

# Who Are the Children Receiving Public Child Welfare Services?

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AT THE END OF March 1959, almost 221,000 children in 45 States were receiving child welfare casework services from public welfare agencies.

Child welfare services are social services that supplement or substitute for parental care and supervision. They are designed to protect children, promote their welfare, and prevent their neglect, abuse, or exploitation and to help overcome problems that result in dependency, neglect, or delinquency. When it is necessary, children are provided care away from their own homes in foster-family homes, adoptive homes, child-caring institutions, or other facilities.

Developing community facilities and community awareness of child welfare problems, selecting adoptive parents, finding suitable foster families, licensing foster-family homes and institutions—all are child welfare services. Another and essential service consists of working directly with the child himself and with his family. As one agency—the New Mexico Department of Public Welfare—put it, “child welfare service means helping a child who is having trouble getting along with himself, his family or his community. The helping process includes getting to know the child and his family, and other people involved, well enough to know what has caused the trouble and how to help straighten it out.” This is child welfare casework; this is the service considered here.

Forty-five State departments of public welfare cooperated with the Children’s Bureau in a study of the characteristics of children receiving services on March 31, 1959.<sup>1</sup> The 220,812 children represented about 61 percent of the total number (362,000) receiving child welfare casework services from public child welfare agencies in the 50

States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands on that date.

Fourteen years earlier, 32 States had made similar reports, and 30 States reported completely in both years. The changes noted seem to be those that have occurred over a period of time and not those resulting from differences in sampling.

A comparison of the data for the 2 years 1945 and 1959 shows that the average age of the children receiving child welfare services was about the same in both years although the younger children made up a slightly higher proportion of the total in 1959 than in 1945. Relatively more non-white children were receiving services in the later year. The proportion of children receiving services because of the death of parents dropped, and the proportion of those whose parents were divorced, separated, or deserted went up. There were proportionately more short-time or relatively new cases in 1959 than in 1945, and a corresponding drop in the proportion receiving services for more than 5 years. The proportion in families receiving public assistance showed a marked increase. Relatively fewer of the children receiving services were living in the homes of parents or relatives.

Because the coverage of the 1959 study is incomplete, any national conclusions should be made with caution. Moreover, the study was confined to public welfare agencies. Some of the apparent gaps in service in certain States may have been filled by voluntary agencies, usually on a planned basis in local communities. Finally, the limitations of a study based only on case records will be obvious. Social welfare practice can be evaluated only by careful, detailed, analytical study that was beyond the defined scope of this inquiry.

\*Division of Research, Children’s Bureau. Adapted from the report by Miss Jeter, *Children Who Receive Services From Public Child Welfare Agencies* (Children’s Bureau Publication No. 387), 1960. For greater detail on the characteristics of the children studied, and for the methodology of the study, see the report.

<sup>1</sup>California, Connecticut, Georgia, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the State of Washington did not report.

## CHARACTERISTICS

There were slightly more boys than girls receiving services. One out of 4 of the children in the study was nonwhite.

A little more than half the children lived in the homes of parents or relatives, and all but a sixth of this group were living with their parents.

More than a third of the children studied were in some type of foster home. A small proportion (6 percent) were in adoptive homes. The largest group was in foster-family boarding homes where their care was being paid for. Only a small proportion lived in free foster-family homes or homes in which the child earned his board and care.

One in 10 of the children receiving services from public child welfare agencies was in some kind of institution. More than half of these children were in institutions for dependent and neglected children, with smaller proportions in institutions for delinquent children, institutions for the mentally retarded, treatment centers for the emotionally disturbed, institutions for the physically handicapped, and homes for unmarried mothers.

The average child receiving service was aged 10. Only small proportions were under 15 months or over age 18. About a fourth of the children were between the ages of  $5\frac{1}{4}$  and  $10\frac{1}{4}$ .<sup>2</sup>

More than a third of the children had parents who were married and living together. Slightly less than a third were from homes that were broken because the parents were divorced or separated or one parent had deserted the home. About one-fifth of them had parents who had never been married to each other. Only one-seventh had lost one or both parents through death, and only 1 in 100 had lost both parents.

About 1 in 5 of the children lived in families in which public assistance was being received, and for most of them this assistance took the form of aid to dependent children. A few of the children (5 percent) were receiving child's benefits under the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program.

For three-fourths of the children, the agencies responsible for public child welfare services had been in touch with them or with their parents, foster parents, or institutional personnel during the 3 months preceding the report. For somewhat more than one-half, the contact had been within the past month. For 5 percent of them,

<sup>2</sup> Quarter-year intervals result from the questionnaire used in the study on March 31, which asked for the year of birth. Age-group intervals are therefore not precise as to upper and lower limits.

the agencies reported no contact in either 1958 or 1959.

### Children in the Home of Parents

Casework for children living with their parents is initiated either by the family requesting help from the child welfare agency or by the agency on complaint that a child is being neglected, abused, or exploited. This study did not ask how many of the children were receiving protective services initiated by the agency or how many were receiving casework at the request of the parents. Of the 220,812 children in the study, 96,640 or 44 percent were living in the home of parents (table 1).

The children living with their parents were aged 10, on the average—about the same age as children with other living arrangements. Fewer of them were aged  $1\frac{1}{4}$  or less, however, or aged  $14\frac{1}{2}$  and over. About half of them were between the ages of  $5\frac{1}{4}$  and  $14\frac{1}{4}$ .

Only half of these children were living with two parents. Twenty-eight percent lived in homes broken because the parents were divorced or separated or one of the parents had deserted the home. Divorce was less frequent in the non-white families. Eight percent of the white children and 27 percent of the nonwhite children were living with an unmarried parent.

Death had taken one parent of 9 percent of the children living with their parents—the father in twice as many instances as the mother. Slightly more than 4 percent of the children living in their own home were receiving child's benefits under old-age, survivors, and disability insurance—less than half the proportion who had lost one parent through death.

Service to children in the homes of parents had begun more recently than service to children living in other circumstances. The median length of service was 1 year. For about 20 percent of the children, service had been last initiated within the preceding 3 months, for 39 percent within the preceding  $1\frac{1}{4}$  years. Fewer than one-fourth had received service for as long as  $3\frac{1}{4}$  years.

### Children in Homes of Relatives

The study reported 9,769 boys and 9,027 girls living in homes of relatives. Together they rep-

resented 8.6 percent of the total. Seventy percent of these children were white.

Children with these living arrangements were the second oldest group in the study (median age, over 11 years). Only 3 percent were under age 1¼, and only 19 percent were under age 5¼. More than half were between the ages of 10¼ and 18¼.

The largest proportion of children who had

lost both parents were in this group. Nearly 30 percent had lost one or both parents (14 percent were motherless, 8 percent fatherless, and 7 percent without both parents).

More than 9 percent of the children living with relatives were receiving child's benefits under old-age, survivors, and disability insurance—the largest proportion for children with any type of living arrangement. Only 17 percent of the chil-

TABLE 1.—Children receiving child welfare services: Number, by whereabouts of child and by Census region and State, 45 States, March 31, 1959<sup>1</sup>

Census region and State	Total	In home of parents	In home of relatives	In foster-family home				In institution for—					Elsewhere	Unknown
				Adoptive	Boarding	Free	"Wage or work"	Dependent and neglected children	Unmarried mothers	Emotionally disturbed children	Delinquent children	Mentally retarded and physically disabled		
Total, 45 States.....	220,812	96,640	18,796	13,744	60,039	3,192	658	13,221	496	955	5,426	2,394	4,421	830
New England.....	14,806	3,703	913	502	7,887	118	68	929	16	100	106	95	323	46
Maine.....	3,476	1,148	308	94	1,640	35	14	69	20	44	43	46	15	15
Massachusetts.....	5,768	603	243	156	4,109	45	9	360	9	21	40	158	15	15
New Hampshire.....	2,304	855	129	121	822	20	13	267	4	24	4	5	37	3
Rhode Island.....	1,563	422	111	60	684	5	6	156	1	13	48	3	46	8
Vermont.....	1,695	675	122	71	632	13	26	77	2	22	10	4	36	5
East North Central.....	52,848	17,653	3,979	2,858	19,008	1,170	239	5,414	102	307	454	247	1,221	196
Illinois.....	5,595	817	186	193	3,653	46	5	516	2	33	38	99	7	7
Indiana.....	12,282	4,123	1,279	1,209	3,220	376	45	1,540	41	61	110	20	217	41
Michigan.....	2,870	1,167	254	89	1,005	162	15	98	1	10	6	32	13	13
Ohio.....	20,797	6,427	1,410	928	7,036	478	98	2,906	31	203	270	165	716	129
Wisconsin.....	11,304	5,119	850	439	4,094	108	76	354	27	-----	56	18	157	6
West North Central.....	27,671	15,579	2,208	1,495	4,995	349	138	690	123	356	791	334	525	88
Iowa.....	2,899	2,042	196	190	189	45	13	103	5	26	21	34	31	4
Kansas.....	2,104	485	107	357	355	37	10	128	13	284	263	22	24	18
Minnesota.....	14,164	8,947	1,168	273	2,779	118	67	125	80	-----	94	206	258	49
Missouri.....	4,236	2,290	400	520	831	71	7	56	7	6	1	8	38	1
Nebraska.....	1,975	796	161	71	219	55	28	129	6	26	381	25	62	16
North Dakota.....	1,274	669	71	26	269	16	12	100	7	12	19	30	43	-----
South Dakota.....	1,019	350	105	58	352	7	1	49	5	2	12	9	69	-----
South Atlantic.....	47,056	19,286	4,347	3,527	12,562	683	78	2,549	97	83	1,571	1,253	829	186
Delaware.....	1,480	508	109	38	681	58	-----	21	-----	45	15	2	3	2
Dist. of Col.....	4,425	1,355	305	107	1,262	59	8	518	12	34	615	11	83	56
Florida.....	3,435	712	203	1,055	1,129	32	-----	178	16	-----	10	15	85	-----
Maryland.....	6,833	1,684	260	138	4,532	1	20	40	1	1	45	20	76	15
North Carolina.....	18,220	8,750	1,900	1,930	2,080	320	30	1,120	50	-----	70	950	340	50
South Carolina.....	4,935	2,286	781	178	826	79	2	347	13	5	128	234	56	-----
West Virginia.....	7,728	3,991	789	81	2,052	134	18	325	5	5	58	21	186	63
East South Central.....	35,487	22,201	3,784	2,133	3,852	402	28	1,310	49	17	1,240	86	298	57
Alabama.....	9,697	4,746	1,426	901	1,498	142	6	512	4	-----	351	-----	106	5
Kentucky.....	9,529	5,986	894	399	853	132	17	444	19	14	571	48	122	30
Mississippi.....	11,359	9,342	897	64	609	73	-----	42	8	-----	207	3	32	22
Tennessee.....	4,902	2,127	567	769	922	55	5	312	18	3	51	35	38	-----
West South Central.....	13,344	5,105	732	1,564	4,414	142	41	648	56	33	256	193	147	13
Arkansas.....	2,034	746	126	154	845	20	4	49	31	1	29	14	15	-----
Louisiana.....	6,335	1,679	248	1,013	2,910	22	33	226	-----	30	7	115	41	11
Oklahoma.....	2,809	1,550	180	155	332	44	3	260	21	2	209	-----	53	-----
Texas.....	2,166	1,130	178	242	327	56	1	113	4	-----	11	64	38	2
Mountain.....	10,577	4,183	1,008	1,340	3,080	110	24	268	50	49	99	67	210	89
Arizona.....	2,948	1,080	359	465	759	26	7	40	31	1	7	48	61	64
Colorado.....	3,014	1,377	178	380	800	11	8	96	5	41	36	6	76	-----
Idaho.....	209	110	26	17	22	9	-----	7	2	-----	5	4	2	5
Montana.....	835	334	60	86	274	12	3	36	7	-----	6	1	15	1
Nevada.....	251	85	18	33	70	8	-----	27	-----	2	1	2	5	-----
New Mexico.....	1,889	591	246	277	642	33	4	40	5	-----	7	5	27	12
Utah.....	1,067	418	95	66	411	7	1	-----	-----	5	34	1	22	7
Wyoming.....	364	188	26	16	102	4	1	22	-----	-----	3	-----	2	-----
Pacific.....	8,384	3,418	748	279	3,149	74	33	363	3	5	106	6	168	32
Alaska.....	737	199	68	27	198	7	5	204	1	5	2	6	13	2
Hawaii.....	1,361	484	124	88	506	10	6	93	2	-----	-----	-----	45	3
Oregon.....	6,286	2,735	556	164	2,445	57	22	66	-----	-----	104	-----	110	27
Outlying.....	10,639	5,512	1,077	46	1,062	144	9	1,050	-----	-----	808	113	700	123
Puerto Rico.....	10,240	5,328	1,044	44	965	122	9	1,005	-----	-----	803	113	685	122
Virgin Islands.....	399	184	33	2	97	22	-----	45	-----	-----	-----	-----	15	1

<sup>1</sup> Data for Indiana as of Apr. 30, 1959, and for North Carolina, March 1958. For some States certain children were excluded for administrative reasons

that do not affect the distribution. See Children's Bureau Statistical Series, No. 60, for national totals for March 31, 1959.

dren in homes of relatives had unmarried parents. The parents of 38 percent were divorced, separated, or deserted. Sixteen percent had parents married and presumably living together. For white children, the percentage with married parents was 19; for nonwhite children, it was 10 percent.

### **Children in Adoptive Homes**

For a child who cannot have a home with his own parents, adoption has long been recognized as the first choice among substitutes. Public welfare agencies in 45 States reported that 14,000 children in adoptive homes were receiving public child welfare services—an estimated three-fifths of the total number of children in adoptive homes that were receiving such services in the country as a whole at the time of the report.

About 12 percent of the approximately 100,000 children adopted annually have been "placed" in the adoptive home by the public welfare agency—that is, the agency selected both the adoptive parents and the child. For a larger number of children, the agency has provided some kind of adoption service. Most of the 45 States have legal provisions for social study before final court order for adoption, and in some States these provisions apply to all adoptions. Most States also require a period of trial residence (from 3 months to 1 year) under supervision. The number of children in adoptive homes under study or supervision by public welfare agencies is thus greater than the number placed by the agencies and adopted within the year. It is this larger group that is represented by the 14,000 children reported in the study as living in adoptive homes.

These children were the youngest of all the groups studied (median age, 2-3). Thirty-five percent were aged  $1\frac{1}{4}$  or less, more than two-thirds were under age  $5\frac{1}{4}$ , and 4 percent were less than 3 months old.

There were more boys than girls in adoptive homes, in about the same proportion as for the entire group. The age distribution was the same for the boys and the girls.

Only 17 percent of the children in adoptive homes were nonwhite. The average (mean) age of the white children was  $4\frac{1}{3}$  years, and the nonwhite children were slightly over age 5, on the average.

Among both white and nonwhite children a fourth or more had parents who were married and presumably living together. Why these children were given in adoption is not known. Remarriage with stepparents adopting may account for some cases.

Most (78 percent) of the children in adoptive homes had received service from the agency within the preceding 3 months. Most of the cases had also been initiated recently—63 percent within the preceding 15 months, 15 percent within the preceding 3 months. The median length of service was 1 year.

Children receiving child's benefits under old-age, survivors, and disability insurance represented almost 2 percent of the children in adoptive homes—a smaller proportion than in the entire group.

### **Children in Foster-Family Boarding Homes**

By far the largest proportion of the children in the study who were in some kind of foster-family home were in foster-family boarding homes where the board was paid from public or voluntary agency funds, by the child's parents, through child's benefits under old-age, survivors, and disability insurance, or from a combination of such sources. These children represented the second largest group in the entire study.

The child in a foster-family boarding home was likely to be about the same age as the child in his parents' home but older than the child in an adoptive home. The average (mean) age was over 9 years. Only 2 percent in this group were over age 18.

Although the proportion of children in foster-family boarding homes who were younger than age  $1\frac{1}{4}$  is small, the number was nearly as large as the number in this age group who were in adoptive homes. Some of the children were undoubtedly in boarding homes in preparation for placement in adoptive homes.

Seventy percent of the boarding-home children were white, and about one-fourth of these white children had parents who were married and presumably living together. (Some of these children may have been removed from their own home because of the parents' neglect or abuse.) For 42 percent of these children, the parents were divorced, separated, or deserted; and 18 percent

had parents that were not married. Two percent had lost both parents.

The nonwhite children in foster-family boarding homes present a different picture. Only 14 percent had parents who were married and living together; more than 45 percent had unmarried parents. Twenty-six percent of these children had parents who were divorced, separated, or deserted. The high proportion of nonwhite children of unmarried parents in boarding homes probably reflects the fact that adoption can be arranged for relatively few of these children.

Children in boarding homes are necessarily the subject of frequent contacts with the public welfare agency. About 71 percent of these children had had some contact with the agency within 1 month, 14 percent within 2 months, and 5 percent within 3 months. Only 1 percent had had no contact during 1958 or 1959.

The boarding-home children have had considerably longer periods of public welfare agency service than children in adoptive homes or children living in the homes of parents. The median length of service was 2.6 years. Service had been initiated within the past 3 months in only 9 percent of the cases. Almost 22 percent of the children had been receiving service for  $7\frac{1}{4}$  years or more. The length of casework service for these children may be related to the high proportion with living parents who were unwilling to release them for adoption but who could not provide a suitable home for them. There may be other factors—such as age, physical handicap, or race—that make it hard to place the child in adoption. In general, the agency's contacts with the parents of children in boarding homes were fairly frequent. For 59 percent, these contacts had been within the preceding 3 months, for 11 percent within 4-6 months.

More than 5 percent of the children in boarding homes were receiving benefits under old-age, survivors, and disability insurance.

### Children in Institutions

This study did not cover all children in institutions but only those for whom public child welfare agencies were providing casework services while they were living in institutions. The children include not only those placed in the institution by the agency but also those placed

there by parents or relatives or committed to the institution by a court order—children for whom the agency has been given responsibility for continuing supervision and final planning.

About 22,500 children, or 10 percent of those in the study, were receiving child welfare services from public welfare agencies while they were living in an institution. About 21,000 were in four types of institutions—institutions for dependent and neglected children, institutions for delinquent children, homes for unmarried mothers, and treatment centers for emotionally disturbed children. Small numbers were in institutions for the mentally retarded (1,542) and in institutions for physically disabled children (852).

*Institutions for dependent and neglected children.*—Children living in institutions for dependent and neglected children represented 6 percent of all the children in the study; they made up 24 percent of the total number of children in institutions of this type in the 45 reporting States. In other words, on the average, departments of public welfare have undertaken casework responsibility for almost one-fourth of the children in institutions for dependent and neglected children in these States, though the proportion varied considerably from State to State.

For the children living in these institutions, the average (mean) age was 12; 37 percent were aged  $10\frac{1}{4}$ – $14\frac{1}{4}$ ; 31 percent were aged  $14\frac{1}{4}$ – $18\frac{1}{4}$ ; 6 percent were aged  $11\frac{1}{4}$ – $5\frac{1}{4}$ . Only 1 percent were less than  $1\frac{1}{4}$  years old.

These children were older than those in foster-family boarding homes, and the pattern of their parents' marital status was different. Only 12 percent had unmarried parents, in contrast to 26 percent of the children in boarding homes and 49 percent of those in adoptive homes. Larger proportions had lost parents through death or had parents that were divorced than among children in boarding homes.

Seventeen percent of the children in these institutions were nonwhite—a smaller proportion than among the children in boarding homes—but the contrasts in parents' marital status between white and nonwhite children were in the same general direction as for the boarding-home children: relatively more nonwhite children had unmarried parents; fewer had divorced, deserted, or separated parents; more frequently they had

lost their mothers; and the proportions with both parents lost through death were the same for both white and nonwhite children.

For 69 percent of the children in these institutions the agencies reported contacts in the month preceding the report and for 81 percent within the 3 months before the report. The contacts included those by letter, telephone, or visit with the child, with his parents, foster parents, or guardian, or with responsible institutional personnel. For almost one-fifth there had been no contact within the past 3 months, and this group included 560 children for whom there had been no case activity in 1958 or in 1959.

The median length of service for children in this type of institution was 2.1 years—a shorter period than for children in foster-family boarding homes, with whose parents the public welfare agencies had been less recently in touch than with the parents of children in this institutional group. The parents of 67 percent of the children in institutions for dependent and neglected children had had contact with the agency in the preceding 3 months.

More than 7 percent of the children living in such institutions were receiving benefits under old-age, survivors, and disability insurance.

*Treatment centers for emotionally disturbed children.*—Ninety-two percent of the 955 children in residential treatment centers for emotionally disturbed children were between the ages of 5¼ and 18¼. The median age of the 577 boys was between 13 and 14; for the 378 girls the median age was 15. Only 103, or 11 percent, of these children were nonwhite—a smaller percentage than for children with any other living arrangement.

For both white and nonwhite children a higher proportion (41 percent) had parents married and living together than that for all children with living arrangements outside the child's own home. Twenty percent of the emotionally disturbed children had divorced parents. Only 14 percent of all children were living with divorced parents and only 15 percent of all children not living with their parents had parents that were divorced.

The median length of service received by these children was 2.4 years—a slightly shorter period than that for children in foster-family boarding homes.

*Homes for unmarried mothers.*—The “chil-

dren” in homes for unmarried mothers included unmarried women—usually under age 21—who were receiving service while awaiting the birth of infants, infants born recently, and perhaps other children admitted to temporary care with their mothers.

Of the 496 children reported as living in these homes, 466 were girls aged 13 to over age 21, and 30 were young children less than 3 months old to ages 3-4. The median age of the mothers was 17.6 years.

About half the mothers in these institutions had parents who were married and living together. Approximately 20 percent were the daughters of parents who were divorced, deserted, or separated; 19 percent had lost one or both parents through death. About 11 percent were the daughters of unmarried parents.

### Age and Whereabouts of Child

The type of care received by children needing child welfare services varies with their age, as shown in table 2. The data indicate that relatives are reluctant or unable to care for infants in need of parents but that they are increasingly a resource as the child grows older. Only 2 percent of the infants less than 3 months old were with relatives, but the proportion increased with each age group until, for children aged 14¼ and over, it was 10 percent.

The greatest opportunity for adoption is for the child less than 15 months old. With each succeeding age group the proportion of children in adoptive homes dwindles, and the decline is sharp after they are over age 10.

The foster-family boarding home is most used for children under 15 months, perhaps in many cases before the mother decides to relinquish a child or before an appropriate adoptive placement can be made. The proportions then drop slightly with increasing ages but remain significant (16 percent) even for the youth over age 18.

Institutions for dependent and neglected children care for only a small proportion of all children receiving services from public child welfare agencies. The children they serve are most likely to be older than age 10 but under age 15.

Forty-four percent of all the children in the study but only 26 percent of the infants younger than 3 months were in the homes of their parents.

The proportions increased with the age of the child to a high of 49 percent for the children aged 5¼-10¼ and then began to decline. Seventeen percent of the young people over age 18 were "elsewhere"—in hospitals, sanatoriums, boarding schools, or the Armed Forces or in independent living arrangements.

### Nonwhite Children

One-fourth of the children studied, 55,330 in 44 States,<sup>3</sup> were nonwhite. In some States the percentages were well above the average—77 percent in the District of Columbia; 46 percent in Delaware, Maryland, and Mississippi; and 45 percent in Illinois. Details by specific race are not available, but the children in the States with high percentages of nonwhite children were predominantly Negro. In Alaska and Hawaii, where the percentages of nonwhite children receiving service were high but the numbers low, the nonwhite children are mostly of other races. Nonwhite children made up the largest percentages of the children served in these two States—85 percent and 91 percent, respectively. Some of the nonwhite children in States in the Mountain Region are Indian, but in the Nation as a whole nonwhite is practically synonymous with Negro.

Forty percent of the nonwhite children were served in their parents' home and 10 percent in the homes of other relatives. For white children the corresponding proportions were 45 percent and 8 percent.

<sup>3</sup> The Virgin Islands, where the proportion of nonwhite children is high, did not report race.

The largest group of the nonwhite children receiving care away from their own homes lived in foster-family boarding homes; they represented 33 percent of all nonwhite children receiving services. Among the white children only 26 percent were in foster-family boarding homes. A slightly smaller percentage (9 percent) of nonwhite children than of white children (11 percent) were in institutions, and the proportion in adoptive homes was also smaller—4 percent compared with 7 percent.

About 35 percent of the nonwhite children but only 13 percent of the white children had parents who were unmarried. The parents of about 23 percent of the nonwhite children were married and living together, compared with 39 percent for the white children. For only 27 percent the parents were divorced or separated or one parent had deserted, compared with 34 percent of the white children. Fifteen percent had lost parents through death.

The nonwhite children were almost a year younger, on the average, than the white children, although the proportions under 15 months were about the same. Relatively more of the nonwhite children (24 percent) than of the white children (17 percent) were in families receiving public assistance. Nineteen percent of the nonwhite children were receiving aid to dependent children.

### Children Receiving OASDI Benefits

In 43 of the 45 States, public welfare departments were providing child welfare services to almost 10,000 children who were receiving child's

TABLE 2.—Children receiving child welfare services: Percentage distribution by whereabouts and by age, March 31, 1959

Age in years	Total	In home of parents	In home of relatives	In foster-family home			In institution for—				
				Adoptive	Boarding	Free, "wage or work"	Dependent and neglected children	Unmarried mothers	Emotionally disturbed children	Delinquent children	Mentally retarded and physically disabled
Total.....	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Under ¼.....	1	1	( <sup>1</sup> )	4	2	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	4		( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )
¼-1¼.....	5	4	3	31	5	3	1	2		( <sup>1</sup> )	2
1¼-5¼.....	18	20	16	36	20	12	6	( <sup>1</sup> )		( <sup>1</sup> )	7
5¼-10¼.....	26	28	25	18	27	17	23			16	22
10¼-14¼.....	23	22	23	7	24	17	37	4		35	19
14¼-18¼.....	23	22	28	3	20	38	31	51		41	74
18¼-21¼.....	4	3	5	1	2	13	2	24		6	6
21¼ and over.....	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	5		1	( <sup>1</sup> )
Median age in years.....	* 10.2	9.8	11.3	3.0	9.6	14.3	12.4	( <sup>2</sup> )		14.0	15.8

<sup>1</sup> Less than 0.5 percent.

<sup>2</sup> From ungrouped data.

<sup>3</sup> Not computed because both mothers and babies are in these institutions.

benefits under the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program (table 3). Some of them had lost a parent; others were entitled to

TABLE 3.—Children receiving child welfare services: Number in families receiving public assistance and number receiving OASDI benefits, March 31, 1959

State	Children in families receiving public assistance				Children receiving OASDI benefits	
	Total number	ADC only	Other public assistance	ADC and other public assistance	Number	Percent of total receiving child welfare casework services
Total, 44 States....	39,973	27,617	9,700	2,656	9,982	5
Alabama.....	2,489	2,489	-----	-----	587	6
Alaska.....	103	71	20	12	96	13
Arizona.....	402	356	32	14	111	4
Arkansas.....	175	69	28	78	35	2
Colorado.....	740	598	113	29	13	(1)
Delaware.....	211	129	65	17	84	6
Dist. of Col.....	765	623	3	57	141	4
Hawaii.....	23	20	8	-----	49	4
Idaho.....	69	65	2	2	13	7
Illinois.....	-----	-----	-----	-----	62	1
Indiana.....	1,062	715	159	188	707	6
Iowa.....	855	360	439	56	106	4
Kansas.....	162	86	54	22	80	4
Kentucky.....	3,984	3,560	85	339	848	9
Louisiana.....	473	274	129	70	192	3
Maine.....	543	232	199	112	200	6
Maryland.....	1,044	844	191	9	292	4
Massachusetts.....	-----	-----	-----	-----	362	6
Michigan.....	772	125	638	9	118	4
Minnesota.....	3,317	1,691	1,305	321	569	4
Mississippi.....	1,808	1,399	223	186	326	3
Missouri.....	1,047	1,248	58	341	246	6
Montana.....	176	96	47	33	46	6
Nebraska.....	432	188	144	100	132	7
Nevada.....	27	27	-----	-----	18	8
New Hampshire.....	189	7	182	-----	144	7
New Mexico.....	174	157	15	2	41	2
North Carolina.....	5,110	2,990	2,120	-----	720	4
North Dakota.....	137	106	27	4	52	4
Ohio.....	3,125	1,126	1,878	121	1,246	7
Oklahoma.....	479	346	19	114	110	4
Oregon.....	1,740	1,201	464	75	305	5
Puerto Rico.....	2,253	2,017	236	-----	371	4
Rhode Island.....	216	155	27	34	90	6
South Carolina.....	689	549	108	32	302	6
South Dakota.....	144	125	6	13	65	6
Tennessee.....	1,210	1,016	173	21	231	5
Texas.....	225	217	7	1	93	4
Utah.....	243	143	42	58	75	7
Vermont.....	190	130	39	21	88	5
Virgin Islands.....	25	12	7	6	7	2
West Virginia.....	1,429	1,233	41	155	598	8
Wisconsin.....	1,082	809	269	4	(2)	(2)
Wyoming.....	34	13	21	-----	11	3

<sup>1</sup> Less than 0.5 percent.

<sup>2</sup> Data not available.

benefits as the children of retired or disabled workers.

Thirty-seven percent of the 10,000 were living with one or both parents, and 16 percent were living with other relatives. A large proportion—28 percent—were living in foster-family boarding homes and about 3 percent in free foster homes or “wage or work” foster homes. Few (2 percent) were in adoptive homes, but the proportion in institutions (13 percent) was significant. Two-

thirds of the children who were receiving old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits and who were living in institutions were in institutions for dependent and neglected children and about one-sixth in institutions for delinquent children. Smaller numbers were in institutions for mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed children.

The children receiving old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits represent slightly more than 5 percent of the total number reported as receiving child welfare services on March 31, 1959, in the 43 States reporting receipt of such benefits. Among the States, the range of variation in this percentage is a narrow one. It may be estimated, on the basis of these percentages, that the total number of children in the United States who are receiving old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits and also receiving child welfare services from public child welfare agencies is about 17,000.

### Children Receiving Public Assistance

In 44 of the States cooperating in the study, 39,973 children or 19 percent of all children receiving child welfare casework services from public welfare agencies were in families on the public assistance rolls. The families of 30,273 children were receiving aid to dependent children; some other type of public assistance, such as old-age assistance or general assistance, was going to the families of 9,680 (table 3).

Relatively fewer of the children receiving public assistance (28 percent) than of the entire group (35 percent) had parents who were married and living together, and relatively more were from homes broken by separation, desertion, or divorce. About the same proportion (one-seventh) in the two groups had lost one or both parents by death, and roughly the same proportion (one-fifth) had parents who had never been married to one another. As in the entire group of children studied, one-fourth of these children were nonwhite.

Eighty percent of the children in families on the public assistance rolls were receiving child welfare casework services from a full-time child welfare worker; the others were served by general welfare workers who spent part of their time on other casework.

## THE AGENCY AND THE CHILD

A study of this kind could not go deeply in the public welfare agencies' methods of work or into the relationships established between the agency and the child or his parent. Three questions were asked, however, that were expected to throw some light on agency practice: (1) How recently had the agency performed service or had some contact in connection with the case—that is, in relation to the child, his parent, or the foster family or institution in which he was placed? (2) How recently had the agency been in contact with the parent of children who were not living at home and not in adoptive homes? (3) How long had the agency been giving service to the child since service was last initiated?

### Recency of Service

The first question concerned the most recent month in 1958 or 1959 in which the child welfare worker had been in touch by letter, telephone, or visit with either the child, his parents, his foster parents, or his guardian or with responsible institutional personnel.

The replies showed relatively recent contact for most of the children. For 57 percent the agency had made this contact within the past month and for three-fourths within the past 3 months (table 4). For more than 8,300 children, or 5 percent of all children receiving services, the agencies reported no contact either in 1958 or 1959. About 58 percent of these 8,300 children were in the homes of parents and 13 percent were with other relatives. All these figures raise a number of questions. Why were these children carried as active cases? Were they in their own homes or with relatives on the basis of a casework plan? Were they awaiting foster placement? Had they been returned to their own homes from foster care or institutions for delinquent children? Possibly the agencies believed that the children no longer needed close supervision or active casework and that the cases should be closed unless—particularly when the children were with relatives—the agency exercised legal custody that could not be terminated.

The other children (29 percent) in this group of 8,300 included 1,136 who were in institutions and who may have needed no attention from the agency. There seem to have been some errors,

however, in recording or reporting those without contact. The 469 children in adoptive homes and the 535 in foster-family boarding homes, for example, would presumably have had some agency contact within 15 months, though no contact was reported for them.

### Agency Contact With Parents

Almost 69,000 children in 41 States who were living with relatives or were in foster care had parents who were alive and whose whereabouts was known. The States reported agency contacts with 71 percent of the parents within the past 6 months and with 59 percent within the past 3 months. For an additional 19 percent there had been contacts with the parents within 2 years.

For 10 percent or nearly 7,000 of these children the agency had had no contact with parents for more than 2 years. The parent may have seen the child or communicated with him in some way. On that point the study produced no information. Moreover, the figures do not reveal the proportion of children who have one or both parents alive but who have been placed in the legal custody of a public welfare agency by court action. In such instances, contacts with the parent may be more infrequent.

### Length of Agency Service

Almost two-thirds (65 percent) of the children studied had been receiving service from the agency for less than 2¼ years since service had last been initiated. Some, of course, had received service at some earlier time. In general, the children in the most recent cases were, as might be expected, in the homes of parents or relatives, adoptive homes, and institutions for delinquent children. On the average, children living in the homes of their parents had been receiving service for 1.0 years, those in the homes of relatives for 1.2 years, those in adoptive homes for 1.0 years, and those in institutions for delinquent children, 1.1 years.

About 12 percent or nearly 25,000 children—more than half of them in foster-family boarding homes—had been receiving service for more than 6¼ years, and for about 800 children the service had continued for more than 16 years. The me-

TABLE 4.—Children receiving child welfare services: Percentage distribution by whereabouts and by month of last contact or service by agency, March 31, 1959

Month and year of last contact	Total	In home of parents	In home of relatives	In foster-family home				In institution for—					Elsewhere
				Adoptive	Boarding	Free	"Wage or work"	Dependent and neglected children	Unmarried mothers	Emotionally disturbed children	Delinquent children	Mentally retarded and physically disabled	
Total, 43 States	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1959													
March.....	57	50	49	53	72	49	56	69	82	46	55	39	49
February.....	13	13	12	16	14	12	13	8	9	13	14	14	12
January.....	7	8	9	10	5	7	11	4	2	7	9	7	8
1958													
December.....	5	6	5	4	3	6	5	5	1	8	6	9	5
November.....	2	3	3	3	1	3	2	1	1	4	3	3	2
October.....	2	3	3	3	1	3	3	2	1	5	2	3	2
September.....	2	2	3	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	4	3
August.....	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	4	2
July.....	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	(1)	2	1	2	2
June.....	1	1	2	1	(1)	2	1	1	0	1	1	2	1
May.....	1	1	1	(1)	(1)	1	1	1	0	1	(1)	1	1
April.....	1	1	1	(1)	(1)	1	(1)	1	(1)	1	1	1	1
March.....	1	1	1	1	(1)	1	1	(1)	0	1	1	1	1
February.....	1	1	(1)	(1)	(1)	1	(1)	(1)	0	(1)	(1)	1	1
January.....	(1)	1	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	1	(1)	0	1	(1)	(1)	1
No contact in 1958 or 1959.....	5	6	7	5	1	8	3	4	2	6	3	9	9

<sup>1</sup> Less than 0.5 percent.

dians were 2.6 years of service for children in foster-family boarding homes, 2.0 years for those in free foster-family homes, and 3.3 years for those in wage or work homes.

These figures on length of service relate to casework service by a public welfare agency and not to the total length of time a child has been "in care" in a foster-family home or an institution. The percentages for the 60,039 children in foster-family boarding homes are, however, similar to those produced in a study by Maas and Engler of a much smaller sample (3,855) of children in foster care.<sup>4</sup>

Among the children in the 45 States who had received service for more than 6¼ years, nearly equal proportions had parents who were married and living together; divorced, separated, or with one parent deserting; dead; or unmarried.

## CONCLUSION

Although 220,812 children is a large number to include in any study, only tentative conclusions can be drawn for the country as a whole until comparable sample studies are made in such large States as California, New Jersey, New

<sup>4</sup> Henry S. Maas and Richard E. Engler, Jr., *Children in Need of Parents*, Columbia University Press, 1959.

York, and Pennsylvania. The study does, however, raise certain questions. When the child's whereabouts is reported as unknown, for example, is the agency actually ignorant of the child's whereabouts? Has the child temporarily run away from a foster-family home or institution and is an effort being made to find him? Is the child in legal custody only? Is this a supplementary service case in which the reporting agency is only making payment and another agency giving service, or is this an inaccurate report from a case record?

A report of no agency contact with the parent of a child in foster care when at least one parent is alive and his whereabouts known raises more complicated questions. Although the parent may have surrendered the child to someone else or may have been temporarily deprived of legal custody because of neglect or abuse, the agency still has an obligation to keep in touch with him. Some other agency—probably a voluntary agency not included in this study—may, of course, be in touch with the parent, or the child and the parent may have been in touch frequently.

Special studies, in greater detail, need to be made of the 25,000 children who had been receiving casework service for more than 6¼ years and especially for the 13,000 children in foster-family boarding homes and the 2,000 in homes for dependent and neglected children. These

are children who, according to Maas and Engler, are "in danger of staying in foster care throughout their childhood years."

Future studies should distinguish between the child whose parents have requested help and the child of neglectful or abusing parents. Perhaps other details or types of service can be identified, such as service for children in their own homes for whom foster care is being planned, children in conflict with the law, and children who have returned home after placement in foster care or after commitment to a training school for delinquent children.

There are other questions that need answers. Why are children living with relatives when they have parents alive, married, and presumably living together? Why are children of married parents given for adoption? Why are children less than 15 months old in foster-family boarding homes and in institutions for dependent or neglected children?

The study shows that cases of children in institutions for dependent or neglected children

had been initiated more recently than some other cases. Does this mean that public welfare agencies are undertaking casework for children already in institutions? that children are placed by public welfare agencies in institutions mainly for short-term care? that foster homes are scarce and vacant beds in institutions plentiful? Or is there a swing back to considering institutional care as more beneficial in certain situations and are the public agencies planning the type of placement for the child on a diagnostic basis, determining for a particular child whether a foster-family home or an institution is better?

Despite these unanswered questions, the study has produced valuable information on public child welfare programs in most of the States. For a large group of children it has led to the type of generalization that has not been published on a national scale during the past 15 years. It should be followed in the near future by a carefully planned sample study that will yield information that is more clearly representative of the country as a whole.

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## PROGRAM OPERATIONS

*(Continued from page 2)*

sulted partly from the provision in the 1960 amendments to the Social Security Act making benefits payable to disabled workers under age 50 and to their dependents. More than 30,000 disabled workers under age 50 and more than 35,000 wives, husbands, and children of these workers received benefits for November, the first month for which these benefits were payable. About 640,000 disabled workers and dependents were receiving monthly benefits at the end of November, 3 $\frac{1}{3}$  years after disability benefits were first payable.

Another factor in the November increase was the large number of awards (18,900) attributable to the provision in the 1960 amendments under which a worker needs, for fully insured status, only 1 quarter of coverage for every 3 calendar quarters elapsing after 1950 instead of 1 quarter for every 2. The total number of awards under this provision has now reached 25,800.

The number of retired workers receiving old-age benefits exceeded 8 million for the first time in November. It had taken 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  years from the time monthly benefits were first payable to reach

the 4-million mark; it took only about 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  years to double that total.

Monthly benefits were being paid at the end of November at a monthly rate of \$924.8 million, of which \$689.4 million went to retired workers and their families. Survivor monthly benefits amounted to \$190.0 million; \$99.6 million was going to widowed mothers and children and \$90.4 million to aged widows, widowers, and parents. Monthly benefits to disabled workers and their families totaled \$45.4 million.

### Benefit Awards Rise Sharply

Monthly benefits were awarded to 251,600 persons in November, 95,000 more than in October and more than in any other month since April 1958. Child's benefits were awarded to a record high of 60,800 persons, including about 28,300 children of disabled-worker beneficiaries under age 50. Disability benefits were awarded to 32,700 disabled workers under age 50 and to 10,700 who were aged 50-64. The total of 43,400 was more than the number awarded in any other

*(Continued on page 22)*