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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE GENERAL
NATURE OF REQUESTS FOR SERVICE AT
THE LANSING FAMILY SERVICE AGENCY
DURING 1952

by
Henry Charles Kursik

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE GENERAL NATURE
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Henry Charles Kursik

A PROJECT REPORT

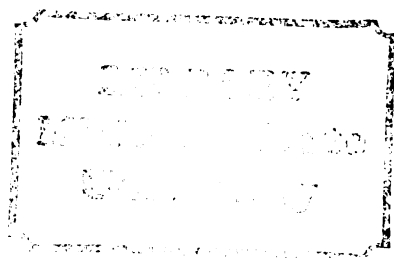
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the general nature of the requests for service, through sources of information and referral, at the Family Service Agency of Lansing, Michigan during 1952.

As the basis of an exploratory study, this purpose grew out of the fact that people do visit the family agency seeking specific services. Like the other institutions that exist in the community, the schools, courts, et cetera, the family agency exists in order that certain needs in the community may be met. To meet these needs the community provides for a service which the family agency offers. The family agency has in the past offered a number of varying services. These services, for the most part, arose in response to the needs which had been identified and for which the community accepted some responsibility.

The nature of the service which the family agency has offered in the past has undergone considerable change. From its initial concern with the prevention and removal of the causes of poverty and destitution, the family agency has become increasingly concerned with helping individuals overcome the disabling effects of social and personal maladjustment.

As such, the service, which is applicable to all, has become a professional method of helping. The resultant trend toward specialization

and the concern with tension states which tend to disrupt sound family life has decreased the number of services which the agency performs but it has broadened the base of problems with which the family agency is concerned.

As the principal agency offering casework help with problems of personal and family adjustment, the family agency is prepared to give help with a wide range of problems. Help with certain problems is requested to a greater extent than with others, depending upon the immediate need which the client faces. As this need affects the client, so does it affect the agency, for it is around this specific request that the casework service has its beginning.

The writer, as a student caseworker with the Lansing Family Service Agency, undertook this study in an attempt to explore the general nature of the requests which clients presented in 1952. The records used were made available by the Family Service Agency through the kindness of Mrs. C. Gladys Spaulding, executive secretary.

The questions that guided the investigator throughout the study were:

1. What was the source of information or referral; that is, how did the applicant hear of the agency?
2. What was the presenting problem; that is, what did the client request help with?
3. Were certain requests made more often than others?
4. Were these requests associated with certain sources more than others?
5. What significance did these factors have?

CHAPTER II

SCOPE, METHODOLOGY, AND OBJECTIVITY

Scope

As in any exploratory study there are serious limitations in the data on which the study was based. The number of cases contained in the sub-groups is small and serves to limit the study.

Although limited in this respect, the study is more severely limited by the selection of only two factors from the total intake; the sources of information and referral and the type of presenting problem present inherent limitations. In the former, the exact source cannot always be determined and possibly two or more sources may have suggested that the individual seek help. In the latter, the presenting problem may not be the only problem with which the individual is seeking help. Usually there is a constellation of problems. Then too, the presenting problem may not be the problem with which the client really wished help. Caseworkers long ago have learned that the problem presented may represent only what the client feels most comfortable in presenting. After exploration, the individual may acknowledge that the specific request is not the real problem but other factors within himself and his relationships comprise the real problem.

Generalizations also cannot be made to family agencies as a whole but are limited to this particular agency. Although effort was

made to select a valid sample, the results obtained might have been different had the entire population been studied.

Methodology

The actual collection of data was preceded by a number of steps.

The first step was to define the area of study. With the objective of determining the nature of the current requests for service, the area of study was defined as the applications or intake requests during 1952. These applications or intake requests did not include requests for legal aid services which are treated as separate applications and not as a part of the agency's regular intake.

The requests for service through intake are made unevenly throughout the year. There is a monthly fluctuation with the peak around the last part of the year. Various seasonal factors create these fluctuations and tend to discourage the selection of a series of months. In order to avoid this difficulty, the entire year of 1952 was selected.

The total intake or applications for the year totaled 847 cases. However, this was too large a number to be studied at this time. In order to reduce the number and still maintain material which was statistically significant, a twenty-five percent sample of the total intake was selected. A twenty-five percent sample eliminated the seasonal fluctuations and also reduced the number of applications to be studied to 211.

The initial phases of intake are usually handled by the office receptionist. At the time of application, a major portion of identifying data is obtained from the client and transcribed on Family Service Association of America Form 2.¹ After the identifying material is obtained the name of the individual is cleared through the Confidential Exchange to determine the previous contacts the client may have had with any social agency. All agency contacts are listed on the application form.

After the potential client has been "cleared," the application form is given to the intake worker who explores the request and determines whether the agency will assume responsibility for the request.

At the completion of the intake interview a duplicate application blank is transcribed from the original and the initial interview is recorded and placed into the record with the duplicate application form. The original is kept for a period of time and then destroyed.

The twenty-five percent sample was obtained by selecting every fourth case from the intake for the entire year of 1952. The material given there, i.e. name, case number, case status and source of referral, was transcribed onto three-by-five cards. This was later used as a check when the actual application form was selected.

In selecting the sample every case was counted and they fell into a distribution of 92 personal referral, or where the individual applied on his own initiative; 95 interested organizations or individuals, or

¹Appendix A

where the individual may have applied personally but his visit was preceded by a telephone call from the referral source or by a note or letter; 13 service to other agencies, written report to other agencies requesting information about a client known by the agency; 11 not taken applications, where the agency did not accept responsibility. The two latter categories were noted but disregarded for the purposes of this study. The actual sample to be studied contained 187 cases which constituted approximately a twenty-two percent sample.

After the sample was recorded on three-by-five cards, the original application forms were separated on a monthly basis and the application blanks that corresponded with sample cards were extracted. The application blanks that comprised the sample were examined according to a prearranged schedule. In those instances where the application blank was missing, the three-by-five cards were kept separately and the information was obtained either by pulling the case record, or where the intake worker was still familiar with the information desired, a verbal report was obtained. In all cases where some question existed as to the actual request the final decision was made by examining the case record.

Once the data were obtained the next step was to organize them into classifications. Some classifications were easily made but the type of service requested presented problems because of the varied requests. The classifications finally arrived at represent the type of help the client asked for in his initial request. Once the

classifications had been established the data were tabulated. Chapter IV is based on the tabulation of these items.

Degree of Objectivity

In gathering the material a certain degree of subjectivity was expected since no standardized procedure was introduced for obtaining the client's actual request. This largely depended upon the individual intake worker's recording of what the client wanted, and the writer's interpretation. However, the help requested in most cases appears on the application as a simple, concise statement of an immediate problem as the client presented it.

A degree of subjectivity was introduced by considering only the presenting problem whereas there may be, and frequently is, a constellation of problems. There was no attempt made to measure the reliability of the presenting problem. The assumption was that the client's request for help would be a simple statement which would offer a high degree of reliability. No reliability test was felt necessary for sources of information and referral since again reliability was assumed because of the objective nature of the data and broad classification used.

The investigator attempted to make the evaluations as realistic and as objective as possible. It is noted again that the data represent only a sample of the total intake.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE FAMILY AGENCIES

Throughout its development from the charity organization movement to the present, family social work has tended to reflect the dominant trends of the times. Traditionally, however, the family agency has been organized around specific economic needs in the community. It generally came into existence upon disclosures of certain community conditions that seemed to require remedial action. For the most part, these conditions were described qualitatively and stated in terms of the specific remedy proposed.²

The early agencies often started with undifferentiated roles or functions and often little related to the services of one another and to other community agencies. They contained a number of diversified services and for the most part combined most kinds of social work under one administration.

"Thus one family agency, started a century ago, offered relief, nutrition, day nurseries, convalescent homes, health services, sheltered workshops and a home for the aged; and when the era permitted it added a mental hygiene clinic. Later other family agencies supported along with family work, housing and court reform activities, legal aid, social service exchanges, early experiments in work relief such as wood yards and laundries and even began schools of social work."³

²Klein, Philip and Voris, Ruth, Some Basic Statistics in Social Work, Columbia University Press, New York, 1933, page 1.

³Hamilton, Gordon, Theory and Practice of Social Casework, Columbia University Press, New York, 1951, page 119.

As family social workers studied their methods of dealing with poverty and destitution they reached into other fields of scientific knowledge dominant at the time. The emphasis in the method of meeting needs changed accordingly from an initial attitude of moralistic reform to a sociological-economic concern with external causes. Family agencies then passed through an era in which psychology and biology reigned. Following the examination of the mental capacity and hereditary structure of the individual, an inquiry into the functioning of the emotional life gained appreciation among the workers.⁴

World War I strengthened this concentration upon the individual personality through psychiatric insight gained from studying war neurosis. Although the family agencies still carried a relief function, the emphasis was oriented around the development of the individual to organize his own capacities in order to use material help more effectively. This concentration upon the inner life was soon overwhelmed by the depression of 1929 and family workers found themselves again playing a major role in meeting material needs. Later the government assumed the bulk of relief cases and the family agency again turned to the personality as distinct from relief.⁵

The rise of public relief agencies permitted the family agencies to reconsider their role in the community. The majority redefined their roles. The reemphasis of service, although still including some

⁴Fink, Arthur E., The Field of Social Work, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1949, pages 116-117.

⁵Ibid., pages 120-121.

financial assistance, refocused attention upon the role of the individual's personality and its place in maladjustment. Help with social and personal problems that affect sound family life was considered the area of competence and the area in which the private family agency would function.

Lansing Family Service Agency

In its historical development the present Family Service Agency has reflected the development of casework and of family agencies as a whole. The changes in the name of the agency itself characterize the evolution of the family agency in the life of the community.

A fire which destroyed the records of the agency on December 12, 1920 leaves much of the early history of the agency unknown. The material which is available, however, indicates that prior to 1911 the charitable work was done by various groups which were loosely organized. The Charity Organization Society was contacted and in 1911 the Associated Charities of Lansing was organized. The purpose of the agency at first was the organization and coordination of charitable work which was done in the community.⁶

Associated Charities was incorporated under Michigan Law in 1918. Under Article II of its association

the purpose or purposes for which it is formed are as follows:
To promote the general welfare of the poor by social and sanitary

⁶Spaulding, C. Gladys, History of the Social Service Bureau of Lansing, Michigan, 1909-1936, unpublished, July, 1947.

reform, by industrial instruction and by inculcation of habits of industry and self-dependence, and to assist and help in a charitable way all persons in need of assistance, and by the establishment and maintenance of any activity to these ends.⁷

Although the goal of this early organization was to "promote the general welfare of the poor" it has always been a service organization in that it had never been asked or forced by the community to assume major responsibility for administration of relief. In its service to the community since these earliest days it played an important role in initiating and coordinating various social work programs in the city and county.⁸

The name, Associated Charities, prevailed until 1920 when it was unofficially changed to the Social Service Bureau. During the period of its existence, Associated Charities helped to organize the Community Chest and the Lansing Chapter of the Michigan Children's Aid Society. It sponsored the development of a public health program, established a free medical clinic and social center and inaugurated a shelter for unattached and single men.⁹ This listing of the highlights of the agency's activities does not present a complete picture but it does give some idea of the undifferentiated function of the early agency.

⁷Articles of Association (as amended January 31, 1949) and By-Laws (adopted April 18, 1949), Family Service Agency of Lansing, Michigan, unpublished.

⁸Hekman, A. A., "Survey of the Social Service Bureau of Lansing, Michigan, unpublished, page 3.

⁹Annual Report, Lansing Family Service Agency, 1952, unpublished.

Unofficially reorganized in 1920 as the Social Service Bureau, the name reflected the reemphasis of its service function. Miss Grace Cone, then acting secretary of the Social Service Bureau, reaffirmed this in addressing the annual meeting of the membership in 1921 by saying: "The main objective of our organization is to give service, not relief."¹⁰

The change was adopted because of the unpopular interpretation of the good word "charity" and because the new name more nearly expressed the work done by the Lansing Social Service Bureau, the finest of its size of any in the state.¹¹

The service program of the agency, aside from its family casework, consisted of the confidential exchange, legal aid, classes for M.A.C. (Michigan Agricultural College) girls and the departmental work done by the social center which was a temporary home for women and children and also has a day nursery.¹²

The work of the Bureau, as the name implies, was carried on through departments of which visiting housekeeper, juvenile protection, educational funds, legal aid, and dental aid were mentioned.¹³ The workers, for the most part, were relatively untrained in social work but extended a helping hand through warm and sympathetic understanding.

The twenties were turbulent times and this was reflected in the number and nature of the problems presented. Both fluctuated with the economic conditions. The fluctuation can be illustrated by the problem

¹⁰The State Journal, Lansing, Michigan, October 11, 1921.

¹¹Ibid., January 2, 1922.

¹²Ibid., February 26, 1925.

¹³Ibid., January 1, 1925.

of unemployment which at various times gained ascendancy and then receded. Among the most common problems during this period were physical illness, indigent transients, non-support, child neglect and domestic infelicity. The years 1925 to 1927 found more attention being paid to behavior problems. This trend continued until the depression of 1929 which soon affected the work of the Bureau.

The Bureau was faced by a number of financial reverses during the years 1930 to 1934. It was hard-pressed for resources to maintain its services and more or less marked time until 1935. Its role during the depression was one of directing all of its energy towards providing the actual physical necessities. Cash relief during 1930 totaled "\$12,000 as compared with only \$4,000 the previous year. This relief was given in addition to food, clothing and other physical necessities.¹⁴ Among its depression activities were included distribution of the milk fund, and surplus commodities. Many of the workers left to join the public agencies which had been established to meet the emergency. The Years 1933, 1934 and 1935 saw behavior problems on the increase.

The period 1935 to 1949 reflects the increasing attention paid to family service work. The first casework supervisor was employed by the agency in 1936. The trend was toward hiring workers with more graduate training. The intangibles of family casework found their way into more and more of the problems which were being presented. The trend continued and was affirmed when the Social Service Bureau was

¹⁴Ibid., January 1, 1931.

renamed the Family Service Agency on February 1, 1949. The expressed purpose of the agency now was to render casework service to families and individuals.

Present Structure and Operation

From its historical past, the present agency has developed into a skilled caseworking agency which offers a professional casework service to people with social and personal problems. Its original purpose "to promote the general welfare of the poor" has expanded to where the family agency stands ready to contribute to the welfare of all families regardless of race, creed or economic status.

This is expressed in its present purpose

to contribute to harmonious family interrelationships, to strengthen the positive values in family life, and to promote healthy personality development and satisfactory social functioning of various family members.¹⁵

These purposes are carried out

through two major functions and three related ones. These functions are (1) providing casework service; (2) participating in community planning; (3) conducting group educational activities; (4) contributing to professional education; and (5) engaging in research.¹⁶

As a member agency of the Family Service Association of America, a family agency must meet an acceptable standard of practice before it is accredited. The Lansing Family Service Agency, as a member agency,

¹⁵Scope and Methods of the Family Service Agency, Family Service Association of America, New York, 1953, page 3.

¹⁶Ibid., page 3.

shares in the advantages which are received through affiliation on a national level. Through the Association, the agency participates in the public relations program which is carried on by the national organization. The national organization also provides direct service to each member agency through consultation, visits, and correspondence on the entire range of agency problems and concerns.

As a voluntary or private agency, the Lansing Family Service Agency is supported by funds contributed by the entire community. As a member agency of the United Community Chest, the agency receives a yearly budgetary appropriation through this organization. The extent to which the agency is able to expand its program depends to a large extent upon the willingness of the Chest budget committee to grant the requested budgetary appropriations.

The actual operating policies of the agency itself are determined by the agency board which is composed of representatives of the community. Board members of the agency are selected through an annual election from the membership body made up of socially minded citizens interested in the work of the agency. Any individual in the community may become a member. Each member has the right to vote in person on any proposal presented for decision at any meeting of members.

The board of directors, which had traditionally been limited to fifteen in number, was increased to twenty-one as of January 1, 1952. This increase permits wider community representation in determining the operating policies of the agency and indicates the definite trend toward stimulating wider community participation in the activities of the agency.

The staff of the agency comprises professional and office staffs. Both are necessary in order that the program of service may be carried out successfully. The professional staff consists of ten members and is composed of the general secretary, casework supervisor, (five) caseworkers, a homemaker, a consulting psychiatrist and a legal aid attorney. The latter two function on a part-time basis. The office staff consists of an office secretary, a receptionist and a dictaphone operator.

The general secretary is the chief administrative officer and is responsible for the effective operation of the agency. In the capacity of chief administrator, the general secretary carries the responsibility of coordinating board and staff activities. As a professional caseworker, the general secretary also engages in work with clients.

The casework supervisor carries the major responsibility for maintaining and raising standards of accepted practice of the individual workers. Through regularly scheduled conferences with the individual worker, the supervisor helps the worker to understand better the function of the agency and the worker's role within that function. The supervisor also engages in direct work with clients.

The caseworkers are professionally trained workers who perform the job around which the agency is structured. Their job of rendering direct service to clients comprises the bulk of the agency's service. Upon their skill depends the success of the agency's program

for, regardless of the ability of the board and the general secretary, the agency does not provide the kind of service which the community needs if the caseworking staff is unable to carry out the policies formed by the board. On the other hand, the degree to which the staff can apply its skill depends, to a large extent, upon an effective relationship between all administrative groups connected with the agency.

The activities of the Family Service Agency are concentrated on rendering a casework service to individuals and family members. Casework service, as defined by the Family Service Association of America, comprises the

individualized consideration by a member of the casework staff to a problem or problems affecting a particular family or a person not attached to a particular family unit, for purposes of evaluating the problem determining its relation to agency function and assisting in solving the problem.¹⁷

Through its casework service the family agency offers a professional method of help to persons who are experiencing difficulties in their family relationships or in other aspects of their social functioning. The professional staff equips the family agency to give help with a wide range of problems and makes the family agency the principal one in the community offering casework help with problems of personal and family maladjustment.¹⁸

¹⁷Shyne, Ann. W., Handbook on Statistical Recording and Reporting in Family Service Agencies, Family Service Association of America, New York, 1949, page 4.

¹⁸Op. cit., Scope and Methods of the Family Service Agency, page 4.

The casework program of the family agency consists of direct casework service and the complementary services. The direct casework service is given through (1) consultation and referral services and (2) continued casework treatment. Consultation and referral services permit both client and caseworker to examine the problem and to decide what treatment is needed and desired. Continued casework treatment is offered to enable the client who desires to change, a period of sustained contacts to effect this change.

The complementary services consist of specific or special services which are offered in addition to the casework treatment service. These services are an integral part of the casework program and are offered as part of the casework service of the agency.¹⁹

At the present time the family agency offers a homemaker service, co-sponsors the Legal Aid Bureau and is a cooperating agency of the Traveler's Aid Society in Lansing.

Through its homemaker service the agency provides a means of preserving family life for children in homes where death or illness of the mother disrupts normal family life and creates serious problems in the care of the children. The Legal Aid Bureau renders a legal service to those persons who cannot afford an attorney. The service ranges from giving of special information with regard to travel plans to help with deep-seated problems.

¹⁹Ibid., pages 5-8.

In carrying out its second major function the agency, as a member of the Ingham County Council of Social Welfare, participates in joint planning toward the improvement of social conditions and the establishment of new services. The staff and board serve on committees and take part in many community activities.

In accordance with its other functions, the agency provides facilities for graduate students in training with schools of social work. During 1952 the agency had six graduate students in training.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

In exploring the general nature of the presenting requests for service, the sources of information and referral were classified according to the nature of the source through which the client had indicated he had heard of the agency, or in cases of referral, the referring agency or individual. The general categories consisted of (1) public and private social agencies, (2) private individuals, (3) other community organizations, (4) previous agency contact, and (5) unknown.

Requests were classified according to the nature of the presenting request made by the client in the application interview and did not include problems which may have been brought out with further exploration of the initial request. In cases where the requests were not specifically stated, the general nature of the requests was abstracted. Only broad general categories were used.

In the majority of cases the presenting request was one of several problems which were seen by the caseworker. As can be expected, the professional caseworker, trained in the recognition of problems associated with maladjustment, would see much more in the presenting problem than the specific request itself. For the purposes of this study only the specific request was used.

The request classification consisted of the following categories: (1) economic, (2) family relationships and personal maladjustment, (3) need for complementary service, (4) situational, (5) physical illness and mental illness, (6) child welfare, and (7) other.

"Economic" included all requests for help with regard to the economic aspects of ordinary living regardless of the specific circumstances which brought about the need. In all cases the circumstances may have been different but the requests which were made were common in that the help desired was around an economic situation; a loan, material requests for food, clothing, etc., and also help with financial planning. The latter was classified in this category because of its general nature. An attempt was made to determine the specific request but it was not possible to determine in each case the type of help the client was seeking. The manner of presentation, "I need help with my financial situation," indicated the economic nature of the request. However, it was not possible to interpret its specific meaning.

Requests for assistance with family relationships included requests around a variety of family difficulties. The requests ranged from marital difficulties to difficulties arising from several families living together. Help with parent-child relationships was included in this category as was help with personal maladjustment.

"Need for complementary service" consisted of those requests which were made of the agency that required the utilization of a special resource as part of its casework service. Those requests required

services of the homemaker or assistance with travel plans. This category also included requests in which an indirect service was rendered to a client by the agency through the extension of an offer to help, and requests made by another agency or organization where the family agency was asked to study the client's situation and to evaluate it for the requesting agency.

"Child welfare" covered those requests where planning with regard to children was the presenting problem. These included boarding care for children and abuse and neglect, whether actual or alleged. "Situational" comprised the requests for help with housing or employment, again irrespective of the difficulties which had precipitated the request.

The category "other" comprised requests which were not covered in the above categories. For the most part they consisted of requests which were, by nature, incidental. The following illustrations are typical requests in this category: (1) _____ wanted to get in touch with the consulting psychiatrist and he understood that he could do so at the family agency. (2) _____ came to the family agency with a complaint regarding another social agency.

Table I indicates the requests which were made by clients having heard of the service or having been referred by social agencies, individuals, or community organizations.

TABLE I
SERVICES REQUESTED
LANSING FAMILY SERVICE AGENCY, 1952

Requests	Number	Percent
Economic,.....	60	32
Family Relationships and Personal Maladjustment	49	26
Need for Complementary Service	37	20
Situational	11	6
Physical Illness and Mental Illness	10	5
Child Welfare	8	4
Other	<u>12</u>	<u>7</u>
TOTAL	187	100

The presenting requests most frequently made by the client, or for the client, in the initial interview were of an economic nature. Occurring in 60 of the 187 cases in the sample, these requests constituted thirty-two percent of all of the requests which were made.

Although this sample included both new and old clients and only the current request was considered, the prominence of requests of an economic nature agrees with a study which was made with new clients at a New York agency. In this study it was found that "the problems most often mentioned by the client in his opening statement

were, in order of frequency: economic, family relationships, and social and environmental."²⁰

Requests of an economic nature were followed closely by those of "family relationships and personal maladjustment." These requests were noted in 49 of the cases and made up approximately twenty-six percent of the sample. The third group of requests was "need for complementary services," which comprised 37 of the 187 cases and made up twenty percent of the total group.

The remaining requests ranged from four to seven percent of the sample with "child welfare," the lowest and "other," the highest.

The requests seem to indicate that problems revolving around economic security are still presented as a major reason for coming to the family agency. Although non-economic problems bring the greatest number to the family agency, they do not constitute the largest single request.

This would seem to confirm the prevalent feeling that the establishment of public agencies, while assuming major responsibility for the meeting of maintenance needs, fills only part of the void necessary to safeguard economic security. As a result, the family agency is faced with a large number of requests within the economic area.

²⁰Blenkner, Margaret; Hunt, J. McV.; and Kogan, Leonard S., "A Study of Interrelated Factors in the Initial Interview With New Clients," Journal of Social Casework, XXXIII, Number 1, January, 1951, page 24.

That "family relationships and personal maladjustment" assumes a secondary position in the nature of requests would seem to indicate that the economic aspects of living are still considered the most serious threat to sound family life in the community.

This factor may be influenced to a large extent by the structure of the community. Lansing, primarily an industrial city, is subject to the cyclic changes in the economic structure which have an effect upon the nature of intake of the family agency. The unfavorable economic situation created by the national steel strike in the early part of 1952 would tend to bring more clients to the family agency with requests of an economic nature. This, however, raises questions as to the accessibility of resources which are available for the clients' use in questions of an economic nature and to the extent to which these are known.

"Need for complementary services," ranking third, seems to indicate the need of such services in the community. The existence of these services in the family agency emphasizes the flexibility of the family agency's program in meeting needs where no other community resources exist.

In some agencies the "need for complementary service" may overshadow the casework treatment program. In cases where this is true the professional usefulness of the caseworker is drained off into services which may properly be provided under other community sanctions.

As shown in Table I, "complementary services" constituted twenty percent of the total requests in this sample and are exceeded by requests of family relationships and economic requests by six and twelve percent respectively. This suggests that, as far as the Lansing Family Service is concerned, complementary services do not overshadow the central casework treatment program.

The relatively smaller proportion of requests regarding "child welfare" (four percent) and "physical and mental illness" (five percent) suggests that, on one hand, the community recognizes the responsibility for meeting these needs and provides for these services in other agencies. On the other hand, the stigma still attached to problems of mental illness may contribute to the presentation of these requests in a form which would be more acceptable to an individual in the initial interview if presented at all. The relatively small proportion (four percent) of problems of mental illness appearing in the total caseload for the entire year of 1952 would seem to confirm this inference.

The small proportion of requests for help with employment and housing (six percent) would seem to suggest that the community does provide resources for meeting some of these needs. That the client requests help with housing and employment seems to indicate the need which the client feels has primacy at the time. The manner in which the client presents his problem depends to a large extent upon the primacy of the felt need and the kind of help that the client thinks he can receive.

Although it is not the intent of this study to determine the primacy of the needs which the client presents, this would suggest an

area where further study would serve to indicate the extent to which the request is related to the problems which the client presents.

The large proportion of requests for the group "other" suggests the extent of the varied nature of requests which are made of the family agency. In all probability they reflect the fact that the family agency is willing to keep its door open to the community regardless of the request for at least an exploratory period. This raises a question as to the extent to which the community realizes the availability of a professional service as distinguished from information and direction.

The nature of request which is made by the community points up the fact that the family agency, although a specialized professional agency, accepts responsibility for a variety of ills which threaten family life. The proportion of requests regarding the financial situation, though disproportionate to the emphasis which is placed upon them, reflects the varied nature of family agencies in varied communities. In all probability, the historical development of the agency in the community and the fluctuating economic conditions determine to a large extent the number of economic requests that are presented.

An area of study which would seem to be of interest would be to compare the extent of economic requests of present intake to that in a period where there were no economic fluctuations throughout the year. This might indicate how many of the requests were of a dependent nature.

Table II indicates the number of requests according to the sources of information and referral. Clients having heard of the service from, or having been referred by "public and private agencies" constituted the largest number of clients requesting service in the sample.

The "unknown" group was designated as such because the source was not known. The group was primarily self-referred and new to the agency.

TABLE II
SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND REFERRAL
LANSING FAMILY SERVICE AGENCY, 1952

Sources	Number	Percent
Public and Private Agencies	72	38.5
Private Individuals	60	32.0
Previous Agency	42	22.0
Other Community Organizations	3	2.0
Unknown	<u>10</u>	<u>5.5</u>
TOTAL	187	100.0

The sources of requests would seem to indicate that on the whole the agency was used as often by "private individuals" as it was by other "public and private agencies."

The larger number of requests coming from "public and private agencies" suggests a larger number of clients came to the family agency after they had requested help from, or became involved with another

social agency; or that clients just happened to go to an agency with which they were most familiar in the hope that they would eventually find their way to the proper agency.

Although requests are considered on the basis of the sources of information and referral, the percentage coming from this source would seem to indicate that a greater proportion of clients that finally come to the agency are directed to it by other organized resources in the community. The smaller proportion directed by private individuals seems to suggest that family casework is not sufficiently recognized or they feel it is not a service which is applicable to all. Social casework has, in the past, demonstrated its applicability to all; however, the data seem to suggest that a large number of "private individuals" are still not convinced and feel that this is a service which only a few can use. The small percentage of "other community resources" (two percent) would seem to underline this.

The number of clients personally requesting service who have been known to the agency previously would seem to indicate that individuals who are accustomed to the agency are satisfied to the extent that they avail themselves of the service more readily.

A comparison of the percentage of requests as made by clients according to the sources of information and referral brings out a number of marked variations. As shown in Table III, clients who had indicated, or were referred by the source "public and private agencies" made requests of an economic nature in twenty-six percent of 72 cases

TABLE III
 PERCENTAGE OF REQUESTS ACCORDING TO
 SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND REFERRAL
 LANSING FAMILY SERVICE AGENCY, 1952

Requests	Total	Sources				
		Public & Private agencies	Private Indi- viduals	Previous Agency	Other Community Organiza- tions	Unknown
Number of cases	187	72	60	42	3	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Economic	32	26	28	45	--	50
Family rela- tionships & personal mal- adjustment	26	18	35	30	--	30
Need for complementary service	20	29	22	7	33	--
Situational	6	7	3	7	--	10
Physical & men- tal illness	5	3	5	9	--	10
Child welfare	4	10	2	--	--	--
Other	7	8	5	2	67	--

in that group. Request for help with family relationships occurred in eighteen percent of the cases.

Comparing this "private individuals" group with the previous agency" group, presents a sharp contrast in that forty-five percent of the 42 cases in this group presented requests of an economic nature while thirty percent of the requests were for "family relationships and personal maladjustment." This represents requests of an economic and family relationship nature almost twice that of "public and private agencies."

A possible inference from this variation would seem to be that clients having had previous agency contacts are able to discuss problems of family relationships more easily because of familiarity through previous contact. The larger percentage of requests of an economic nature from this group suggests several things. On one hand, there would be a greater amount of security attached to the presentation of such requests at an old established agency in the community with the hope that if the request were not appropriate introduction could be gained to a more suitable agency.

On the other hand, this group with previous agency contact may consist largely of marginal income families where problems of an economic nature would be more prevalent with a sudden change in the external environment. Both inferences are limited, however, because facts determining disposition and the characteristics of the group would have to be considered before generalizations could be made regarding the population as a whole.

An examination of the specific requests made by the clients in the "previous agency" group reveals, for the most part, the emphasis on the strained financial situations. In a large portion of the requests the inability to interpret exactly the statement, "I need help with my financial situation," indicated the economic nature of the request but left what the client really expected from the agency a matter of conjecture.

Of the nineteen cases, indicated in Table IV, requesting help of an economic nature in this "previous agency" group, seven were requests for help with the indefinite financial situation. Three of the cases were specific requests for financial assistance while requests for material help (food, clothing, et cetera) comprised four cases. One case requested help with a budgetary problem and one requested a loan. The last three cases were requests for help with indebtedness but here again the nature of the help requested would depend upon the type of interpretation which was placed upon the help that the client had in mind.

The same examination of the nineteen cases (Table IV) in the "public and private social agency" group shows nine cases where stress was placed on a solution of the financial situation, four cases were specific requests for financial assistance, four were requests for help with plans regarding financial situations while one was a request for material help and one a request for help with debts.

The examination of the requests suggests the need for a standardized question which would spell out the help specifically before

TABLE IV
DISTRIBUTION OF REQUESTS FOR SERVICE
LANSING FAMILY SERVICE AGENCY, 1952

Requests	Total	Sources				
		Public & Private Agencies	Private Indi- viduals	Previous Agency	Other Community Organiza- tions	Unknown
Total number of cases	187	72	60	42	3	10
Economic	60	19	17	19	--	5
Family rela- tionships & personal mal- adjustment	49	13	21	12	--	3
Need for complementary service	37	2	3	4	--	1
Situational	11	5	2	3	--	1
Physical & men- tal illness	10	20	13	3	1	--
Child welfare	8	7	1	--	--	--
Other	12	6	3	1	2	--

generalizations could be made from the total sample. The few instances where help was requested in material assistance, financial assistance or a loan, seems to point up the fact that such requests are made of the family agency but, due to the nature of this study, it is impossible to determine the extent to which these are made.

From this it seems that clients having previous agency contact are more apt to request help with material items than those whose source is "public and private agencies." This seems rather puzzling since the expectation would be that both groups would have a good understanding of agency function and there would be less chance of material request being made in both of these groups. The emphasis upon the financial situation seems to uphold the inference that this group forms the marginal group of families in which a precarious financial situation is a constant threat.

A breakdown of the requests for help with "family relationships and personal maladjustment" indicates that out of the twelve cases indicated in Table IV for the "previous agency" group, eight returned because of marital difficulty while three returned because of difficulties between parent and child. The remaining case was a request for help with difficulty arising from two families living together. None presented requests of personal maladjustment. On the other hand, in the thirteen cases for the "public and private agencies" group, nine presented requests of marital difficulty, two in parent-child relationships and two in personal maladjustment.

Although this is not conclusive, it seems to indicate that even though a larger proportion of "previous agency" come with problems of family relationships, actually few return because of recognized personal inadequacy. On the other hand, although "public and private agencies" are the source in a larger number of cases, the nature of the requests in this group show a relatively larger number of requests for help with personal maladjustment.

Further contrast is obtained when the group "private individuals" is compared to the two previously mentioned groups. In this group the category "family relationships and personal maladjustment" contains a larger percentage than that of the economic requests (thirty-five to twenty-eight percent). This would seem to suggest that possibly the idea of help with personal family problems has been accepted by the community.

The percentage of economic requests for both the "public and private agencies" and "private individuals" is about equal but a little over one-half less than that of clients with previous agency contacts. This would again seem to suggest that the "previous agency" group is composed of clients which would tend to seek help of a more economic nature. This would also suggest that clients returning to the agency are more apt to come with requests of an economic nature than those indicating the sources "public and private agencies" and "private individuals."

The group "unknown," which represents clients not indicating a source, contains about five percent more economic requests than the

group "previous agency." This "unknown" group contains the highest percentage of requests of an economic nature. Although the percentages here are open to question because of the small number of "unknown" requests (ten), it does seem to suggest that the client who "just walks in" makes a request of an economic nature about as frequently as the client who has had previous agency contact.

When contrasting the requests of "family relationships and personal maladjustment" for all groups, a number of interesting comparisons can be noted. Although the economic requests are predominant in three groups, this is reversed in the group "private individuals." As shown in Table III, requests of "family relationships and personal maladjustment" are larger by seven percent and comprise the highest percentage of all groups in this category.

The group "private individuals," although it contains about the same percentage of requests in the "family relationships and personal maladjustment" category as "previous agency," has about one-half less the economic requests of this group. Compared to the group "public and private agencies," it contains about two percent more requests of an economic nature but has approximately twice the number of requests in the family relationships and personal maladjustment category.

This seems to indicate that as far as requests of an economic nature are concerned "public and private agencies" would be the source in about as many cases as "private individuals" but the former group would be the source in less than half the requests of family relationships and personal maladjustment.

The indication becomes a puzzling one in that one would expect "public and private agencies" to be as familiar with the agency as "private individuals" and would probably encounter as many emotional problems as economic. A possible inference may be that the "public and private agency" group, coming into contact with the socially unadjusted client, would be the source in an area where the client was having difficulty if help could not be given in that area by the source.

A natural expectation would be that the "private individuals" would be the source in a large number of requests of "family relationships and personal maladjustment" since this group would naturally be more intimately associated with the client and would suggest or refer the client with regard to the problem that the client and he both recognized. An inference from this could be that "private individuals" recognize to a greater extent the helpfulness of the agency in the area of "family relationships and personal maladjustment."

In examining the specific "economic" requests for the groups "private individuals" and "unknown," the results proved to be inconclusive. Considering the total of 22 cases for both groups, the results were three cases where a plan was asked for in regard to the financial situation, three direct requests for financial assistance, three requests for material aid and one request for a loan. The remaining twelve cases were unclear.

In the category "family relationships and personal maladjustment," the group "private individuals," containing 21 cases, was indicated as the source in sixteen cases of marital difficulty, two in other family

relationships and three in personal maladjustment. Of the three cases in the group "unknown," one was a request for help with parent-child relationships and two were other family relationships. There was no request for help with personal maladjustment.

This again indicates that a large majority of the family relationships are presented in terms of marital difficulty and relatively few requests are made in terms of personal maladjustment. The large proportion of marital problems suggests again that the problems are seen with regard to the specific situation rather than personal involvement. A possible study in this area would be an examination of the requests of marital difficulty to determine to what extent this is true and the results which are obtained in the treatment process.

Requests of "need for complementary services" occurred with significantly greater frequency in the "public and private agencies" and "private individuals" groups than it did in the "previous agency" group where more familiarity with the agency seems indicated. The small percentage (five) occurring in the "previous agency" category suggests that a much greater proportion of this service is requested by other agencies than by clients who use the agency for treatment purposes.

By the nature of the service, we would expect that a larger proportion of the sources would be "public and private agencies" since this category is made up largely of traveler's aid, hospital studies, home studies for the selective service system and homemaker service. In these instances the work done by the agency largely enables the

individual to make better use of existing resources and provides an expert casework service in areas where none exists.

In "need for complementary service," the major request was for help with travel plans while homemaker, hospital and selective service home studies followed in that order. The "public and private agencies," indicated as the source in the travel cases, were largely state and outstate agencies while requests for hospital and home studies indicated the Community Chest and the Selective Service System as the source.

"Private individuals" made up the second largest source with friends, relatives and neighbors indicated in nine of the thirteen cases in this group. These requests were largely for help with travel plans and the service of a homemaker.

Requests of an indirect nature were evenly distributed between "public and private agencies" and "private individuals." These requests comprised ten of the 37 cases and consisted generally of requests where the agency reached out into the community to offer help.

Situational requests (employment and housing) showed about the same percentage distribution for all groups. The only exception to this was requests made which indicated "private individuals" as the source. The smaller percentage falling in this group suggests that clients are less likely to request help in finding housing or with employment upon information and referral of "private individuals" than they are through "public and private agencies," "previous agency contact" or by "just walking in" the office.

The slightly higher percentage of requests coming from the "unknown" category would again suggest that the family agency, being an old established agency in the community, would be asked to help around such requests especially if there is an unfamiliarity with other resources in the community. The lower percentage of these requests occurring in the "private individual" group suggests that the family agency would be asked to deal less with the specific situations and more with the other problems associated with these specific situations.

All groups, with exception of "other community organizations," which is excluded, contained a relatively similar percentage of results with regard to mental and physical illness. Breaking down the percentages from Table III into per percentages respective of requests as shown below illustrates the somewhat larger frequency of help with mental illness in the "previous agency" group.

Request	Source			
	Public & Private Agencies	Private Individuals	Previous Agency	Unknown
Mental illness	1.5%	3.0%	7.0%	--
Physical illness	<u>1.5</u>	<u>2.0</u>	<u>2.0</u>	<u>10.0%</u>
TOTAL ILLNESS	3.0%	5.0%	9.0%	10.0%

This seems to confirm the inference that the "previous agency" group would feel more secure presenting requests regarding problems of mental illness. The relatively small percentage coming from the source "public and private agencies" suggests that the individual might be sent

to an agency that would meet the specific request rather than the emotional problems involved.

A relatively higher proportion of the "unknown" group represented in the physical illness category suggests that the individual who "just walks in" would be less apt to present a request of mental illness which again suggests stigma as a factor in this request.

In requests regarding child welfare another variation is the relatively higher percentage of requests in the source "public and private agencies" and the absence of these requests from the "previous agency" and the "unknown" groups. The remaining group, "private individuals," contained two percent of these requests. This suggests that these requests came after the individual had brought this to the attention of another social agency. The relative lack of requests from other sources seems to indicate that, while problems of this nature do exist, they are not frequently brought to the family agency unless they are brought to the attention of another public or private agency first.

An examination of the requests made indicates that the larger proportion are made with regard to planning substitute care for children while only a few represent situations where abuse and neglect of children, either actual or alleged, was involved. Of the seven cases in the "public and private agencies" group, five indicated the source as a legal agency. This would seem to indicate that the child welfare requests, as defined here, arise to a large extent, as a response to legal action. The relative lack of these requests in the "previous

agency" and "unknown" categories suggests that these requests are not made to a great degree by clients returning to the agency but rather by individuals who have come into contact with a legal agency.

The final category, "other," is made up of a number of varied incidental requests. These ranged from complaints against other agencies to instances where information was sought concerning a psychiatric consultant. As incidental requests, they will not be enumerated here because of their varied nature.

The requests in this category made up seven percent of the total sample. "Public and private agencies" were the source in six of the twelve cases; "private individuals," three; "other community organizations," two; and "previous agency," one. There were no requests in the "unknown" group;

The varied nature of requests in this category again points out the many tasks which the family agency is requested to perform.

Summary

This chapter dealt with the presentation and analysis of the data which had been collected regarding the general nature of the requests for service.

Analysis of the data pointed out that requests of an "economic" nature are the largest single request made. This is followed by requests of "family relationships and personal maladjustment" and "need for complementary service." "Economic" requests comprised 32 percent of the total while non-economic requests constituted sixty-eight

percent of the total.

"Public and private agencies" are indicated as the source in $38\frac{1}{2}$ percent of the 187 requests. Approximately twenty-two percent of the requests comprise a group which had been at the agency some time previously. The group "private individuals" is indicated in thirty-two percent of the sources.

In the percentages of requests according to the various sources, requests of an economic nature are predominant in all groups except in "private individuals" and "other community organizations." The trend in the group "private individuals" is reversed with a larger percentage requesting help with "family relationships and personal maladjustment." The group "previous agency" contains the largest percentage of requests of an economic nature. "Public and private agencies" contains the lowest percentage of requests regarding "family relationships and personal maladjustment."

In the other categories, "public and private agencies" assumes the higher percentage in "child welfare" and "need for complementary services." Requests of a "situational" nature are found to be the lowest in the group "private individuals."

The variance in the remaining request categories allows very limited inferences but emphasizes the concern placed upon the specific situation by the sources and the client.

Breaking down the requests of an economic nature points out the need for standardized questions before a determination can be made

of the help desired by the client. The breakdown also indicates that help with marital difficulty comprises the largest specific request in the "family relationships and personal maladjustment" category.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has been concerned with the determination of the general nature of the requests, according to the sources of information and referral, made by clients applying for service at the Family Service Agency of Lansing, Michigan during 1952.

The study was carried out through (1) a selection of a twenty-five percent sample of the total applications for the year 1952 and (2) the classification and tabulation of the requests and sources of information and referral from this sample.

The foregoing chapters have been concerned with the historical development of family agencies generally, the historical development of the Lansing Family Service Agency, the present structure and operation of the agency and presentation and analysis of the data.

The historical development of family agencies generally, emphasized the evolving nature of family casework. From its historic concern with reforming the needy and the causes of poverty and destitution, the family agency evolved as an institution through which a professional casework service is offered to the community.

The historical development of the Lansing Family Service Agency has closely paralleled that of family agencies generally. In its beginnings the Lansing Family Service Agency emphasized the promotion of the general welfare of the poor. This emphasis has grown to a concern

for the general welfare of all classes in the community. The present structure emphasizes this concern through the provision of a professional casework service applicable to all.

So that the professional casework service may be sensitive to the changing needs of the community, the policies governing the agency are determined by a board of directors composed of leading representatives of the community. The policies are administered by a professional caseworker who acts as the executive secretary. The actual services are rendered by professionally trained social caseworkers.

The presentation and analysis of the data concerned the requests which were made for services which the agency offers the community.

Though the data raise more questions than they answer, they seem to indicate that the trend toward specialization has reduced the number of services offered but has not limited the varied nature of the problems presented to this family agency. The varied nature of the requests covers the gamut of problems that affect sound family life. Through its "open door" policy at intake, the agency demonstrates its willingness to consider all clients, regardless of the specific request, for at least an exploratory and evaluative period.

The requests emphasize the agency's willingness to offer a professional casework service, not only to clients but to other social agencies, both public and private, and to the community in general. Every individual has the opportunity to take advantage of this service even though the presenting request involves only a relatively short

period of help.

The data point out that help of an economic nature is the largest single request (thirty-two percent). Help of a non-economic nature, however, comprised the largest percentage of the total requests (sixty-eight percent). From this we can conclude that the purpose of the agency seems to be accepted by the community. In this respect, however, while stress is placed on the emotional content of everyday living, the requests tend to emphasize the specific difficulties which the client is facing.

Throughout the years, family casework has demonstrated the applicability of its method of helping in a great number of situations other than where the question of economic need seems to be paramount. Although this is indicated in the study, much of the help which is offered is brought about by requests of an economic nature.

Other findings indicate that, although more requests of a personal nature are made by clients upon information of private individuals, family casework still appears to be regarded as reserved for special cases and not a service which a great many people would seek for their own personal problems.

In order that the applicability of the social casework method can be extended to a larger proportion of private individuals, it must first be sufficiently recognized by the people who would use it. That the proportion of requests indicating the source "public and private agencies" is larger than that of "private individuals" would seem to

lead to the conclusion that clients do seek help elsewhere before coming to the family agency.

Further findings indicate that relatively few requests are presented in terms of personal maladjustment. This seems to be especially true in cases where marital difficulties are stressed. As a problem, this was seen in terms of the specific situation rather than any personal maladjustment. As was pointed up previously, the stigma attached to the requests for help with mental illness may be a factor which also influences requests for help with personal maladjustment.

From the number of clients who had previous agency contacts and the large proportion of requests in an economic area in this group, it seems appropriate to conclude that the individual who has had previous agency experience is more apt to present a request of an economic nature.

The larger proportion of "private individuals" requesting help with "family relationships and personal maladjustment" leads to the conclusion that private individuals recognize, to a greater extent, the helpfulness of the agency in these areas.

On the whole, this study of the general nature of requests demonstrated that a number of factors must be taken into consideration before the specific nature of the requests can be explored. The presenting request and its various interrelationships constitute an area in which additional studies can be made with regard to further understanding of the individual, and current social casework practice.

A number of areas in which further study seems to be indicated leads to these recommendations in which the agency may be interested:

1. Examining the requests made by clients with previous agency contacts in order to determine how the current request differs from the request made in previous contacts;
2. A more intensive study of the initial request and its interrelationship with the problems brought out by the client and seen by the case-worker;
3. Determining to what extent available resources are known by the general public;
4. The extent to which material requests for financial assistance, loans, food, clothing, et cetera are made of the agency;
5. Comparing the requests of an economic nature made in 1952 with those when economic conditions show less fluctuation.

APPENDICES

- A Family Service Association Form Number 2.
- B Schedule.

APPENDIX A

FAMILY SERVICE ASSOCIATION FORM NUMBER 2

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CATION

MAN'S FIRST NAME			WOMAN'S FIRST NAME			WOMAN'S MAIDEN NAME			ALIAS — PREVIOUS MARRIAGE			DATE		CASE NO.							
									TELEPHONE NO.			DISTRICT		CASEWORKER							
			BIRTH DATE			OCCUPATION OR SCHOOL OR WHEREABOUTS IF AWAY			BIRTHPLACE			MARRIAGE DATE		COLOR		RELIGION		CITIZEN YES NO		RESIDENT YES NO	
OF SINGLE CHILDREN									FAMILY STATUS: MC CLC UC UM W WR DES DIV SEP SM SW ORPH												
									SOURCE OF APPLICATION												
									REPORT FROM SOCIAL SERVICE EXCHANGE												
IN IN HOUSEHOLD						RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD			APPLICATION NOT MADE CASE — DISPOSITION												
HOUSE ADDRESSES			DATES FROM			TO															

52

WORKER'S NOTES

(FURTHER DICTATION PLANNED: YES NO)

PROBLEMS GIVEN INDIVIDUAL CONSIDERATION BY CASEWORKER		DATE OF CLOSING:		EVALUATION AT CLOSING	
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS — MARITAL DIFFICULTY — PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS — UNMARRIED PARENTHOOD — OTHER		STATUS AT CLOSING — BRIEF SERVICE — CONTINUED SERVICE		SERVICE ENABLED FAMILY OR INDIVIDUAL TO HANDLE SITUATION BETTER — YES — NO — UNABLE TO EVALUATE	
INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITY ADJUSTMENT — CHILDREN (UNDER 13 YEARS) — ADOLESCENTS (13 THROUGH 20) — ADULTS (21 AND OVER)		REASON FOR CLOSING — REFERRED ELSEWHERE — SERVICE COMPLETED — CLIENT UNWILLING TO CONTINUE — MODIFICATION UNLIKELY — CLIENT DID NOT CONTINUE DESPITE PLAN — NO COMMUNITY RESOURCE		FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GIVEN — YES — NO	
PLANNING SUBSTITUTE CARE OF CHILDREN — OLD AGE — PHYSICAL ILLNESS OR HANDICAP				FEE FOR CASEWORK SERVICE — YES — NO	
APPLICATION FORM					

APPENDIX B

SCHEDULE

Case	-	
Number	-	Name
	-	
Source of Information and Referral		
Presenting Request		

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