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THE COUNTY AS A UNIT
FOR AN ORGANIZED PROGRAM OF
CHILD CARING AND
PROTECTIVE WORK

By

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THE COUNTY AS A UNIT
OF ORGANIZED PROGRAMS OF
CHILD CARE AND
PROTECTIVE WORK

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III

THE COUNTY AS A UNIT FOR AN ORGANIZED PROGRAM OF CHILD CARING AND PROTECTIVE WORK

PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT STUDY OF COUNTY SOCIAL WORK

A publication by the Children's Bureau, issued in 1922,¹ contains descriptions of the methods of county-wide work for child care and protection in certain States and localities. An attempt was made to analyze the development and types of county organization then existing in some 15 States, in 3 of which the county work was developed under the auspices of private agencies and in the others under a public department. The work in the following States or counties was described in detail by persons having intimate contact with the plans and their development: Minnesota, North Carolina, California, New York State, Westchester County, N. Y., and Monmouth County, N. J. In the introduction brief mention was made of the methods employed in some of the other States, including Indiana, Missouri, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, South Carolina, and Florida, and activities in Alabama which later were given the sanction of State law. The appendix contains the laws authorizing special county work in Arizona, Arkansas, Missouri, Ohio, and Virginia.

A field study on this subject was undertaken by the Children's Bureau and completed in 1925, designed to show the methods that had been found desirable and to some extent the results obtained through organization of county welfare work in Minnesota and North Carolina, and in Dutchess County, N. Y.² These illustrate three forms of county social work conducted by public agencies. The report furnishes interesting information in regard to the problems dealt with in county work and the various methods used by the units studied.

Since the first publication was issued a number of changes have occurred through passage of new legislation authorizing this form of county activity and in two or three instances discontinuance of plans under way at the time to which the earlier report applied. This report summarizes the information on the present situation obtained from the various State organizations in November, 1925. The aim is not to present the material according to a uniform plan, but to set forth important features of the development in each State as reported by persons having first-hand knowledge of the situation.

¹ County Organization for Child Care and Protection. U. S. Children's Bureau Publication No. 107. Washington, 1922.

² Public Child-Caring Work in Certain Counties of Minnesota, North Carolina, and New York, by H. Ida Curry. U. S. Children's Bureau Publication. (In press.)

In discussing the work being done in the States included in the earlier report the same field will not be covered, but an effort will be made to give such supplementary information as will show the present status of the work. Except where otherwise noted, this information was obtained through correspondence with State boards in the fall of 1925.

WHAT IS MEANT BY COUNTY ORGANIZATION FOR CHILD CARE AND PROTECTION?

County organization for child care and protection means primarily the unification, or at least the coordination, in the county, of the work undertaken by various public agencies for the care and protection of the dependent, neglected, delinquent, physically handicapped, and mentally defective. Sometimes health activities and enforcement of child labor and compulsory education laws are also united with the program for care of dependent, neglected, and delinquent children, and the activities of private agencies are coordinated in some counties with those of the public agencies. It is probably unnecessary to point out that organization of county social work is not an object in and of itself but is simply a means to an end—the development of the standards of modern social work in the conduct of family or child welfare work. Interest in county organization has developed from the same causes and often as a part of the movement to make more effective the work of State boards or departments of charities or welfare. The county is selected as the local administrative unit in carrying out this program because it is the local unit for taxation, poor relief, education, and other matters, and because through the county as a unit the needs of both urban and rural children can be served.³

The form of organization is based largely on the character of the public or private agencies found in the county, and is to a considerable extent dependent upon the character of the population. Resources adequate for a county whose largest city has a population of about 50,000, though the same general principles may hold, would not meet the needs of an entirely rural county or one in which there is a large city. The basic laws of the State and the agencies and institutions that have developed over a period of years must be taken into account. No two States have exactly the same background, and methods fitting the needs of one can not be applied in exactly the same way in a second State. There are equally great differences between counties in the same State. It is therefore necessary to follow the opportunist policy of continually adapting a program to local needs and local resources in working out a program of this kind for a State.

CHANGING PROGRAMS OF PUBLIC SOCIAL WORK

All States make some provision for certain classes of handicapped persons, especially for those who require custodial care or special training, but only recently have public agencies entered the field of

³ The Pennsylvania Department of Welfare (see p. 16) finds that the "political boundaries of a county" are not always the best for "welfare administrative units."

preventive social work with families or children. Its development has sometimes been the result of definite efforts on the part of private organizations to enlist the State or other public body in special forms of child caring or protective work the desirability of which has been demonstrated by private agencies. Sometimes the State, county, or municipality has undertaken to fill a need not met by any existing agency, or to supplement an inadequate program. In some States and in some counties and municipalities public child-caring activities are extensive; in others the major part of the field is covered by institutions and agencies conducted under private auspices.

The effectiveness of county organization must be judged not by the form or the auspices under which it is undertaken, but by the quality and the adequacy of the work actually performed for the care of those in need and by what is being done to prevent or reduce future needs through constructive social work that deals not only with the individual but with underlying conditions.

County organization for child care and protection as it has been developed, though undertaken primarily to unify and make more effective the work of the public authorities concerned with child welfare, is sometimes, as has been pointed out, a plan for harmonizing the work of the various public and private organizations active in the county. While the complaint is sometimes heard that the extension of public service discourages the development of private effort through making agencies and institutions under private auspices unnecessary, the question that should be asked is whether in the absence of the new form of public county work the private agencies in these counties would on their own initiative have so extended their activities that the field of preventive and protective service would be covered as well as it is under public auspices. If such an inquiry were made it would doubtless be discovered that private organizations are finding greater opportunities for constructive service than were previously recognized, although their efforts may be directed into a different channel in order that the needs of all the children in the county may be met.

It is being recognized more and more that all relief for families or for children in need of special care is or should be regarded as temporary and that the elimination or prevention of the problem of dependency should always be sought. There is, as a consequence, little tendency on the part of intelligent leaders in either public or private social work to feel that hard and fast programs are desirable or to try to secure permanency for the institutions or agencies established. Nor is there any present tendency toward the assumption by the public of all the functions connected with the care and protection of children in need.

TYPES OF COUNTY ORGANIZATION

The following discussion will be limited to county public-welfare work authorized by special legislation or developed by State agencies without such laws. Special emphasis is thus placed on the work of public agencies, though that of private agencies is not necessarily excluded.

The types of organization for county public-welfare work, so defined, may be classified into four groups based on the type of activity undertaken:

1. Broad program of public-welfare or child-welfare work according to state-wide plan (North Carolina, Minnesota, Missouri, Virginia, Alabama).

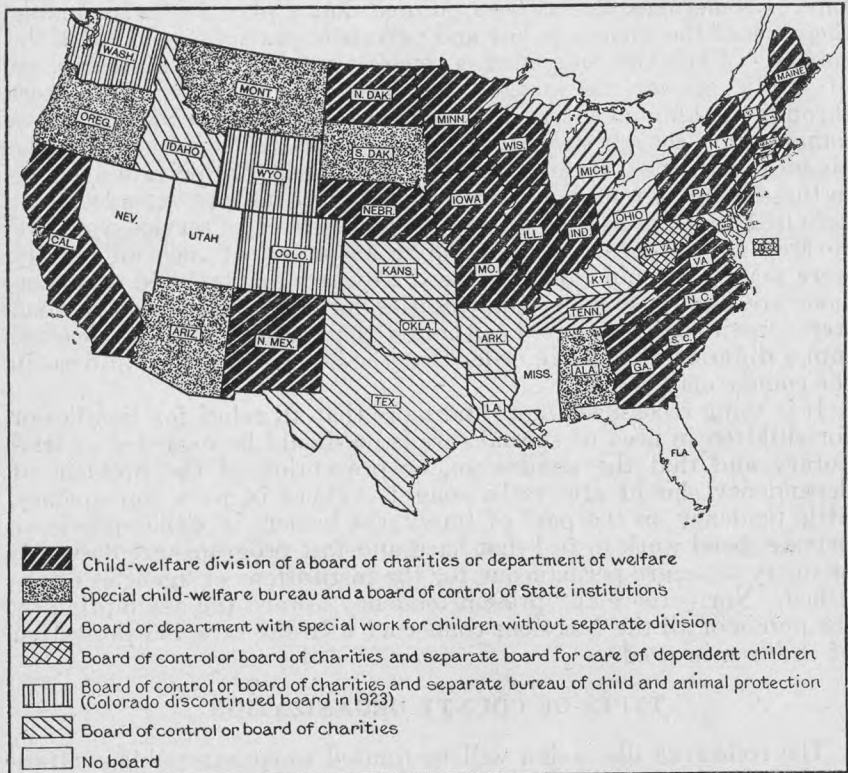
2. Program of social work promoted by State department but not according to state-wide plan (California, Georgia, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, West Virginia).

3. Coordination of public and private relief promoted by State body (Iowa).

4. Care and supervision of dependent, neglected, delinquent, or defective children, with or without the co-operation of State department (Arizona, Arkansas, Indiana, Michigan, New York, Ohio).

MAP I

STATE DEPARTMENTS OR BUREAUS DEALING WITH DEPENDENT, NEGLECTED, DEFECTIVE, OR DELINQUENT CHILDREN



In all the States included in the first three classes the development of county organization has been stimulated and promoted by a State body, and in all but one of the States in the fourth class (New York) more or less close relationships between the State department and local organizations have been maintained. It is of interest, therefore, to note the types of State bureaus or departments dealing

with dependent, neglected, defective, or delinquent children. These are shown in Map I, and the different types of county organization are shown in Map II (see p. 5).

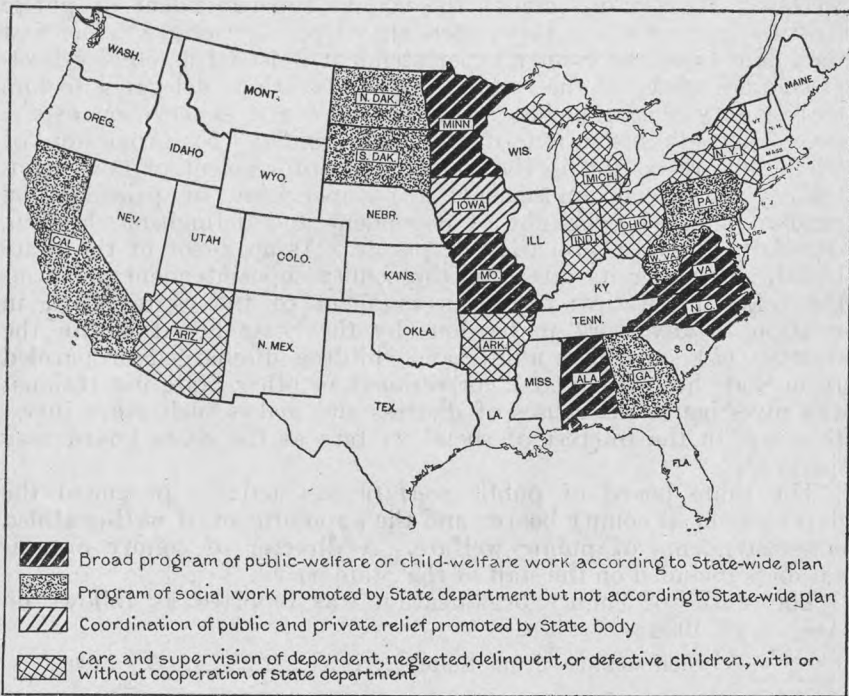
BROAD PROGRAM OF PUBLIC-WELFARE OR CHILD-WELFARE WORK ACCORDING TO STATE-WIDE PLAN⁴

Included in this group are five States—North Carolina, Minnesota, Missouri, Virginia, and Alabama—that have county boards of child or public welfare carrying out broad programs according to a state-wide plan specified by law. These boards or officials act as agents of the State departments for certain types of activities. The Minnesota system differs in some important respects from programs in the other States, especially in the limitation of the activities of the

MAP II

ORGANIZATION OF COUNTY PUBLIC-WELFARE WORK AUTHORIZED BY LAW OR DEVELOPED BY STATE BOARDS

[County boards of visitors, juvenile advisory committees, etc., are not included]



county boards to work performed for the State board of control. The laws defining the organization of boards and the powers and duties of the boards and their executives are similar in the other four States, except that Alabama (as is the case in Minnesota) has child-welfare boards, whereas North Carolina and Virginia have public-welfare boards, and Missouri has superintendents of public welfare but no boards.

⁴ The States are discussed in the order of establishment of county work.

North Carolina.⁵

The law enacted in North Carolina in 1917, amended in 1919 and 1921,⁶ provides for the appointment by the State board of charities and public welfare, of county boards of charities and public welfare consisting of three members. The county board is to advise with and assist the State board in the work in the county and make such visits and reports as the State board may request. The board is also to act "in a general advisory capacity to the county and municipal authorities in dealing with questions of dependency and delinquency, distribution of the poor funds, and social conditions generally." The members of the county boards serve without pay.

The act further provides that the county board of education and the board of commissioners of each county shall elect a county superintendent of public welfare, who shall be a person qualified by character, fitness, and experience to discharge the duties of the office. No one can be so employed until he has received a certificate of approval of his fitness from the State board of charities and public welfare. In certain counties the county superintendent of public instruction may act as superintendent of public welfare. The first duty laid upon the county superintendent is to act as chief school-attendance officer of the county. Other functions delegated to him as a county official include: (a) The care and supervision of the poor and administration of the poor funds; (b) promotion of wholesome recreation in the county and enforcement of laws regulating commercial amusement; (c) supervision of prisoners on parole; and (d) oversight of dependent and delinquent children, especially those on probation or parole. As an agent of the State board, and under its direction, the county superintendent performs the following duties: (a) Acts as agent of the State board in relation to any work to be done by the State board within the county; (b) supervises adults and children discharged or paroled from State hospitals, penal, correctional, or other State institutions; (c) investigates the causes of distress and makes such other investigations in the interest of social welfare as the State board may direct.

The State board of public welfare has actively promoted the development of county boards and the appointment of well-qualified superintendents of public welfare. A director of county organization is included on the staff of the State board.

The status of county organization was reported as follows on August 25, 1926:

Total counties in the State.....	100
Whole-time superintendents of welfare with assistants.....	7
Whole-time superintendents of welfare without assistants..	44
Part-time superintendents of welfare.....	8
Superintendent of public instruction serves as superin- tendent of welfare.....	41

⁵ The North Carolina system of county public-welfare work has been described in more detail in two Children's Bureau publications previously cited: *County Organization for Child Care and Protection*, pp. 43-53, 151-154, and *Public Child-Caring Work in Certain Counties of Minnesota, North Carolina, and New York* (in press).

⁶ N. C. act of Mar. 6, 1917, Public Laws of 1917, p. 320, ch. 170, amended by act of Feb. 13, 1919, Public Laws of 1919, ch. 46, and by act of Mar. 4, 1921, Public Laws of 1921, p. 385, ch. 128; Consolidated Stat. 1919, secs. 5014-5018, amended by Public Laws of 1921, ch. 128.

⁷ Of these 12 have clerical assistants.

An important feature of the development of county social work in North Carolina has been the summer-training course for county superintendents of welfare conducted by the State university in cooperation with the State board of charities and public welfare.

Minnesota.⁸

County child-welfare boards were authorized by statute in Minnesota in 1917⁹ in accordance with the recommendation of the State child-welfare commission. The law provides that the State board of control, when requested to do so by boards of county commissioners, may appoint in each county three persons (at least two of whom shall be women), who shall serve without compensation, and, together with a representative of the county board of commissioners and the county superintendent of schools, shall constitute a child-welfare board for the county. In counties containing a city of the first class the board membership shall include five persons appointed by the State board. The county child-welfare board is tied up directly to the State board, the law specifying that it shall perform such duties as may be required of it by the State board of control. A secretary and necessary assistants may be employed by the county child-welfare board, persons thus appointed acting as executive agents of the county board. In counties where no child-welfare board exists the judge of the juvenile court may appoint a local agent to cooperate with the State board of control. Salaries of secretaries or agents and expenses of board members and agents are to be paid from county funds.

The relation between State and local administration in child-welfare work has been described by the first director of the children's bureau, Minnesota State Board of Control, in *County Organization for Child Care and Protection*,¹⁰ and the development of the county units is discussed in detail in *Public Child-Caring Work in Certain Counties of Minnesota, North Carolina, and New York*.¹¹ In the latter report it is stated that the county boards in Minnesota are expected to perform the duties of the State board of control in protecting, establishing paternity, and securing the support of children born out of wedlock; in investigating (a) boarding homes and maternity hospitals for licensing, (b) homes in which dependent children have been placed, and (c) prospective adoptions; and in supervising dependent children and feeble-minded persons who have been committed to the guardianship of the State board of control. On the request of the juvenile court of the county, the county board may investigate applications for mothers' allowances and supervise families receiving such grants. They may cooperate upon request with the public officials or boards charged with the relief of the poor.

⁸ The operation of the Minnesota system is described more fully in the two Children's Bureau reports previously cited.

⁹ Minn., act of Apr. 10, 1917, Laws of 1917, p. 279, ch. 194, secs. 4-7; Gen. Stat. 1923, secs. 4457-4461.

¹⁰ Hodson, William W.: "Organization and development of county child-welfare boards in Minnesota." *County Organization for Child Care and Protection*, pp. 19-42. U. S. Children's Bureau Publication No. 107. Washington, 1922.

¹¹ U. S. Children's Bureau publication. (In press.)

The staff employed in the child-welfare work of the counties in the fall of 1926 was as follows:

Total counties in the State.....	87
Counties having child-welfare boards.....	80
With full-time executive secretaries.....	17
With part-time executive secretaries.....	4
With no paid workers.....	59
Counties having no child-welfare boards.....	7
With agents appointed by juvenile courts.....	2
With no special county service for children.....	5

Missouri.

The Missouri law passed in 1921¹² authorized county courts in counties of less than 50,000 to appoint county superintendents of public welfare and such assistants as might be required. The duties of the county superintendent were defined as follows:

1. Administration of funds devoted to outdoor relief and allowances to needy mothers.
2. Supervision of patients discharged or paroled from the State hospital for the insane.
3. Supervision of prisoners on parole from the State penitentiary and the Missouri reformatory, and boys and girls paroled from the training school for boys and the industrial home for girls.
4. Cooperation with State employment bureaus.
5. Investigation of condition of the poor, sick, and delinquent in the county and enforcement of school attendance laws.
6. Acting as probation officer of the county.
7. Investigation of requests for charity and applications of blind persons for pensions.

The county superintendent of public welfare may be deputized or authorized and required by the State board of charities and corrections to act as its agent in any work to be done by the board within the county, and to act as local representative of the children's bureau of the State board in its work of finding foster homes and supervising children placed in them. He may also be deputized as an agent of the State factory inspector. He serves as probation officer and attendance officer, administers all county funds devoted to outdoor relief and allowances to needy mothers, and is directed to investigate the condition of the poor, sick, and delinquent of the county.¹³

In a leaflet published by the Missouri State Board of Charities and Corrections, the purpose of a county department of public welfare is stated as follows:

To furnish in the county government one department which is responsible for all the social work done by the county; as there is a county superintendent to handle the school business of the county, as there is a county farm agent to look after the advancing of farm interests in the county, so should there be a superintendent of public welfare to advance and conserve the human

¹² Mo., act of Mar. 31, 1921, Laws of 1921, pp. 586-589.

¹³ Biennial Report of the Missouri State Board of Charities and Corrections, 1923-1924, p. 43. Jefferson City, Mo., 1925.

interests of the county. As the other departments are conducted by trained men, so is it even more important that a trained worker administer the social work of the county.¹⁴

In the smaller counties it is found practicable to combine in the person of superintendent of public welfare the duties of juvenile-court workers, compulsory-attendance officers, and other officials dealing with the dependent, delinquent, and defective. In no county has preexisting work in these fields been eliminated. In the larger counties the different branches of work may be divided among a staff under the supervision of the county superintendent.

In November, 1925, the secretary of the State board of charities and corrections reported that there were in the State 23 county-welfare superintendents, 8 of them employed on full time, the remainder on part time.

Virginia.

In 1922, following the recommendations of the Children's Code Commission of Virginia, the legislature enacted a body of new child-welfare laws, the central administering agency for which was the reorganized State board of charities and corrections called the Virginia State Board of Public Welfare. In order to extend the work of the State board into the counties, county and city boards of public welfare were provided for. This law made it mandatory upon the circuit court of each county to appoint, not later than two years from the date of passage of the act, a county board of public welfare of three to seven members, from a list of eligibles submitted by the State board of public welfare. The creation of a city board of public welfare was optional with the corporation or hustings courts of cities.¹⁵ The duties of these county and city boards are to inspect all institutions of a charitable or penal nature within the county or city; to interest themselves in all matters pertaining to the social welfare of the people of the county or city; to direct the activities of the superintendents of public welfare when there is one; and to cooperate with the juvenile and domestic-relations courts "and all other agencies operating for the social betterment of the county or city."

When the board "may deem it advisable and expedient" they shall elect from a list of eligibles submitted by the State board a county or city superintendent of public welfare—to serve as the executive officer of the board—and such assistants as are deemed necessary. Two or more counties, or a city of the first class and a county, may unite in providing for such service. Under the law every superintendent is vested with the powers of a police officer or constable.

The duties of the superintendent of public welfare cover a broad field of cooperation with the State board of public welfare. He acts as an agent of the State board of public welfare in relation to any work undertaken by the board in the county or city. Under the direction of the State board, he supervises persons discharged or paroled from State institutions of any kind and dependent children placed in the county or city by the State board. He also assists the

¹⁴ Conserve Human Resources; a county superintendent of public welfare needed. State board of charities and corrections. Jefferson City, Mo.

¹⁵ Va., act of Feb. 27, 1922, Acts of 1922, p. 156, ch. 105, secs. 12-14.

State board in finding employment for the unemployed and makes investigations into the causes of distress or any other investigations the State board may direct.

In relation to relief activities carried on by the county the superintendent of public welfare has the care and supervision of the poor and administers the funds formerly administered by the overseers of the poor. He administers mothers' aid funds, where such funds exist, in accordance with the provisions of the State law. In cooperation with the courts he acts as chief probation officer for county or city. In addition to these definite functions it is his duty to "foster cooperation and intelligent division of work between all public and private charitable and social agencies in the county or city to the end that public resources and charitable donations may be conserved and the needs of the county or city be adequately cared for."

The report of the Virginia State Board of Public Welfare, issued in 1925, in discussing some of the child-welfare laws enacted in 1922, states:

These laws are on the statute books, and, with the funds provided, are being administered as well as could be expected, but they have not received the support needed either financially or morally to make them as effective as they might easily be * * *. It is comparatively easy to write a law into the statute book, but another thing to administer it, and there has been greater support in doing the former than the latter.¹⁶

The agent of the board in charge of the development of county work said in a letter to the Children's Bureau that because of this lack of support the bureau of county and city organization, planned for as an important division of the State board, is for the most part a nominal one, never having been provided for in the budget. The director of the county work has at present several other functions of the State board to perform.

It is reported that in the fall of 1925 boards had been appointed in about 40 counties, but owing to inadequate supervision had not really functioned in more than 10 or 12 counties—those on which the State board had concentrated its efforts—and in these their work was felt to have justified their existence. Seven counties had superintendents of public welfare, in accordance with the act of 1922, and in 10 or more counties a public-health nurse or a Red Cross worker was to all intents and purposes serving as superintendent. As there are 100 counties in the State, this leaves most of them unorganized.

Alabama.

County boards of child welfare were authorized by an Alabama statute enacted in 1923.¹⁷ This act authorized the judge of the juvenile court (the county judge of probate), when the county board of education and the board of county commissioners declare by resolution that a county child-welfare board should be established in that county, to appoint three citizens at large, two of whom shall be women. These three members, together with the judge of the juvenile court, the chairman of the county board of education,

¹⁶ Sixteenth Annual Report of the State Board of Public Welfare of Virginia, year ending June 30, 1925, pp. 6, 7. Richmond, 1925.

¹⁷ Ala., act of Sept. 26, 1923, Acts of 1923, p. 389, No. 369; Code 1923, secs. 143-152.

the county superintendent of education, and one member of the board of county commissioners, constitute a county board of child welfare. As defined by the State child-welfare department, the duties of the county board of child welfare will be to "cooperate with the judge of the juvenile court; with the county and city boards of education, in the enforcement of the compulsory school attendance law; with the county board of health in matters relating to welfare of children; and * * * with all other educational and social agencies, public and private, in the county for the coordination of all work pertaining to the well-being of children."¹⁸

The State Child-Welfare Department of Alabama helps the counties to survey conditions and inaugurate the service needed. The duties of the county superintendent of child welfare include the following:

1. Serving as probation officer of the juvenile court.
2. Enforcing the compulsory school attendance law.
3. Cooperating with the State child-labor inspector in the enforcement of the State child labor law.
4. Acting as parole officer for any child living in the county paroled from a State institution.
5. Cooperating with the State child-welfare department and all other public or private agencies having to do with or giving relief to children.
6. Cooperating with county boards of health in public programs for children.

It will be seen that these functions are very similar to those of county superintendents in North Carolina, Virginia, and Missouri.

The salary of the county superintendent of child welfare and other expenses may be paid jointly by the county board of education and the board of county commissioners. Special funds for this work may be appropriated by any municipality in the county.

Four counties had been organized by the State child-welfare department prior to the passage of the law in 1923. The director of the child-welfare department stated in November, 1925, that during 1925 six counties were organized "with full-time, trained, and well-paid social workers." The director described the organization in one county as follows:

C—— County is entirely rural, being the first county in the production of cotton this past year. A most unique organization has been put on here where all the county agents, such as the county health officer, health nurse, home demonstration agent, county supervisor, and the farm agent, together with the new probation and school-attendance officer made an educational campaign in the county, holding eight or nine meetings at the consolidated schools attended by great groups of farmers interested in knowing what "the county as a unit for an organized program of social work" meant.

And in regard to another county:

Perhaps the most progressive program that has been inaugurated is in X—— County. The plan is to place on duty in this county a trained social

¹⁸ "County Organization for Juvenile Courts and for Children's Aid." Issued by the Alabama Child-Welfare Department in multigraphed form in 1925.

worker to supervise rural field and case social-welfare work in the county, and in addition, to conduct classes and supervise county rural field and case social-welfare work.

All these counties have been organized by the State department. The director says, "First, we go into the counties and make a study of conditions; second, present this study before the people; and third, go before the boards of commissioners and boards of education to help secure the appropriation." All local workers must be certified as to training and experience by the department, and it is stated that every county so far has left the selection of the worker entirely to the department. After the work has been organized in a county the State department receives monthly reports on its progress and makes "friendly visits" to help in keeping the work up to standard.

One of the difficulties in county organization in Alabama, as in the other States undertaking similar work, is to find workers properly qualified by training and experience. The type of extension work undertaken in North Carolina by the State university in cooperation with the State board of charities and public welfare (see p. 7) is an important feature in the development of county organization.

**PROGRAM OF SOCIAL WORK PROMOTED BY STATE DEPARTMENT BUT NOT
ACCORDING TO STATE-WIDE PLAN**

California, Georgia, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and West Virginia constitute a group of States in which county programs of social work are promoted by the State department with or without statutory authority but not according to a general state-wide plan, the organization in each county being adapted to local needs. In these States the State departments have put much emphasis on advising and helping the counties to develop whatever methods of work and cooperation between public or private agencies seem practicable in view of local conditions. There are certain advantages in this method, based as it must be on education of the communities as to needs and methods and subsequent development from within the county of its own program. On the other hand, the State functions of investigation and supervision can not be developed so readily under this form of county organization, and the need of developing private agencies is much greater than where the nucleus is public and cooperation between public and private agencies may be more successfully organized.

California.

The executive secretary of the California Department of Welfare, in November, 1925, stated that the activities of the department in connection with the organization of county social work have continued along the same lines as those that were described in the Children's Bureau publication, *County Organization for Child Care and Protection*.¹⁹

Surveys have been made in various counties in order to interest them in creating public-welfare boards. The 1925 law creating the State department of public welfare authorizes it to utilize the services of an "approved and accredited inspection service" in the issu-

¹⁹ *County Organization for Child Care and Protection*, pp. 55-71.

ance of permits or licenses for institutions, boarding homes * * * or to engage in the finding of homes for children or placing children in homes."²⁰ Although this law does not apply specifically to county boards it may be so interpreted, and local agencies and organizations, including county boards, may be given the right to act as representatives of the State department.

Twenty of the 58 counties of the State are reported as having paid workers devoting full time to social-service work in the county welfare departments.

Georgia.

The Georgia State Department of Public Welfare has undertaken the task of promoting social work in the counties not according to any set program for organization, but by working out with the existing local organizations the needs and possibilities in each county and by helping them to coordinate and extend the work as required to make social service available to all those in need.

The director of the division of county organization of the State department of public welfare reports that the counties in Georgia are rapidly coming to see "that the fundamental need in the welfare program of caring for the delinquent and dependent is the organization of county forces under trained leadership, for the effective cooperation of all interested groups and the coordination of efforts which have hitherto been dissipated by working blindly and at cross purposes."²¹ As there is no special legislation authorizing this type of work, the State department has undertaken it as a necessary part of its public-welfare work. The report cited goes on to say:

As the official investigatory and advisory agency, it is the duty of the State department of public welfare, through its division of county organization, to find out how each county is caring for its dependents and to discover if the methods are such as lead toward rehabilitation of the socially handicapped, so that they may be returned as productive citizens * * *. Where methods are found to be wasteful or inefficient, it is the duty of this division to show how the county may organize its forces to do the work as it should be done.

The need for organized and county work was pointed out in the State department's report, which states that the 161 counties in the State were spending on outdoor relief to dependent families approximately \$400,000. "This amount," the report says, "is usually handed out in pitiful doles in various haphazard, unbusinesslike ways to what is known as the pauper list, with no facilities for finding out the real needs of those applying for aid." One county commissioner is quoted as saying, "The delinquent and dependent of our county is the biggest thing we have to deal with. We spend from \$500 to \$600 a month on the dependent and disorganized families. It increases every month and we are getting nowhere." People are placed on the "pauper list" or in the county almshouse by the county commissioners, acting usually upon petitions circulated by family or friends and signed by a large number of voters. No effort is made to discover the real conditions and needs.

²⁰ Calif., act of Mar. 27, 1925, Laws of 1925, pp. 20-25, ch. 18.

²¹ Footprints; report of fifth year's work of the State department of public welfare, June 1, 1925, p. 6. Atlanta, Ga.

Thirty-six families on the pauper list in one county were visited by the department's agent and an investigation made of conditions. Twelve of the families were reported as not requiring the aid given, and relief was discontinued by the county. Fifteen additional families could have been removed from the county's list if a welfare worker had been available to solve the problems which were handicapping them. In other cases on the list families were woefully neglected because they were in need of services of various kinds which the county did not supply.

Other problems that make county social work necessary are described in the State report, including the need of probation officers to make investigations of juvenile cases and supervise children placed on probation and enforcement of the school attendance law by a trained family-welfare worker. The State department estimates that "in the average rural Georgia county one trained welfare worker can handle the work with the county's poor, its juvenile court, and its school attendance, with the assistance of the volunteer help of churches and civic organizations." It is further stated that according to studies made in several counties proper investigation of the pauper list would save the county enough money to pay the salary of a trained welfare worker, especially with the addition of the money now being paid by the county for school-attendance work.

The policy underlying the promotion of county social-welfare work in Georgia is thus stated in the department's report:

In each county the problem has been approached by the State department of public welfare open-mindedly, with no preconceived ideas. Each county situation is considered individually by the department and on its own merits, and advisory service as to organization is rendered in the spirit of cooperation and helpfulness. There is no desire to dictate local policies, but only a desire to render trained advisory service toward a successful and happy working out of the county-wide program. As the official State agency, with the duties and responsibilities of developing a State welfare program, the department has tried to study the social problems in each county which present themselves constantly to county officials and private citizens. It has tried to see these problems from the standpoint of the county official in his efforts to be systematic and save money; from the standpoint of the citizen who would like to see service rendered to unfortunate people; and from the standpoint of the individual to whom service is rendered.²²

Although, as has been pointed out, the State department holds that a "stereotyped plan for county organization for welfare work" is not desirable, it is stated in the report that "there are three phases of the problem, namely, the relief work, the juvenile delinquency, and the school attendance, which logically seem to tie up in the small county. The juvenile court law, section 900 of the Code, makes legal provision for the appointment of a probation officer. The school attendance law makes mandatory provision for attendance officer and a commissioner of the poor may be appointed according to section 550. On the basis of any one or all of these laws and of the potentialities of the county's private agencies, various plans may be worked out."

Outside the 5 counties containing large cities, 13 counties were reported as having social workers. In 3 of these counties this worker is connected with the local Red Cross chapter. In 7 counties

²² Footprints, pp. 16, 17.

he is the probation officer under the juvenile advisory board, and in 3 counties a part-time probation officer.

North Dakota.

The development of county social work in North Dakota is of recent origin, but a beginning has been made in several counties. The children's bureau of the State board of administration has undertaken the organization of county child-welfare boards as a part of its program of constructive child caring and protective work throughout the State. Because the State children's bureau has been very much occupied since its creation in 1923, and educational preparation is required in the counties as a basis for coordinating social work and improving methods, the work has progressed slowly. There has been, however, a definite aim. The State bureau seeks to create a demand for county organization from the counties themselves.

The director of the North Dakota Children's Bureau says:

From several counties has come the request for the organization of county child-welfare boards. In one county the juvenile commissioner, a trained social worker, serves as secretary of the county-welfare board, her salary being paid by the county * * *. Problems of child care in the county are brought before the regular meetings of the board. This board also serves as the official representative of the State children's bureau. In B—— County the county and the Red Cross finance a full-time experienced worker to whom come all problems concerning children in need of care, as well as general family-welfare work. The officials and public generally appreciate the value of this work and for the past years have supported it wholeheartedly. The worker in this county also serves as juvenile commissioner to the district. The child-welfare board in C—— County has not seen its way clear to financing a secretary, and therefore acts only in an advisory capacity. It is only a matter of time before there will be a trained worker in the field. The full-time trained secretary in W—— County is paid by the county and the Red Cross. There is no official organization of a board, as the board of the Red Cross and the county and city officials actually serve in that capacity.

It is further reported that several counties have begun to work out plans whereby several adjoining counties, each financially unable to meet the expense of a full-time worker, could unite in the joint employment of a social worker for the administration of mothers' pensions. In North Dakota several organizations, including the women's clubs and parent-teacher associations, are sponsoring legislation to authorize the organization of county child-welfare boards, and it is stated that there is every likelihood that the next legislative assembly will consider this subject.

The director of the State bureau sums up the situation as follows:

The children's bureau has been in operation two years and during that period has been overwhelmed with problems concerning handicapped children. It is evident that effective work can not be done without the aid of local units such as county child-welfare boards through which to work. The grave danger will lie in the inability of the county to support a qualified executive and the tendency to depend upon inexperienced, untrained service.

Pennsylvania.²³

The act under which the Pennsylvania department of welfare operates, as amended in 1923, contains the provision that "the

²³ Except where otherwise noted information was received from the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare, November, 1925. See "Pennsylvania welfare problem founded on 'prevention,'" by A. E. Howell, field representative, State department of welfare, in *The Nation's Health*, Vol. VII, No. 8 (August, 1925), pp. 534-535.

department of welfare shall have 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."²⁴ Since its organization the department has promoted such activities in the counties.²⁵ Under the authority of the present law, the department of welfare has on its staff "a special representative in community-welfare organization, to consult with officials, citizens, agencies, and groups interested in local or county welfare work, to help them to find the best organization to suit their needs, to promote a better cooperation within the counties and communities, and to work out with other public and private agencies a general plan for county welfare organization in the State."

In November, 1925, what are known in Pennsylvania as "county councils of social agencies" were reported to be in active operation in four counties and in process of development in several others. In five additional counties "welfare federations" had been established on a county-wide basis and in three other counties on practically a county-wide basis.

Under a plan adopted as a result of the earlier program of the welfare department in cooperation with other State departments, "county welfare boards" had been organized in three counties. "One of these boards now operates to some extent, another operates jointly with the county council of social agencies, and the third has established a social-service exchange, but as a board it is at present inactive. None of these county welfare boards employs a paid worker, but two are planning to do so in the near future."

In regard to the definite part played by the department in the organization of these activities, the field representative in charge of county work states:

The welfare department took the initiative in organizing these three county welfare boards and some of the councils. It also influenced the organization of a few federations, but it is difficult to say just what part the department played in the establishment of several councils of social agencies and welfare federations now in existence. Probably the latter came almost altogether from local initiative.

There are said to be indications that welfare departments may be a more logical development in some counties than welfare boards, and "a few such county departments of welfare appear to be slowly coming into being." In such instances an officer is employed by the county commissioners to administer poor funds, or by several public agencies such as the mothers' assistance fund trustees, directors of the poor, juvenile court, superintendent of schools, or by private family or child welfare agencies. "The important thing seems to be to administer closely related welfare work in a logical district under the close affiliation of agencies involved, or from a single office. Since in some places such a 'logical district' is determined more by the topography of the region, by population, or industrial areas, it seems possible that political boundaries will not always be the best determinant for welfare administrative units."

The department has recognized the desirability of inspiring local initiative and aiding in the development of county plans in accord-

²⁴ Pa., act of June 7, 1923, Laws of 1923, P. L. 498, No. 274, sec. 2006.

²⁵ County Organization for Child Care and Protection, pp. 9-11.

ance with the needs and resources that may be developed in each community. The field representative says on this point:

The department's purpose and method is to act in an advisory capacity and as a clearing house for information. It encourages local initiative and leadership. Each community or county is considered on its own merits, the whole situation studied, and an attempt made to plan the organization to suit its peculiar needs. Apparently this method must be used for some time in Pennsylvania, with the possible exception of smaller counties * * *. The department of welfare is at present inclined to believe that the more scientific and in the end the more fruitful means of promoting social welfare in Pennsylvania is through aiding individual counties and communities to study their situation and adapt their form of organization to local needs.

The department of welfare has worked on plans to be incorporated in a proposed bill giving legislative authority to the establishment of county welfare boards; but, as has been indicated, no one system has appeared adaptable to the situation in all counties. A tentative draft of such a bill authorizing the appointment of county welfare boards in all but first-class counties provides that the county commissioners, upon the recommendation of the county welfare board, shall employ a "competent person who shall be thoroughly qualified by training and experience in welfare work as county superintendent of welfare and such other assistants as they may deem necessary." The salaries are to be paid out of the funds of the county, and the superintendent of welfare is to be the secretary of the board and perform such other duties as the board may determine.

Upon "due request and written agreement" the county welfare board is to furnish the services of the county superintendent of welfare and his assistants to—

- (1) The mothers' assistance fund trustees for investigation and supervision of cases receiving assistance.
- (2) The poor-relief authorities for investigation and supervision of applicants for relief.
- (3) The courts of the county for investigation and probation of individuals brought before them.
- (4) The school authorities for attendance work and social case work with such school children as may need it.
- (5) State mental clinics, public hospitals, and public institutions for social investigation and cases applying to them.
- (6) Any other governmental agency, public or semipublic institution for such social investigation and supervision as may be needed.

Under this proposed legislation the county welfare board would further be given authority to conduct, at the request of the county commissioners, any other activity that the county commissioners are by law empowered to conduct which has to do with the social welfare and health of the residents of the county, and to enter into financial arrangements with any public or private body, institution, or agency to receive services from any qualified private agency or institution or to render services to them.

South Dakota.

The Legislature of South Dakota in 1921 passed a law²⁶ creating county child-welfare boards. The law provides that the State child-welfare commission (a continuing body) shall appoint in each

²⁶ S. Dak., act of Mar. 12, 1921, Laws of 1921, ch. 142, p. 232.

county of the State two persons to serve without compensation and to hold office for two years. These two appointees, together with the county judge, the county superintendent of schools, and the county superintendent of health, constitute under the South Dakota law a county child-welfare board. The board acts in a general advisory capacity to the county and municipal authorities in dealing with questions of dependency and delinquency and social conditions generally. The 1923 bulletin of the commission states that the work will be "mostly in cooperation with the county judge, who acts also as juvenile judge, with the county superintendent of schools regarding school attendance of children, with the county commissioners, and with the county nurse, where there is one."²⁷ The board may appoint a secretary who, with the approval of the county commissioners, may be paid a salary.

The 1924 report of the State child-welfare commission says that "a county welfare board has been created in 42 counties (of the total 68 counties in the State) at a total cost of \$769.86. This amount covered the expenses of a visit by the secretary to 46 counties."²⁸ This represents work done within the period of a year and a half. There is no mention in the report of activities undertaken by these boards other than "surveys" nor of the employment of a trained staff.

West Virginia.

The child-welfare commission reporting in 1923 to the West Virginia Legislature recommended authorization of the establishment of county welfare boards, or employment of county welfare secretaries where a board was not thought desirable, and this plan was enacted into law.²⁹ The duties of the board of county welfare or of the county welfare secretary, were defined by the statute as follows:

To advise and cooperate with and assist the State board of children's guardians in its work in the county and to make such visitations and reports as the State board of children's guardians may request; to act in a general advisory capacity to the county and municipal authorities in dealing with questions of dependency and delinquency, distribution of poor funds and social conditions generally.

The following information received from the executive secretary of the State board of children's guardians illustrates the methods pursued by the State board in developing social work in the counties:

Early in 1924 the County of M—— offered to pay a district agent of the State board a small salary in addition to what she was receiving from the State if she would demonstrate to them the need and value of such work. By the end of the year the demonstration was so conclusively proven that the county employed a woman on full time to go on with this program. This practically resulted in relieving the local county overseers of the poor from further service. The county also named a woman probation officer at the county seat. Beginning with 1925, M—— County had a trained woman on salary available for family investigations of all sorts, equipped to go to any part of the county and make any form of investigation desired by judge, county prosecutor, sheriff, or local society.

²⁷ Bulletin of the State Child-Welfare Commission of South Dakota, 1923, p. 5. Pierre, S. Dak.

²⁸ Second Biennial Report of the State Child-Welfare Commission of South Dakota, for the period ending June 30, 1924, p. 5. Pierre, S. Dak.

²⁹ W. Va., act of Apr. 13, 1923, Acts of 1923, ch. 60, p. 202.

Shortly after this demonstration had so successfully ended, a neighboring county determined to appoint a secretary, and a woman is there on salary, giving full time to family case work. Another neighboring county had a most efficient probation officer, so the program there is to include in his duties that of county welfare agent.

Meanwhile another agent of the State board offered to make a demonstration in F—— County, provided they would follow it up by the appointment of a welfare secretary. The county court named a man promptly at a salary of \$200 a month, and appointed the district agent of the State board assistant secretary for a period of three months on a nominal salary, to advise and direct the work. The progress has been satisfactory and the service excellent.

Other district agents of the State board of children's guardians are "carrying out demonstrations in other counties under varying terms." The secretary of the State board states:

It may be said now that the program of a county welfare secretary at the county courthouse in every county is the most practical solution of the poor-relief problem of the counties. In rural counties in the mountainous sections, where families are isolated in the narrow valleys and remote nooks, it may be necessary to continue the overseers of the poor for immediate-relief work, but case studies and family adjustments will eventually fall to the work of the county welfare secretary, with headquarters at the county seat * * *. When the county levies are made another year, a great many counties will be prepared to make provisions for a county welfare secretary.

Stressing the absence of any single program and the State board's policy in interesting the counties in the development of social work, the secretary of the board says:

There is no legal restriction on this work, but the poor law gives plenty of latitude. The State board of children's guardians has no legal control and no legal supervision beyond the general provision in the law. The State board acts in a friendly and advisory capacity when called upon by any agent. Staff members of the State board willingly respond to calls for assistance and advice, and go down in person to help in adjusting any particular case. This whole program of county welfare work in West Virginia is extremely democratic in purpose and spirit, and the counties seem to like the independence of this program and freedom from direction by any State bureau or agency.

COORDINATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RELIEF PROMOTED BY STATE BODY

The "Iowa plan," as it has come to be known, is based primarily on the combination of the administration of public and private relief, usually on a county-jurisdiction basis. The executor of this county work is a social worker trained in the field of family welfare. The work of organizing county social-service leagues is conducted by the extension division of the State University of Iowa. The social worker in charge of the county-organization work of the extension division says:

The Iowa plan involves the organization of a group of local people representing the entire county as a local board of directors. The county supervisors are ex officio members of this board, since they are responsible by statute for the administration of poor relief from public funds, and the board usually includes representatives of the county medical society, board of education, farm bureau, and the chamber of commerce. This board employs a trained social worker as executive, and a stenographer; their salaries are met in part by the board and in part by the county. Usually an office in the courthouse can be obtained through the county.³⁰

In Iowa the social worker is responsible to the board for the proper social treatment of those who apply for relief. The worker

³⁰ Cottrell, Louise: "A social-working State university." *The Survey*, February 15, 1925, p. 582.

is also helpful to courts, schools, public-health nurses, private-relief organizations, and individuals, in dealing with the handicapped. "It [the Iowa plan] provides the local courts with a trained social worker for all cases involving children or helpless adults. It supplies trained social service to the schools in dealing with problem children. It strengthens a public-health program where there is one and helps evolve one where there is none. It insures a reliable information service about institutional care and proper means for using it. It affords help in filing applications properly for State benefits available to certain groups of handicapped people. It provides vocational training for those handicapped for industry."³¹

As has been stated, the board of directors of the county social-service league employs a full-time trained family social worker and also a full-time stenographer. The county board of supervisors appoints the same social worker as overseer of the poor, who has all the powers and duties conferred by law and is the agent of the county board in dealing with dependent families. Inasmuch as she is the executive secretary of the county social-service league, she has charge of the administration of all public relief and of all relief collected by the league from private sources.³²

The social worker on the State university extension staff says:

The university conceives of social work as fundamentally educational in character. It has worked for years, through its extension division, trying to throw so much light on the inadequacy and social waste of unstandardized service and irregular doles that citizens will become fully conscious of these inadequacies and will demand something more nearly adequate to the need than the old system of outdoor relief administered by people not trained for social work.

In November, 1925, 20 counties had full-time paid workers who administered public relief, and another county had voted to employ such a worker. In 13 counties the jurisdiction is county-wide, in 8 it covers a part of the county. Fifteen of the counties are employing workers with special training in social work, most of whom had had experience as family case workers.

CARE AND SUPERVISION OF DEPENDENT, NEGLECTED, DELINQUENT, OR DEFECTIVE CHILDREN, WITH OR WITHOUT THE COOPERATION OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT

In six States—Arizona, Arkansas, Michigan, Indiana, New York, and Ohio—county organization has been confined to the care and supervision of dependent, neglected, delinquent, and defective children. In the three States first named the county board or county agent acts as agent of the State board in investigating and supervising cases of this type. The Indiana and Ohio boards have a less close relationship to the State departments, and in New York county organizations have been developed independently of the State department.

The county work represented in this group of States is much more limited than in the other groups representing organized programs of social work in counties. However, the work now done may be the nucleus of more general county programs.

³¹ The Survey, February 15, 1925, p. 582.

³² Cottrell, Louise: Iowa Plan for Organization of a County Social-Service League. University of Iowa Extension Bulletin No. 100, February 15, 1924. Published by the university, Iowa City, Iowa.

Arizona.

The law enacted in Arizona in 1921³³ provides that the superior court of each county of the State shall appoint four persons "at least two of whom shall be women, and all of whom shall be experienced as to the requirements for the support and maintenance of children," who shall serve without compensation as members of county child-welfare boards. The members of the county board shall provide for the investigation of "the conditions surrounding any child within the county reported to it as being an orphan, waif, neglected, or abandoned child." Such cases may be brought to the attention of the board by any citizen. The county boards cooperate with the Arizona State Child-Welfare Board. Cases are investigated by them for the State board, and no application for aid is granted by the State without approval by the county boards. The State board provides care for dependent children in family homes and aids children in their own homes.

According to information received from the secretary of the State child-welfare board, the work is well systematized in only 2 or 3 of the 14 counties of the State, because the boards are handicapped by lack of funds and by the fact that all the work has to be done by unpaid members whose personal duties sometimes makes this difficult, not to say impossible. The county welfare boards have not undertaken any special work with the juvenile court.

Arkansas.

County boards of public welfare were authorized in Arkansas by a law passed in 1917,³⁴ the State commission of charities and correction being given power to appoint five persons in each county as members of such boards. These boards were given the power and duty of inspection of institutions and agencies in their counties, similar to the inspection power of the State commission, and were to work under the direction of the commission and report to it.

In 1923, when organization of county boards had just begun, the appropriation for the State commission of charities and correction was discontinued. Two county welfare boards had at that time been named by the commission, neither of which had a paid executive.

Michigan.

The Michigan law provides for the appointment in each county by the welfare commission of the State welfare department of a county agent who holds office during the pleasure of the commission.³⁵ In most of the counties the agents are employed at \$5 per day and expenses. In Wayne and Kent Counties the board of supervisors has fixed a salary basis for the county agent and assistant county agent.

In smaller counties the State commission has often found it advisable to link up the work of the county agent with the work of the county school commissioner, the friend of the court, and the probation officer, and in some instances he also acts as secretary of the county superintendent of the poor.

³³ Arizona, act of Mar. 7, 1921, Laws of 1921, p. 92, ch. 53, secs. 10-12.

³⁴ Ark., act of Mar. 21, 1917, Laws of 1917, act No. 297, p. 1520, sec. 6; Digest of Stat. 1921 (Crawford and Moses), sec. 1024.

³⁵ Mich., Comp. Laws 1915, secs. 1990-1996; act of Sept. 25, 1919, P. A. of 1919 (extra session), Act 22, amended by act of May 24, 1923, P. A. 1923, Act 244, p. 391.

The county agent works under the direction of the county probate judge and the State welfare department. The work of the county agent³⁶ includes: Investigating petitions filed in the juvenile division of the probate court; investigating applications for licenses to board children; investigating homes for licensed child-caring and child-placing agencies; investigating homes in which children are placed by maternity hospitals and supervising children so placed. In addition the county agents of the State department investigate homes from which application is received for State wards and make subsequent visits to homes in which wards have been placed by licensed child-caring agencies. In most counties the investigation of applicants for "mothers' pensions" is done by county agents.

In addition to the county agent the State welfare department has four district supervisors who devote their entire time to the supervision of wards placed out by the State school for dependent children and the industrial schools for boys and girls. These supervisors work in close relationship with the county agents in their activities concerning State wards.

Indiana.

County boards of children's guardians were established in Indiana in 1901.³⁷ In 1925 there were 92 such boards.³⁸ The boards of children's guardians are appointed by the circuit and juvenile courts of the counties and serve as assistants to the courts. They exercise supervision over dependent and neglected children assigned to their guardianship by the court and may place such children in institutions or in foster homes, or board them with their own mothers at a rate not exceeding 75 cents a day for each child. The county boards are required by law to make monthly reports to the board of State charities, which exercises general supervisory powers over placed-out children and also carries on child-placing work.

New York.

The child-welfare work that has been developed in certain counties in New York State as a public function is generally conceded to be the result of the activities carried on for 30 years by the State Charities Aid Association, a private agency working in cooperation with public officials in the promotion of county child-caring and protective work. The law under which one of these counties operates, the methods employed, and the results attained are discussed in the United States Children's Bureau publication *Public Child-Caring Work in Certain Counties of Minnesota, North Carolina, and New York*, and reference is made to the somewhat similar public activities in two other counties. The work for children in these counties represents a broad field of child-caring and child-protective work, carried on by trained and experienced staffs under the control of boards of county officials. In one of the counties commitments

³⁶ Mich., Comp. Laws 1915, secs. 1991, 2014-2015 (sec. 2015 being amended by act of June 15, 1921 (1st extra session), Act No. 24, p. 797); act of Apr. 25, 1919, P. A. 1919, No. 136, p. 248; Comp. Laws 1915, sec. 2004; act of May 18, 1913, P. A. 1913, Act 263, p. 490, sec. 4; Comp. Laws 1915, secs. 1990-1996, 7228-7230; Comp. Laws 1915, sec. 2017, amended by act of June 15, 1921, P. A. 1921 (1st extra session), No. 16, p. 785.

³⁷ Ind., act of Mar. 11, 1901, Laws of 1901, p. 369, ch. 173, amended by act of Mar. 3, 1923, Laws of 1923, p. 176, ch. 61; Burns' Annotated Stat. 1926, secs. 4344-4351.

³⁸ The Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Correction, No. 141, June, 1925, pp. 110, 219. The Board of State Charities, Indianapolis, Ind.

can not be made by the county court to any private institution or agency; they can be made only to the board of child welfare or to State institutions. In the other counties the county boards have general oversight of all wards of the county. In these three counties the boards provide for the care of dependent children in foster homes or in institutions, and do general children's aid and protective work.

Ohio.

In 1921 the Ohio Legislature passed a law⁴⁰ empowering counties to appoint county boards of child welfare which should provide care for dependent children through placement in family homes or otherwise, in lieu of maintaining county children's homes. Such county child-welfare boards, consisting of four members serving without compensation, may be appointed with the approval of the State department of public welfare when "in the judgment of the county commissioners the best interests of the dependent wards of the county will be subserved thereby."

In March, 1925,⁴¹ three counties had appointed boards of child welfare under the provisions of this law and were providing for dependent wards through the use of boarding and free foster homes. In two of these counties the former children's homes had been abandoned; in the third, a remodeled residence was being used as a receiving home, pending placement.

SUMMARY

The reports from the States make it evident that, important as are the terms of the laws authorizing county welfare activities and the forms of organization employed, the most vital factor is the underlying idea of promoting social service, whether by public or by private agencies, based on the best modern principles, with prevention of dependency and delinquency as its goal. The character of the local work depends on what the superintendent and the county board make it. The law may enumerate the duties, but it can not fix the quality of the service given. The supervisory authority of the State board or department has proved to be of the greatest importance in securing the appointment of executive officers qualified for the work and in furnishing advice and assistance to county boards and encouraging high standards of service.

It is probable that, given the necessary appropriations, almost any board of county commissioners which appreciated the need could inaugurate work for the protection of dependent and neglected children on a constructive social-work basis, if they so desired, but the absence of these two factors retards such activities. County work has been extensively developed only where there has developed throughout the State a general appreciation of the problems to be dealt with and the value of the proposed methods.

It has been demonstrated that the cost of administration is often more than compensated for by savings in poor relief or other

⁴⁰ Ohio, act of June 7, 1921, Laws of 1921, p. 533; Page's Annotated Code (1926), secs. 3092 and 3092-1.

⁴¹ Ohio Welfare Bulletin, Vol. I, No. 3, March, 1925. Published quarterly by the Ohio Department of Public Welfare, Columbus, Ohio.

expenditures that had been administered wastefully under the old system. The saving in other ways is demonstrated less easily but is far more important. Children who are kept in their own homes through assistance to the family, instead of being removed to institutional or agency care; families who are helped to maintain a normal home; boys and girls who are saved from commitment to institutions for delinquents and given real probationary supervision; children who are removed from surroundings that are injuring them physically or morally; crippled children for whom hospital or clinical treatment is arranged; constructive service in a multitude of conditions—these are the real criteria of the value of making this service available to remote rural sections as well as to cities.

Including only the States in which the county work is broadly inclusive, the various experiments may be divided into two main groups:

1. County organization in which the executive is an official representative of the State department of welfare or board of charities, performing certain State functions such as supervision of boarding homes or other foster homes; supervision of children on parole from State institutions; administration of child labor and compulsory education laws, case work with unmarried mothers and children, investigation of adoption cases, and the combining of these State functions with duties in connection with local relief administration, probation work, and children's aid and protective work.

2. The development of constructive social-service work which coordinates the work of public or private agencies through the activities of a social worker employed jointly by several organizations or through a board representative of the various forms of service in the county.

It is significant that this development of the county as a unit for social work has come about almost entirely through the instrumentality of State departments of welfare or boards of charities. This is an indication of the changing theory of the functions of a State department from that of a purely supervisory and law-enforcement authority to that of an agency which promotes social welfare through aiding in the development of constructive service by public or private agencies in all parts of the State, having as its objective the solution in accordance with present-day standards of the problems of dependency, delinquency, and mental and physical handicap. There has come in State work an increasing recognition of the needs and rights of the individual State wards. This individualization in treatment has led to a search for causes and to the institution of preventive measures. Prevention and reconstruction are recognized primarily as the functions of the local county and community.

In child-caring work the emphasis is being placed increasingly on the value of home care. This is true not only in regard to dependent children, but also to the delinquent, physically handicapped, and mentally defective children whose condition is such that with safety to themselves and the community they can be cared for at home. Child dependency is being prevented through temporary aid in preserving the child's own home. When it is necessary to place a child in the care of an agency or an institution efforts are directed toward making the conditions in his own home such that he may be returned at

the earliest possible time. For children who have committed offenses against the law probationary supervision has largely taken the place of commitment to institutions, and such children are being considered as in need of special care and guidance, with custodial care as a final resort when home conditions require it or when the child is in need of special training and supervision which can not be secured locally. Corrective treatment through clinics and equipment for training in local public schools are making it possible for deaf, blind, and crippled children to remain in their own communities while receiving medical care and education. Supervision in the community has been found to be a solution of part of the great problem of mental defect. Whether this work can best be done under public auspices or through a coordination of the services of public and private agencies and whether one worker or a corps of workers is necessary depend often on local county conditions. Of fundamental importance is the application of the principles of social case work to each individual problem that presents itself, and the coordination of the work of social agencies in the county, whether public or private, so that wasteful expenditure may be eliminated and that skilled service may be made available in all parts of the county.

It is not to be expected that any one form of organization will be considered practical in all types of communities. State and county conditions must be taken into account in planning what is likely to prove most successful in each case. It is not the organization of county boards that is important but the social-service work that these boards make possible. Whether this is done after special legislative authorization of such county service or whether it is developed through education of county after county in the principles of constructive social work, is comparatively unimportant if it is found that the same ends can be attained as speedily and as effectively by either method. It seems evident, however, that little progress has been made in the development of such county work until a central State body, usually the State board or department of charities or of welfare, has undertaken a campaign of education and assistance to the counties. It is encouraging that in a period of less than a decade 18 States, whose work is herein described, have definitely undertaken to develop the counties as units of social service.



