public child welfare agencies are living in the 40 States that have submitted comparable reports from 1946 to 1957. In these States the total number of children receiving such services has increased steadily throughout the 12-year period under review; they numbered 247,087 on March 31, 1957—4 percent more than in the preceding year and 25 percent more than on March 31, 1946. For all 53 States the estimated increase is somewhat greater (table 3).

Although the general trend has been upward, the numbers served in certain States have decreased, and there are different trends for States primarily rural and those primarily urban.

In relation to child population the trend in child welfare casework services has been slightly downward. The rapid rise in the birthrate, beginning in 1946, has brought an estimated 37-percent increase in the child population of the United States—from 49 million in 1946 to 67 million in 1957. The 12-year increase in the child population in the 40 States reporting during this period was about 34 percent, and the increase in the number of children receiving welfare services was only 25 percent. Thus the rate of children served by child welfare programs in these States has declined

Table 4.—Children receiving child welfare casework services from State and local public welfare agencies in 40 States reporting completely: Rate per 10,000 estimated child population under age 21 for State groups,¹ by urban-rural character, 1946-57

As of March 31	Rate per 10,000 estimated child population under age 21			
	Total	Urban States	Semi-rural States	Rural States
1946.....	55	62	58	40
1947.....	54	63	54	40
1948.....	53	61	52	41
1949.....	54	62	51	45
1950.....	54	62	51	45
1951.....	54	60	50	48
1952.....	52	57	47	54
1953.....	51	54	45	56
1954.....	51	50	47	58
1955.....	51	50	47	59
1956.....	51	49	47	62
1957.....	51	49	47	63

¹ States are classified according to percentage of population in urban areas, as defined by the 1950 Census.

from 55 per 10,000 children in the population to 51 per 10,000 (table 4). The child population has grown even more rapidly in the States not reporting completely, and the increase in child welfare services has been insufficient to maintain the rate of service. For the country as a whole the rate dropped to 49 per 10,000 children in 1957.

In recent years, among the 40 States reporting completely for the years 1946-57, the trend in the proportion of children receiving services and living in their own homes or the homes of relatives has been rising slightly and the proportion living in institutions has shown a declining trend. The proportion of children receiving services in foster-family homes rose from 1946 to 1950 but has declined slightly since 1953 (table 2).

Urban-Rural Trends

The number of children receiving child welfare casework services in rural States has increased consistently among the States reporting completely for the years 1946-57. This increase reflects in part the emphasis placed by the Social Security Act on the expenditure of Federal child welfare funds primarily in rural areas. Among the semirural States no definite trend is apparent. In the urban States the number of children

receiving services increased from 1946 to 1950, when it approached 1957's all-time high; it dropped from 1951 through 1954 and in 1955 began the increase that has continued until, on March 31, 1957, the record high was reached.

The consistent and large increases in rural States in the number of children receiving child welfare case-work services from public welfare departments have resulted in a larger proportion of rural children among all children receiving such services in the United States. In 1946, of all children served, 19 percent lived in rural States, 38 percent in semirural States, and 43 percent in urban States. In 1957 the percentage who resided in urban States had dropped to 39, and the percentage residing in rural States had increased to 28. There was an 85-percent increase from 1946 to 1957 in the number of children served in the rural States and only a 12-percent increase in the number served in urban States.

The rates for children served in rural States have also shown an almost consistently rising trend; for the group the rate increased from 40 per 10,000 children in 1946 to 63 per 10,000 children in 1957 (table 4). In urban States there has been a generally declining trend, from 62 per 10,000 in 1946 to 49 per 10,000 in 1957.

State Variations

Although there has been a steady rise in the country as a whole in the

number of children served, and an even more marked upward trend in the rural States, individual States in each of the groups—urban, semirural, and rural—show considerable variations from the trend. Four States—Massachusetts, Indiana, Nebraska, and Idaho—had downward trends. The first is an urban State, and the last is a rural State; the other two are semirural. Twenty States showed rising trends; eight were semirural States, eight were rural, and four were urban. In the other 16 States no well-defined trend could be observed.

Nearly the same number of States in the urban and rural groups had declining trends in the rates of children served. Marked State variations in these rates tend to persist from year to year. In 1946 the rates in the reporting States ranged from 9 per 10,000 children to 201 per 10,000 children; in 1957 in the same group of States the rates ranged from 5 to 161. Among the eight States ranking lowest in 1946, five were still among the lowest eight in 1957.

A few States, however, have made remarkable progress. Mississippi is outstanding, with more than a five-fold increase from 1946 to 1957 in the number of children served and a rise in the rate of service from 13 per 10,000 children under age 21 to 79 per 10,000. Maryland increased the number served by 284 percent and the rate from 24 to 61. Arkansas and Oklahoma also moved out of the

group of States that had the lowest rates in 1946.

Conclusions

The major conclusion that can be drawn from the data on children receiving services provided by 40 States reporting continuously since 1946 is that there has been a significant expansion of child welfare services in rural States. Since these States are largely States with low per capita income, this expansion has occurred primarily in low-income States. During the same period, child welfare services in urban States have been reaching a declining proportion of the child population—from 62 of every 10,000 children in 1946 to 49 per 10,000 in 1957.

These factors, together with higher birthrates and increasing child population, have brought about a slight drop in the rates for children receiving services in the 40 reporting States.

That the lower rate is not the result of declining need for child welfare services was shown by the answers of 51 States to an inquiry about needs for foster care in 1956. The principal finding was that practically all States had children who needed foster care but for whom facilities were inadequate. Growth in the number of dependency and neglect cases in juvenile courts also points to the need for providing more child welfare casework services to children in their own homes.

Notes and Brief Reports

Canadian Programs for the Aged*

Twice during the calendar year 1957 important changes were made in the Canadian income-maintenance programs for the aged. The most significant of the modifications were the two successive increases in the benefit amounts. The programs¹ became effective in what is, in general, their present form at the beginning

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¹ For more details, see "New Canadian Programs for the Aged," *Social Security Bulletin*, April 1952.

of 1952, when a dual basis for payments was established. The provision in effect immediately before this change provided for old-age assistance for persons aged 70 or over, which was financed jointly by the Dominion Government (75 percent) and the Provinces (25 percent); the maximum payment in which the Dominion Government shared was \$40 a month, with need being measured and the pension being reduced by income over a specified amount.

From 1952 on, old-age assistance has been provided on a national basis for persons aged 65-69, and flat-rate pensions under the "old-age security"

program have been available without a means test to persons aged 70 and over. Under both programs there are certain residence requirements but no citizenship requirements. The amount of the flat-rate pension is the same as the maximum available under old-age assistance—at least to the extent that the Dominion Government participates financially in the assistance payment. (Certain Provinces pay supplementary assistance out of their own funds to persons aged 70 and over, as well as to those aged 65-69.) Old-age assistance payments are not made to persons receiving either an allowance because of blindness or disability or a war veteran's allowance, which is as large as or larger than the assistance pay-