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A STUDY OF THE DUPLICATIONS IN THE STATISTICAL  
RECORDS KEPT BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL  
WELFARE, MICHIGAN, OF THE CHILDREN FROM INGHAM  
COUNTY IN FOSTER CARE IN 1954

by

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A PROJECT REPORT

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Approved:

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THESIS



## PREFACE

The study which is the subject of this report was part of a larger project undertaken by the writer in connection with his field work placement at the State Department of Social Welfare of Michigan. The overall project aimed at developing an administrative tool for obtaining an unduplicated count of the children in foster care in Michigan.

Alas, not enough energy or spirit was left for the whole after the part was completed. The tool was not fashioned. Instead, recommendations on the situations producing the duplications and on methods for obtaining an unduplicated count were presented to the State Department. These recommendations have been attached to the report.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With profound feelings of indebtedness the writer wishes to express his gratitude to the numerous persons who have assisted him in carrying out this research project. Special mention must be made of Miss Ruth Bowen, Mr. Manfred Liliefors, Mr. Donald DeVinney and particularly Miss Helen Little of the Michigan State Department of Social Welfare, whose help and advice at all stages of the project were invaluable. The assistance provided by Professor Bernard Ross and other members of the faculty of the Department of Social Work at Michigan State College must also be recorded. Finally, the writer wishes to acknowledge the support which his wife gave him even to the detriment of her own participation in a similar undertaking.

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## C. Research

**Subject of Study:** A Study of the Duplications in the Statistical Records kept by the State Department of Social Welfare, Michigan, of Children from Ingham County in Foster Care in 1954.

**Sponsoring Organisation:** The State Department of Social Welfare, Michigan

### Summary:

The purpose of the study was to discover the reasons for the duplications in the records, with a view to determining conditions that must be observed by any method to be devised for obtaining an unduplicated count of the children in foster care. Opportunity was taken also to evaluate the agency relationships which were responsible for a child being reported to the State Department more than once. The study was part of a larger project, the aim of which is developing a procedure for obtaining an unduplicated count of the total foster care population in Michigan.

To carry out the project, the names of all the children reported to the State Department by the foster care services were listed (a practice not generally done), so that the duplications could be identified. The reasons for the duplicate reporting were then examined by study of the reports and interviews with the executives of the agencies submitting the reports. The duplications were then evaluated in terms of their avoidability. Some, it was felt, could be eliminated by changes in the records, and others by changes in agency practices. But all the duplications could not be thus removed and therefore it was recommended that any method for obtaining an unduplicated count should be one that was applied after the reports were received.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Act 47, P.A. 1944, First Extra Session, of the Laws of Michigan stipulates that each agency, institution or boarding home caring for children away from their own families shall be licensed and,

shall keep records regarding each child in its control and care as the department of social welfare may prescribe and shall report to said department, whenever called for, such facts as it may require with reference to such children upon blanks furnished by the department.

The purpose of licensing and reporting are twofold -

to protect children by establishing minimum standards for care as a condition for licensing, and to improve standards of child care through the continuing consultation and cooperation of licensed child welfare agencies and the State Department of Social Welfare.<sup>1</sup>

#### Historical Background

The development of state boards of charities during the latter half of the 19th century for the supervision of the institutions run by the state for special handicapped groups started a trend that has never been reversed. "The increasing importance of the tasks undertaken by state boards is a measure of the public's acceptance of the state's

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<sup>1</sup> State of Michigan, Department of Social Welfare, Child Care Institutions and Child Placing Agencies: Requirements for Licensing and Recommended Standards, Lansing, March 1953, Foreword.

responsibility to furnish protection or opportunity to those who cannot provide these services for themselves."<sup>2</sup> By the end of the century the state boards, the forerunners of the modern state departments of social welfare, were extending their supervision to include private agencies and they found approval of this new function among some of the child welfare agencies. The question of their authority to supervise private agencies did not become acute until later.<sup>3</sup> In 1913 Michigan settled this question by enacting a statute requiring agencies and institutions providing foster care services for children to be licensed.<sup>4</sup> The law was rewritten in 1944,<sup>5</sup> and extended in 1951 to include compulsory reporting by independent boarding homes.<sup>6</sup>

#### Use of Records

Reporting, properly used, is an important supervisory tool. It is an aid in evaluating an agency's work, in indicating strengths that should be encouraged and in pointing out weaknesses that need attention. From the reports submitted by the various child welfare agencies, the State Department of Social Welfare obtains information

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<sup>2</sup> Frank J. Bruno, Trends in Social Work, Columbia University Press, New York, 1948, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> Act No. 300, P.A. 1913.

<sup>5</sup> Act No. 47, P.A. 1944, First Extra Session.

<sup>6</sup> Act No. 96, P.A. 1951, amending Act No. 47.

about the number of children receiving care from these agencies, the characteristics of such children and the duration of their stay in foster homes or children's institutions. The district children's consultants, whose responsibilities include offering consultation to child welfare agencies and making agency studies preparatory to the issue or renewal of licenses, often use statistical data extracted from the reports. Armed with this data they are in a position to offer help to agencies on questions concerning the volume of their caseloads in relation to the size of their staffs and the difficulty of the problems being tackled. However, on account of the duplication<sup>7</sup> which occurs whenever a child is reported more than once, the records do not give as true a picture of the total foster care population as of the caseloads of the individual agencies.

#### Why Duplication?

"The kinds of problems that make it necessary to place children and youth outside their own homes are usually connected with dependency, neglect, birth out of wedlock, and serious behavior problems."<sup>8</sup> To serve such wide areas of need a variety of private and public agencies

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<sup>7</sup> In this study the word 'duplication' has been given a special meaning as defined in Chapter II on page 13.

<sup>8</sup> Michigan Youth Commission, Services for Children Outside Their Own Homes: A Report to the Honorable G. Mennen Williams, Governor, November 1953, p. D-1.

have been established. Included among them are juvenile courts, child placing agencies, child caring institutions, training schools and independent boarding homes. The services of many different agencies are often sought in providing for the care of children outside their own homes. Usually this is done with one child welfare agency assuming responsibility for the case and contacting other resources. But there are instances where, in the interests of all concerned, it is necessary or convenient for such responsibility to be shared or to change hands from one agency to another. Sometimes, too, an agency may close a case after returning a child to his own home, only to find itself forced to reopen the case when the home situation again breaks down. These and other circumstances cause some children to be reported more than once to the State Department of Social Welfare in the same year, with the result that duplications occur in any statistical count made of the children in foster care.

#### Problems Created by Duplication

Duplication always presents a challenge to the user of statistical records. Unless the duplication is estimated, it destroys the accuracy of data that have been extracted from the records. Secondly, it suggests that there may be a flaw in the procedure for collecting the data. Further, it may be indicative of an even more basic defect, such as inadequate understanding of the



conditions being observed. For these reasons, wherever duplication appears, it should be known and estimated and special devices should be employed to investigate, understand, correct, control and prevent it.

The duplications in the records of the State Department of Social Welfare prevent an accurate count of the children in foster care from being computed. Because of this dilemma, comprehensive totals of the children in foster care are not published. Figures of the children in the different types of services are usually presented, but any total obtained by adding together these figures will produce a greatly expanded count of the foster care population.

The inability to give a comprehensive total of the number of children in foster care is often a source of frustration. Only approximate figures were available to the Joint Legislative Committee appointed in 1949 to study the need for foster care of children in Michigan. The committee was interested in securing "more adequate information on the amount of money now spent for foster care and the number of children in need of such care who are not taken care of."<sup>9</sup> Accurate statistical data were needed for estimating the per capita cost of foster care, determining

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<sup>9</sup> Joint Legislative Committee to Study Foster Care, Foster Care in Michigan: Report of the Joint Legislative Committee, State Department of Social Welfare, 1951, p. 6.

the ratio between the foster care population and the total child population, and tracing the trends of the foster care program. Since the duplication in the records was not estimated, the conclusions drawn from the available data are open to question.

This is but one example of the disadvantage of not being able to obtain an unduplicated count of the children in foster care. Administratively, this lack is a rather serious handicap to overall state planning. For instance, it is felt that the foster care population in Michigan has remained stable for the last ten years despite the rapid increase of the child population in the state during this period. Whether or not this feeling is true cannot be verified from the current records except through considerable and laborious effort. If true, it may mean that there are not enough foster care facilities available, or that more attention is given to children in their own homes before foster care placement becomes necessary. Without accurate statistical data, questions of such vital importance to planning cannot be properly investigated.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons for the duplications which occur in the statistical records kept by the State Department of Social Welfare of the children from Ingham County in foster care in 1954. It is not the aim to question the appropriateness of foster care placement as a method of dealing with children whose families have failed. Nor is the study an evaluation of the foster care services, even though some aspects of the investigation may reflect the quality of these services. Rather, it is an attempt to identify and evaluate the factors responsible for the duplications in the statistical records of the State Department.

The duplications indicate that the services of more than one agency were used, or that the services of one agency were used more than once, in providing foster care. A study of the duplications can therefore aid the understanding of the types of relationships in which agencies engage in offering service to children outside their own homes. For purposes of supervision and planning such knowledge is of great value. The usefulness of this study is thus mainly administrative, for, in pointing out what the duplications mean, information about the practices employed

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in administering foster care services is furnished. Also, the study is an aid to the State Department in "the development of sound programs and standards of child welfare ....throughout the state."<sup>10</sup>

#### An Unduplicated Count

One outcome of the investigation, it was hoped, would be the discovery of a procedure for obtaining an unduplicated count of the children in foster care in the state of Michigan, and special emphasis has been given to this consideration in the study. Administrative limitations were provided for the procedure to be recommended. It was shown that the existing relationships between the State Department and the reporting agencies were largely voluntary,<sup>11</sup> and so it would be difficult to enforce any scheme calling for additional work on the part of the agencies in preparing reports. Further, any method which required a great expenditure of time and money and the employment of increased staff would be inadvisable. The aim was thus to develop a procedure that could be used by the present staff of the State Department with data available from report blanks similar to those currently in use.

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<sup>10</sup> Act 280, P.A. 1939, Section 14 (c).

<sup>11</sup> Although the State Department has the support of the law in requesting reports from the agencies, it has no administrative control over the private agencies. Because it relies so much on the cooperation of these agencies, the Department must avoid using its legal authority very much.

That methods could be devised for obtaining an unduplicated count of the children in foster care in Michigan without a careful study of the duplications was recognized early. By a process of alphabetical listing and isolation of the cases of duplication (similar to the method used in this study) an unduplicated count for the state could be procured. If it is argued that this method is costly, time-consuming and subject to error, and requires the same volume of work from year to year, other methods could be devised without recourse to a study of the duplications. A central registration of all cases reported, for example, and the use of a reliable coded index would affix to each child a single number or distinguishing mark no matter how often he were reported. Such a device would prevent a child from being counted more than once in spite of being reported several times. After the system has been set up, it would be easy to obtain accurate totals of the number of children in foster care, for all the services together as well as for each service separately.

Thus, the method used for obtaining an unduplicated count of the children in foster care need not eliminate the duplications in the records. Indeed, it is felt that efforts to prevent such duplications would produce inaccuracies in the records and would cause some cases of foster care service not to be reported. It would in such case be unwise statistically to make radical changes in the present

system of reporting for the sake of eliminating the duplications. In any event, since one of the primary uses of the reports and records is providing information for consultation to the child welfare agencies, it is important to know all the cases in which an agency has been active, even if other agencies have also participated in giving service to these cases.

Neither the study of the duplications nor the elimination of them seems to be a necessary step in the direction of obtaining an unduplicated count. This conclusion does not invalidate the usefulness of the study from the point of view of developing a procedure for "unduplicating"<sup>12</sup> the count. The study indicates conditions that must be

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<sup>12</sup> Although not yet in the dictionary, the verb 'unduplicate' and its participial form 'unduplicated' are in common use in research circles. Since 1951 Mrs. Esther Moore in her address to the National Conference of Social Work referred to an "unduplicated family count". More recently, the Division of Research of the Children's Bureau, Social Security Administration, circularized the departments of social welfare of the various states, (Form CB-251. I-S - January 1955 - Budget Bureau No. 72-R512) the purpose of which was "to obtain an unduplicated count of the children served during the year by public welfare agencies." The use of the prefix 'un' with 'duplicate' conforms to grammatical ruling as stated in Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, - "An inseparable verbal prefix used: a. With Verbs (esp. when intransitive) to express the contrary, or reversal, and not the simple negative, of the action of the verb to which it is prefixed, as in unbend, uncoil, undo, unfold.... Sometimes participles and participial adjectives formed with this prefix coincide in form with compounds of the negative prefix un- (see 2d un-) as in undone (from undo) meaning unfastened, ruined, and undone (from 2d un- and done) meaning not done, not finished." In keeping with the usage explained above, 'to unduplicate' means 'to reverse or remove the duplication' and 'unduplicated' means 'without duplication or not duplicated'.

applied to any method that is devised. It is shown, for instance, that methods which eliminate the duplications at the same time defeat one of the main purposes of the records - providing information for evaluating and offering consultation to the child welfare agencies. It is therefore necessary to seek a device that does not interfere radically with the system of collecting and recording the reports, or that unduplicates the count after the records have been made.

Moreover, the duplications in the records illustrate an aspect of the foster care services that prevails and needs investigation. There are always cases in the service of which more than one agency is active. Are these situations inevitable? Are they consistent with recognized practice? Or, are they uneconomical and preventable? Do they indicate a competition for service? The answers to these and similar questions are valuable equipment for a supervisory authority like the State Department of Social Welfare.

#### Scope of Study

This project has been limited to the study of the duplications in the records of the children from Ingham County who were in foster care in 1954. The State Department also keeps records of children receiving welfare services other than foster care, and it is known that there are cases of duplication in these records too. For example,

the cases of all children referred to the juvenile court are reported to the State Department irrespective of the way in which they have been disposed. Several children commit in the same year more than one offense requiring the court's attention. If they commit a new offense after their old case has been closed, they are reported to the State Department more than once and the result is duplications in the records. Records are also kept of children served in their own homes by the private agencies, the state institutions and the county children's services.<sup>13</sup> However, since the primary concern of Act 47 is for "the regulation and supervision of the care and placement of minor children"<sup>14</sup> away from their own families, it has been decided to devote this study to the duplications in the records of children in foster care only.

For the sake of convenience, the study has been restricted to Ingham County. Ingham County is a manageable unit since the unduplicated number of cases of children in foster care is only 882,<sup>15</sup> whereas the number of cases in the state is approximately 40,000. Further, Ingham County contains both an urban and a rural population and

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<sup>13</sup> See, State of Michigan, Department of Social Welfare, Agency and Institutional Care of Children in Michigan: Annual Statistical Report 1953, Lansing, Michigan, August 1954, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Act 47, op. cit., Preamble.

<sup>15</sup> Exact count for 1954 obtained in the course of this study.

is provided with most of the various types of agencies offering foster care services. It is likely that the main factors contributing to the duplications in the records for the state, with the possible exception of Wayne County,<sup>16</sup> will be observed in a study of the cases of Ingham County. However, it is expected that these factors will be distributed in different proportions in other counties and therefore the validity of using data gathered from the records of one county for predicting conditions obtaining in other counties of the state should be tested.

#### Definitions

In general usage the term 'duplication' is loaded with negative connotations. It at once suggests overlapping, wastage, inefficiency. No such value concepts are attributed to the word in this study. Duplication does not imply duplication of service nor duplicate records. It is used specifically to refer to the case of any child whose name appears more than once in the records kept by the State Department. There are many such cases and these are referred to variously as 'duplications' or 'cases of duplication'. **This study deals with the duplications in the foster care records for 1954.** Its purpose is to discover the reasons for these duplications and so

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<sup>16</sup> Conditions in Wayne County, because of Detroit, are usually quite unique. The peculiarities of this county must be capitalized, however, since about one-third of the population of Michigan lives in it.

it would be unfortunate to begin by assuming what these reasons signify.

"Foster care denotes the type of care that is given to children who must be separated from their natural families."<sup>17</sup> It does not include the care provided by nursery schools, day care centers, summer camps, boarding schools and other facilities run primarily for purposes of education and group experience.<sup>18</sup> In this study it means,

the care of children away from their own homes, in institutions, or in family homes in which foster parents are not related to the children. Institutional care includes care in county juvenile detention homes and in the Boys' Vocational School and Girls' Training School, as well as in private child-caring institutions and maternity hospitals licensed to care for children. It does not include licensed summer camps or boarding schools or the state institutions for mentally ill and deficient. Foster homes include all licensed homes both paid and free, including those in which placement is for purposes of adoption and those which provide day care only. It does not include nursery schools and day care centers.<sup>19</sup>

In practice, children in juvenile detention homes are not reported as such to the State Department. Detention care is a court service and when children receiving such service are reported, this is included in the juvenile court report.

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<sup>17</sup> Helen R. Hagan, "Foster Care for Children", Social Work Yearbook 1954, A.A.S.W., p. 225.

<sup>18</sup> The Social Welfare Commission, through the State Department of Social Welfare, licenses these facilities also.

<sup>19</sup> Join Legislative Committee to Study Foster Care, op. cit., p. 23.

The phrase 'from Ingham County' is used in a special sense. A child is considered to be from Ingham County if he was admitted from this county to a child welfare agency. His residence is regarded as being the same as that of his parents or other persons responsible for his care at the time of his acceptance by the agency. Legal residence such as is required in order to establish eligibility for relief from the county departments of social welfare is not used in determining the county from which a child comes. As children from Ingham County are sometimes placed in institutions outside the county, the records of all the private agencies in the state were examined for cases of Ingham County children.

A variation of this definition was made in connection with children in independent boarding homes. In their reports to the State Department, these homes are not required to state the county from which the children in their care have been accepted. Consequently, it has been assumed in this study that the children in independent boarding homes in Ingham County are from Ingham County. While it is realized that this assumption is not likely to be entirely true, since children from other counties may be in Ingham County homes and vice versa, yet this anomaly should not seriously affect the results of the study.

The juvenile court exercises jurisdiction in proceedings concerning children "found within the county".



Even a liberal interpretation of the phrase 'from Ingham County' would not allow for the inclusion of all cases that may be subsumed under 'found within the county'. However, in providing foster care service for dependent, neglected and delinquent children, the juvenile courts usually restrict their activities to children from their own counties.<sup>20</sup> It is therefore to be expected that all the children in court foster homes of Ingham County are from Ingham County and that children from the county will not be found in court homes in other counties.

The child welfare agencies which have to report to the State Department are those which receive minor children for care or placement. "'Minor children' according to the statute means children under the age of 17 years."<sup>21</sup> However, the agencies may maintain responsibility, either legally or voluntarily, for children in their care until the children have attained the age of 19 years. Thus, the cases of all children from Ingham County who are under 19 years old and in foster care come within the purview of this study. As mentioned earlier, included among them are children whose problems range from dependency and neglect to anti-social behavior.

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<sup>20</sup> Much of the reason for this practice is that the funds for administering the court services are provided by the counties.

<sup>21</sup> State of Michigan, Department of Social Welfare, Child Care Institutions and Child Placing Agencies: Requirements for Licensing and Recommended Standards, Lansing, March 1953, p. 1.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FOSTER CARE SERVICES

The needs of children requiring care outside their own homes are many and varied. Accordingly, the services that have been developed to cater for these needs are also diversified. For the normal dependent or neglected child, placement with a foster family is the usual plan. Most of the children in foster care receive this type of service, and they are to be found in paid or free boarding homes, work or wage homes, or adoptive homes. Sometimes, however, the mental and emotional problems presented by children needing foster care are so great that special provisions have to be made. In such cases, institutional care of one type or another is sometimes the recommended program. But, serious as the children's problems may be, they are not always as great a source of trouble to agencies as the problems presented by their parents. Thus, important among the foster care services is the juvenile court, equipped with authority to determine, curtail or sever the rights of parents.

All foster care is not full-time care. Many parents require foster care service for their children only during their working hours. The homes they use are day care homes.

Foster care services are provided by public and private agencies, sectarian and non-sectarian organizations and individual families. The services which cater for children from Ingham County may be divided into five categories:

#### Private Agencies

These agencies, which include child placing agencies, child caring institutions and agencies performing both functions, serve children referred by their own parents, guardians or relatives, or committed by the juvenile court. Usually the parents or the court provide the funds for the care of the children they have referred. Sometimes, however, parents refuse or cannot afford to pay for this care and the entire burden of the cost is left on the agency. In such cases, some agencies have the children committed to them by the juvenile court, which may then contribute toward the cost of care. This practice is uncommon in Ingham County where the court provides a large placement service of its own. However, the court makes ample use of the private institutions for placing children whom it finds difficult to place. A more regular practice of the private agencies in Ingham County is to seek legal custody of children from the court in order to establish definite relationships with difficult parents. Children committed to the private agencies by the court remain wards of the court until their cases are permanently disposed of by the court, or until they reach the

age of 19 years.

There are three private agencies located in Ingham County, and the great majority of children from the county in the care of private agencies has been placed by these agencies. Two of the agencies, the Ingham County Branch of the Michigan Children's Aid Society and the Catholic Social Service, are child placing agencies. The other, the St. Vincent Home for Children, is a children's institution. Reports from all branches of the Michigan Children's Aid Society are sent to the State Department from the society's headquarters in Detroit. From a statistical point of view, this is fortunate for it is the policy of the Michigan Children's Aid Society to place children awaiting adoption in counties other than the ones where their natural parents reside. Both the Catholic Social Service and the St. Vincent Home are under the same director. The Catholic Social Service serves as the intake office for the St. Vincent Home, but a separate report is submitted to the State Department for each agency.

## (2) State Facilities

Under this heading are the Michigan Children's Institute, a child placing agency which also runs a home for diagnostic purposes, and the Boys' Vocational School and Girls' Training School, which are institutions for delinquent children. Only children who have been committed by the juvenile court may be received for care by these

state facilities. On admission, the child becomes a ward of the state. For the Michigan Children's Institute, children must be under 14 years of age at the time of commitment, and for the Boys' Vocational School and the Girls' Training School over 12 and under 17 years. However, a child under 17 years may be committed temporarily to the Michigan Children's Institute for purposes of observation. Such a child remains the ward of the court and so may be reported to the State Department by both the court and the Michigan Children's Institute.

Boys and girls released on parole from the two training schools remain state wards until they attain the age of 19 years, or are officially discharged from the schools. If they are returned to their own homes or to the care of relatives they come under the supervision of the county welfare agent of the juvenile court for the period that they are state wards. If it is impossible or unwise to return them to their own families, they may be placed in foster homes. For the boys, these homes are procured by the county children's workers, and for the girls by the Michigan Children's Institute. After placement these children come under the supervision of the above-named services, but they are still state wards and the institutions are responsible for providing for their care.

The parolees of the Girls' Training School are but a small part of the foster placements made by the Michigan

Children's Institute, which has an extensive program serving the whole state. The other state facilities are, likewise, for the use of the whole state.

### (3) Juvenile Court

The Juvenile Division of the Probate Court, generally known as the juvenile court, is an important child welfare agency. It,

has exclusive original jurisdiction in proceedings concerning any child under seventeen found within the county who has violated any law or ordinance, who is a runaway or disobedient, who has immoral associates or frequents premises used for illegal purposes, who is an habitual truant, or who is an idler.<sup>22</sup>

It also exercises jurisdiction in proceedings concerning children under 17 years of age found within the county,

(1) Whose parent or other person legally responsible for the care and maintenance of such child, when able to do so, neglects or refuses to provide proper or necessary support, education as required by law, medical, surgical or other care necessary for his health, morals or well-being, or who is abandoned by his parents, guardian or other custodian, or who is otherwise without proper custody or guardianship; or

(2) Whose home or environment, by reason of neglect, cruelty, drunkenness, criminality or depravity on the part of a parent, guardian or other custodian, is an unfit place for such child to live in, or whose mother is unmarried and without adequate provision for care and support.<sup>23</sup>

The juvenile court also has jurisdiction over children under

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<sup>22</sup> Maxine B. Virtue, Basic Structure of Children's Services in Michigan, American Judicature Society, Ann Arbor, 1953, p. 112

<sup>23</sup> The Probate Code, Chapter XII-A, Section 2 (b).

19 years of age waived to it by a court in chancery in cases of divorce proceedings, and concurrent jurisdiction with the circuit court over children between the ages of 17 and 19 who have committed minor offenses.

In addition to its judicial function, the juvenile court provides foster care service for some of the children whose cases it adjudicates. These cases are only a small portion of the great volume which the court handles. All cases coming before the court are reported to the State Department.

In Ingham County the juvenile court has offices in Lansing and Mason, and it is served by a staff of six workers excluding the probate judge. This staff, which comprises a county agent, two assistant county agents and three probation officers, is responsible, among other things, for obtaining and supervising foster homes for dependent, neglected and delinquent children in the custody of the court. As explained in Chapter II, the Ingham County court provides foster care for children from Ingham County only. It also runs a detention home in Mason in which some children awaiting court action are kept.

#### (4) Independent Boarding Homes

Many parents who find it impossible to provide a home for their children make their own arrangements for placing their children in foster care. The independent boarding homes which they use, like the agency homes, have

to be licensed and to report the children in their care to the State Department at the time of admission and at removal. In many cases, parents require only day care homes, and these are almost never provided by the private agencies in Michigan. Most of the independent boarding homes are day care homes.

(5) County Children's Services

One of the major functions of the county children's services is studying independent boarding homes for licensing. In addition, these services, which are provided by the State Department of Social Welfare, help parents and the Boys' Vocational School in finding foster homes for children. County children's workers usually give casework service to the children and foster parents in the homes they have recommended and report these cases to the State Department. In compiling data on the children in foster care, cases reported by the county children's workers are included.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE REPORTING SYSTEM

The statute requiring child welfare agencies to be licensed and to report to the State Department was enacted for the purpose of regulating and supervising the care and placement of minor children. By these means standards are established and information is available for making evaluations, offering consultation and developing plans. Reporting is considered to be almost as important as licensing for achieving this purpose. The Joint Legislative Committee referred to in Chapter I, made this clear when they recommended that even the independent boarding homes, which formerly had only to be licensed, should also be required to report to the State Department.<sup>24</sup>

Forms for reporting are furnished by the State Department in accordance with the statute.<sup>25</sup> But the reports fulfill different functions for the different services and therefore are not uniform. With regard to the private agencies, the reports are used mainly for gauging the work of the agencies and for information to aid consultation. The state facilities and the county children's

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<sup>24</sup> Joint Legislative Committee to Study Foster Care, op. cit., p. 14. This recommendation was adopted in 1951.

<sup>25</sup> Act 47, op. cit., Section 4.

services are administered by the State Department and so their records are kept merely for the sake of accounting. The juvenile court reporting, which began in 1945, is more a service to the courts than to the State Department. It represents the only coordinated report of all the juvenile courts in the state, and the system of collecting and recording the reports was developed in collaboration with the Michigan Probate Judges' Association. Only of recent origin, the reports required by the independent boarding homes are much less complete than those required of the other services. Certain items are deliberately omitted from the report blanks for these homes, because it is felt that the independent boarding home parents ought not, or would not be in a position, to obtain the desired information.

#### Reporting Blanks

For the child placing agencies and child caring institutions and the Michigan Children's Institute, three types of blanks are used - an admission card (CC-1), a notice of re-admission (CC-2) and a notice of discharge (CC-8). In addition, an annual list of all cases "is prepared in duplicate at the end of the calendar year by the State Department of Social Welfare from the above cards and sent to the agency for checking."<sup>26</sup> This list is sent

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<sup>26</sup> State of Michigan, Department of Social Welfare, Child Caring Institutions and Child Placing Agencies, op. cit., p. 28.



to be reviewed for completeness and accuracy, and a copy is returned to the State Department.

Much the same procedure and type of forms are used for receiving reports from the state training schools, the Boys' Vocational School and the Girls' Training School. For these schools, there also are a notice of admission (SW-3), a notice of readmission, designated 'Notice of Return to Institution' (SW-8) and a notice of discharge (sw-9). In addition, a notice of placement (SW-4) for children paroled from the schools but still state wards, and a notice of transfer (SW-7) for children temporarily placed in another institution, are used. An annual list is sent to the schools for checking at the end of each calendar year.

The juvenile court submits a Face Sheet and Statistical Report (JC-1) on initial contact with each case after a preliminary investigation has been made, but before the case has been officially determined. After the case has been closed, the court may notify the State Department through a notice of closure (JC-8) or through a copy of its own court order. In practice, all courts use the JC-1 form for reporting official cases on initial contact and some for reporting unofficial cases also. Notification of the disposition of the cases, either by court order or notice of closure, is not done by all the courts despite the recommendations of the "Reference Guide for Michigan Juvenile

Court Reporting" adopted in 1944 by the Probate Judges' Association. The annual list prepared by the State Department at the close of each calendar year is thus of paramount importance in checking the accuracy of the records and gathering information about the disposition of the cases. When it is remembered that the juvenile court handles more cases (in quantity and variety) than any other of the reporting sources, the usefulness of the annual list, from the viewpoint of statistical accuracy, is greatly magnified.

The independent boarding homes report on the Boarding Home Record form (BH-3). When the foster child first enters the home, the boarding parent is required to fill out Section One of this form and to send a copy to the State Department. Section Two is used as notification when the child is removed. As each boarding home is a separate unit handling usually only one or two cases, an annual list is not sent to these homes. Very often the boarding parents fail to notify the State Department when they have given up caring for a child. Thus, information about the children served by this facility is somewhat inadequate and sometimes has to be supplemented with data from other sources.<sup>28</sup>

The county children's services report on the Children's Service Face Sheet and Statistical Report form (CD-14).

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<sup>28</sup> From the boarding home unit of the State Department and the children's workers who carry out boarding home studies for licensing.

A monthly list is sent out to the children's workers to aid them in checking the accuracy of their reports. The annual report of the county children's services is prepared on a fiscal year basis in order to avoid the strain of having to prepare all the reports at the same time. However, since monthly statistics from the children's workers are readily available and the volume of cases handled by these workers is not great, it is easy to obtain figures that would synchronize with those of the other reports. This reporting system is in the process of being revised.

## CHAPTER V

### METHOD OF RESEARCH

With the aid of IBM machines the names of all the children from Ingham County reported by the child welfare services to the State Department were listed in alphabetical order. Other characteristics of the children taken from the records were also listed. These included the sex, race, birth date (by month and year) of each child. In order to facilitate identification of the various children and to provide information about the services they received, data pertaining to the familial circumstances and whereabouts of each child as well as to the agencies offering service were also included in the list. As a result, it was easy to observe by inspection the cases where a child's name appeared more than once on the list. These cases were further examined to see whether or not the duplication occurred in connection with foster care service.

Frequent reference was made to the reports and records in search of further identifying evidence. This procedure was necessary in sorting out the duplications in foster care, because the State Department's records are kept according to agency, and some of the child welfare agencies provide other services for children in addition to foster care. It was therefore possible for a child to be

reported several times without being counted twice as being in foster care.

Certain precautions were necessary. It had to be borne in mind continually that the study was not about children who had received foster care services from more than one source, but rather about the cases of children reported as being in foster care more than once during the year. Care had to be taken to check the status of each case at the end of 1953, at closure during the year, if this was done, and at the end of 1954, if necessary. The method used in taking the count was responsible for these measures. For each type of service a count of the number of children in foster care is made at the end of the year. At that time the total of the previous year is taken, the cases opened during the year are added and the cases closed are deducted. The resulting figure is regarded as the total number of cases of foster care for the year under consideration.

Allowance had to be made for special cases. A child who has been admitted to one of the state institutions from Ingham County may be placed in another county when released on parole from the institution. In such case, the records of the juvenile court in the county of placement had to be examined for information about the whereabouts of the child. The records of the private agencies and institutions in other counties had already been scrutinized



for cases of children from Ingham County before the list was prepared.

By these means, all the duplications in foster care in Ingham County were isolated. Information leading to the reasons for each duplication was then collected from the records of the State Department as well as from interviews with the executives of the agencies implicated. It was necessary to know the agencies that were active in the duplications, the services which they provided and their relationships with other participating agencies. After these details were assembled, a frame of reference for determining the reasons for the duplications was needed. For this purpose, certain hypotheses were formulated.

#### Guiding Hypotheses

The foster care duplications were conceived as resulting from the interaction of three basic factors, viz., the records, the services and the children. From this orientation, the three following hypotheses were prepared to guide the search for reasons for the duplications:

- 1) The duplications in the records are produced by the system for receiving and recording reports employed by the State Department;
- 2) The duplications are produced by the administrative and professional practices of the agencies providing the foster care services;
- 3) The duplications are produced by the individual needs and familial circumstances of the children receiving the foster care services.

### Method of Classification

There is an element of arbitrariness in most classifications of social phenomena. As a rule, the forces affecting them interact with each other to such an extent that it is impossible to arrange the data in discrete groups. It is agreed that the reasons for the duplications are interrelated and cannot be separated into mutually exclusive categories. Certainly, all of the foster care services were established to provide for the needs of children who do not have homes or whose homes are considered unsuitable or inadequate. Thus, the various agency practices and relationships which have developed are, directly or indirectly, attributable to these needs. It is not the intention of the above listed hypotheses to regard the agency practices as distinct from the needs of children.

Nevertheless, the categorizing implicit in the hypotheses is justifiable if the situation responsible for the idea of the study is kept in view - the administrative need for an unduplicated count of the children in foster care. Of the three component factors affecting the duplications, the one most under the control of the State Department is the records. The system of recording can be changed in any desired way without very much trouble. If, for example, the first hypothesis were proved to be the only cause for the duplications, then all that has to be done to achieve an unduplicated count would be

to revise the procedures for receiving and recording the reports. There is no reason to believe that this is impossible. It is also conceivable that the duplications may be prevented by changing the recording system even though there may be other contributing factors besides the reporting system responsible for the duplications.

The two other factors assumed to be producing the duplications - the services and the children - are less controllable. Even between these, however, it is possible to make some evaluation from the standpoint of ability to be modified for the purpose of attaining an unduplicated count. Surely, the foster care services are more subject to human control than the children in receipt of these services.

Thus, in grouping the reasons for the duplications, it was decided to consider first the records, then the services and last the children. The cases were examined in order to find out whether the main reason for duplication could be attributed to the system of receiving and recording reports. In such cases, other contributing reasons were not investigated. The same procedure was repeated in dealing with the remaining cases. In this instance, however, the cases sought were those in which the main reason for duplication could be attributed to the foster care services. After these cases were isolated, all the remaining cases automatically were assigned to the category

of duplications produced by the needs and circumstances of the children.

This approach could hardly be approved if the focus of the study were on the foster care services. It would have been important in such case to evaluate all the factors operating in each case in which more than one agency gave service. The aim of this study, however, is to obtain information having a bearing on unduplicating the count. It is felt that the suggested method of classifying the reasons for the duplications indicates all the conditions affecting the duplications. Any device for unduplicating the count must take into account all these conditions.

Moreover, the value of the study is not in pointing out the distribution of the various conditions producing the duplications, but in showing what these conditions are. It has already been mentioned that the validity of using the experience from Ingham County for projecting conditions in other parts of the state is subject to question.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FINDINGS

The number of reports submitted to the State Department by the child welfare services in connection with the children from Ingham County whom they served totalled 1,689. There were 215 duplications among these reports, making the unduplicated count of all the children reported 1,406. Of this latter number 882, less than two-thirds, were children in foster care. These 882 children were reported 1,031 times because there were 126 duplications in the foster care records. The duplications constituted a little more than 14 per cent, exactly one out of every seven, of the foster care population, just one per cent less than the 15 per cent of the duplications in the full list of reports.<sup>29</sup>

Only the 126 duplications in the foster care records come within the purview of this study. The 126 cases were reported 276 times, or 2.2 times each. Of the duplications, 103 refer to children who were reported twice, and 22 to children reported three times. The name of one child appeared four times in the records.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See Table A., Appendix, p. 73.

<sup>30</sup> See Table B., Appendix, p. 73.

Services Active in Duplications

Each of the five foster care services described in Chapter IV was implicated in some of the cases of duplication. As shown in Table 1 on page 37, the private agencies were participants in more of the duplications than any other type of service. The 93 cases in which they were active comprised a little less than 75 per cent of the duplications. In the opposite position were the County Children's Services. They were active in only 10 cases, about 8 per cent of the total number of duplications. However, a glance at Table 2 on page 38 reveals that these 10 cases constituted almost one-third of all the children receiving attention in foster homes from this service. The corresponding proportion for the independent boarding home program, which was implicated in 17 cases of duplication, was one out of fourteen.

(1) Private Agencies and  
Independent Boarding Homes

As in the case of the number of duplications, the private agencies led the field with respect to the proportion of duplications in their total caseload. The 93 duplications which they served represented 35 per cent of the number of children in foster care in their clientele. It has already been mentioned that only 7 per cent (one out of fourteen) of the cases reported by the independent boarding home program consisted of duplications. That the

Table 1. Participation of Foster Care Services in  
Duplications

Showing Number of Cases and Times Reported

FOSTER CARE SERVICES	Cases of Duplication			
	Number of	Per Cent	Times	Average
	Cases	Total Cases	Reported	Times Reported
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Total . . . .	(126) <sup>a</sup>	(100) <sup>b</sup>	276	(2.2)
1. Private Agencies	93	73.8	157	1.7
2. State Facilities	24	19.0	24	1.0
3. Juvenile Court	56	44.4	56	1.0
4. Independent Board- ing Homes	17	13.5	27	1.6
5. County Children's Services	10	7.9	12	1.2

<sup>a</sup> The total of this column exceeds the number of duplications because in many cases more than one service is involved.

<sup>b</sup> Similarly, the total of this column exceeds 100 per cent.

Table 2. Per Cent of Duplications in Cases Reported

Type of Foster Care Services	Total Cases Reported	Duplications	
		Number	Per Cent For Each Type of Case
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Total . . . .	(882) <sup>a</sup>	(126) <sup>b</sup>	14.3
1. Private Agencies	266	93	35.0
2. State Facilities	104	24	23.1
3. Juvenile Court	325	56	17.2
4. Independent Boarding Homes	237	17	7.2
5. County Children's Services	33	10	30.3

<sup>a</sup> The total in this column exceeds the number of cases reported because of the duplications.

<sup>b</sup> The total in this column exceeds the number of duplications because in many cases more than one service is involved in the duplication.



private agencies had proportionally five times as many duplications as the independent boarding homes is somewhat surprising, especially since the number of children in the care of each of the two services was nearly the same. The private agencies served 266 children and the independent boarding homes 237. When the professional methods employed by the private agencies is contrasted with the haphazard practices of some of the independent boarding homes, the results of the two types of services, insofar as the duplications in the records indicate, certainly need explanation.

It may be pointed out, in the first place, that the reporting by the independent boarding homes in Ingham County seems to be rather incomplete and consequently an appreciable number of their cases never get into the records of the State Department. The private agencies, on the other hand, report all their cases, including those with which the contact is very brief, and many of their cases are difficult ones, often involving emotionally disturbed children with parents who are no less maladjusted. Secondly, most of the parents who make independent arrangements for the care of their children require such care only for that period of the day when they are out to work. Thus, the number of children reported in day care homes in the independent boarding home program is 168, over 71 per cent of the total number of children served by the program.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See Table C., Appendix, p. 74.

On the contrary, all of the children whose foster care was supervised by the private agencies were in full-time foster homes or in children's institutions.<sup>32</sup> Further, 38 of the duplications in the records for the private agencies were caused solely by the administrative arrangement between the Catholic Social Service and the St. Vincent Home for Children, referred to in Chapter III, whereby the former agency acts as intake office for the latter and sometimes provides casework help to children who are in the institution. Since both agencies report all cases in which they have in any way participated, each child admitted to the St. Vincent Home is reported twice. If the 38 cases in question were deducted from the duplications in the records of the private agencies, the remaining figure would constitute about 24 per cent of the caseload of these agencies. This is still a much higher per cent than that for the boarding home program.

The number of children in full-time care in the independent boarding home program is 67. Seven, just a little more than one out of every ten, of these children were reported more than once. It is to some extent unfair to compare this small group with the large number of children in agency care. Nevertheless, even if the necessary allowances were made, the result would still show a higher

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<sup>32</sup> See page 23. Day care homes are almost never provided by private agencies in Michigan.

per cent of duplications among the private agency cases.

It would be prudent to remember that duplication does not indicate whether or not service was effective. All it shows is the number of agencies playing responsible roles in offering service to the child in foster care.<sup>33</sup> The fact that there are more duplications in the cases of the private agencies than of the independent boarding homes suggests that children in the care of private agencies are likely to receive the services of more resources than children in the care of the independent boarding homes. What this signifies is a fit subject for another investigation. It may be that the needs of such children are greater than those of children in the independent boarding home program. Or, it may suggest that there is some stigma attached to agency service preventing 'self-respecting' persons from using such service; thus, only the worst cases are referred to the agencies. Several other interesting hypotheses may be formulated.

## (2) Interagency Participation

Table 3 on page 42 shows the number of cases in which the various services participated with each other. The private agencies were active in duplications with each of

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<sup>33</sup> In this study a service is considered to be foster care service only if it has main responsibility, either legally or voluntarily obtained, for the care of the child. Otherwise, this service is regarded as a community resource.

Table 3. Participation of Services with Each Other in Duplications, by Cases

Type of Foster Care Service	Type of Foster Care Service					
	Total	Priv-ate Agen-cies	State Fac-ili-ties	Ju-ven-ile Court	Ind. Board-ing Homes	Chil-dren Ser-vices
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Total .....	(126)	95 <sup>a</sup>	25 <sup>b</sup>	57 <sup>b</sup>	18 <sup>b</sup>	11 <sup>b</sup>
1. Private Agencies	95 <sup>a</sup>	(42)	6	36	5	6
2. State Facilities	25 <sup>b</sup>	6	(0)	19	0	0
3. Juvenile Court	57 <sup>b</sup>	36	19	(0)	0	2
4. Independent Board-ing Homes	18 <sup>b</sup>	5	0	0	(10)	3
5. County Children's Services	11 <sup>b</sup>	6	0	2	3	(0)

<sup>a</sup> Includes 2 cases reported by 3 different services.

<sup>b</sup> Includes 1 case reported by 3 different services.

the other services. No other type of service had relations with all of the other services. The largest number of relationships of the private agencies was with other private agencies, but there was also considerable participation with the juvenile court. Thirty-six of the 93 duplications in the caseloads of the private agencies involved the juvenile court, which was itself active in 21 other duplications, 19 with the state facilities and 2 with the county children's services.

### (3) The Juvenile Court

The importance of the legal function in foster care is clearly illustrated. Active in 56 cases of duplication, the court dealt with 325 children in foster care, a larger number than any other service.<sup>34</sup> As shown in Table 4 on page 44, the various types of services rendered by the court for children in foster care were well demonstrated in the duplications. These services included providing funds, awarding legal custody, making placements and aftercare supervision of children.

#### Agency Relationships

Except for some of the St. Vincent Home cases, there were never more than two agencies active at the same time in any case. It was therefore possible to present the duplications as a series of 'relationships', each

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<sup>34</sup> See Table 2, p. 38.

Table 4. Participation of Juvenile Court in Cases  
of Duplication

Relationships		Cases
Total .....		<u>56</u>
1. Funds .....		23
With Private Institutions ....	22	
With Private Agencies .....	1	
2. Custody .....		18
With Private Agencies .....	11	
With M.C.I. ....	4	
With Private Institutions ....	3	
3. Placements .....		9
With M.C.I. ....	4	
With State Institutions .....	3	
With County Children's Service	2	
4. Aftercare Supervision .....		6
With State Institutions .....	6	

involving two agencies. Table 5 on page 46 shows these relationships, which numbered 150. The great majority of them (127) represented collaboration between the agencies, the others (23) represented a succession of service.<sup>35</sup> All but two of the duplications involved the participation of two different types of services. In one of the two cases in which three different services were active, the worker in the county children's services program collaborated first with the independent boarding home and later with the private agency, when these resources offered service to the child. In the other case, the two later services, the juvenile court and the state institution, did not work with the case until the former resource, a private institution, had surrendered it.

By far the most frequent type of relationship was that between the Catholic Social Service and the St. Vincent Home. As mentioned earlier, a great deal of unnecessary duplication occurred because the former agency performed for the latter a function which is usually undertaken by the same agency providing the service. This administrative arrangement is not under question, but it would seem that the Catholic Social Service cases that were also reported by the St. Vincent Home should not be included in the foster care records. Throughout the study, this anomaly produced problems that had to be assessed before conclusions

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<sup>35</sup> See Table D, Appendix, p. 75.

Table 5. Agency Relationships in Cases of Duplication

Relationships	Number
Total .....	<u>150</u>
1. Catholic Social Service (Intake) - St. Vincent Home (Care) .....	56
2. Juvenile Court (Funds) - Private Institution (Care) .....	22
3. Juvenile Court (Custody) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	11
4. Independent Boarding Home (Care) - Independent Boarding Home (Care) ..	7
5. State Institution (Parole) - Juvenile Court (Supervision) .....	6
6. Children's Services (Casework) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	6
7. Juvenile Court (Custody) - M.C.I. (Observation) .....	4
8. Juvenile Court (Placement) - M.C.I. (Placement) .....	4
9. M.C.I. (Funds) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	4 <sup>a</sup>
10. Independent Boarding Home (Care) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	4
11. Same Private Agency (Placement) Twice .....	4
12. Same Independent Boarding Home (Care) Twice .....	3
13. Juvenile Court (Placement) - State Institution (Care) .....	3
14. Juvenile Court (Custody) - Private Institution (Care) .....	3
15. Independent Boarding Home (Care) Children's Services (Casework) ...	3
16. Private Institution (Care) Private Agency (Placement) .....	2
17. Children's Services (Casework) Juvenile Court (Placement) .....	2
18. Same Children's Services (Casework) Twice .....	2
19. Juvenile Court (Funds) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	1
20. Private Institution (Care) - State Institution (Care) .....	1
21. Private Institution (Care) - M.C.I. (Placement) .....	1
22. Private Agency (Placement) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	1

This practice is being discontinued by M.C.I.



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could be drawn.<sup>36</sup>

### An Evaluation

It is possible to make an evaluation of the various agency relationships observed in the duplications, at least of those relationships representing collaboration between the services. The 23 cases in which the duplications resulted from a succession of service are really not subject to this type of appraisal. Even though the effect of the service may be considered good or bad in these cases, it seems unreasonable to evaluate relationships which did not actually exist. The only connection between the agencies was the child in whom both agencies were interested.

However, the 127 relationships representing collaboration between the agencies do not merit this exemption. Criteria may be developed for evaluating these relationships. The two basic factors to be considered seem to be the children needing the service and the agencies offering the service. Were the relationships necessitated by the needs of the children? Were they in accordance with approved administrative and professional practice?

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<sup>36</sup> The Catholic social agencies in Michigan seem to be in the process of integration. In Detroit, the Catholic Family Center acts as intake office only for the St. Vincent's and Sarah Fisher Home for Children and the St. Anne's Home; In Grand Rapids, the Catholic Social Service Bureau is an amalgamation of the family and placement agency and the St. John's Home. The reports from the St. John's Home are not separated from the Catholic Social Service Bureau. It may be argued that the Catholic Social Service - St. Vincent Home relationship in Ingham County is not definite enough for a decision to be made as to which agency is responsible for the care of the child in the institution.

All of the 127 relationships do not meet these criteria. As shown in Table 6 on page 49, if the 56 cases of Catholic Social Service-St. Vincent Home relationship are excluded, more than half of the remaining 71 relationships are, in the opinion of the writer, not valid. Only 34 of the relationships are justifiable in that they were inevitable and were at the same time consistent with recognized administrative and professional practice.

These 'valid' relationships comprised 18 cases in which legal custody was obtained in order to control the interference of difficult parents, or to have the problems of children diagnosed; 11 cases in which the county children's services offered a protective service until more adequate care was available; 3 cases which had to be committed by the juvenile court to a state institution; and 2 cases in which a child was removed from a private institution to a foster home for professional reasons.

The 37 relationships that were not considered valid included 27 cases in which funds were provided by public agencies (the juvenile court and the Michigan Children's Institute) to finance the care or placement of children by private agencies. This arrangement was considered uneconomical because the public agencies had to maintain records of each of the cases concurrently with the private agencies. Had the cases been referred to a public agency instead, there would have been no need for duplicate

Table 6. Evaluation of Agency Relationships in Duplications

Relationships		Number
Total .....		150
1. Succession of Service .....		23
2. Catholic Social Service (Intake) - St. Vincent Home (Care) .....		56
3. <u>Not Valid</u> .....		37
Juvenile Court (Funds) - Private Institution (Care) .....	22	
State Institution (Parole) - Juvenile Court (Supervision) .....	6	
Juvenile Court (Placement) - M.C.I. (Placement) .....	4	
M.C.I. (Funds) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	4	
Juvenile Court (Funds) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	1	
4. Valid .....		34
Juvenile Court (Custody) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	11	
Children's Services (Casework) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	6	
Juvenile Court (Custody) - M.C.I. (Observation) .....	4	
Juvenile Court (Placement) - State Institution (Care) .....	3	
Juvenile Court (Custody) - Private Institution (Care) .....	3	
Independent Boarding Home (Care) - Children's Services (Casework) ..	3	
Private Institution (Care) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	2	
Children's Services (Casework) - Juvenile Court (Placement) .....	2	

To be considered 'valid' a relationship must be (1) necessitated by the needs of the child, and (2) consistent with recognized administrative and professional practice.

accounting.<sup>37</sup> The remaining 10 cases comprised 6 cases in which the juvenile court supervised parolees of the state institutions but both public agencies maintained records of the children, and 4 cases in which the juvenile court placements were displaced by Michigan Children's Institute placements. The 6 cases of juvenile court supervision violate the principle advanced above that duplicate records would be avoided if a public agency transferred care of a child to another public agency. As regards the 4 cases in which the court placements were superseded by Michigan Children's Institute placements, the court placements were made in the first place only because help from Michigan Children's Institute was unavailable. Administrative exigencies delayed, perhaps marred, the giving of proper service.

#### Reasons for Duplications

Most of the reasons for the duplications, as illustrated in Table 7 on page 51, have been attributed to the foster care services. This is a result of the procedure outlined in Chapter V, which was strictly applied in determining the reasons.

Another important factor in the classification of the reasons is the meaning given to foster care service.

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<sup>37</sup> For example, after committing a child to a state institution, the juvenile court's interest in the child ceases.

Table 7. Reasons for Duplications, by Relationships

Reasons		Relationships
Total .....		<u>150</u>
1. System of Recording .....		33
a. Children's Services Cases ..	13	
b. Court Custody Cases .....	14	
c. State Institution Cases ....	6	
2. Foster Care Services .....		96
a. Administrative Practices ...	56	
b. Lack of Public Facilities ..	27	
c. Inadequacy of Service .....	8	
d. Professional Practice .....	4	
e. Competition for Service ....	1	
3. Circumstances & Needs of Children		21
a. Familial Circumstances .....	13	
b. Individual Needs .....	8	

The definition in Chapter II enumerates the various facilities in which foster care is provided, but it does not deal with the question of responsibility for such care. In determining the reasons for the duplications, this question could not be avoided. Rights and responsibilities regarding the child in foster care are often fragmented among a number of agents. Thus, ultimate responsibility for the child may rest with the court or a state institution, while main responsibility for his care<sup>38</sup> may be delegated to an agency, and at the same time the parent may still retain a few residual responsibilities. Further, although one agency may be responsible for the care of the child, another agency may simultaneously be giving service to the child. Accordingly, it was decided that the agency having responsibility for the care of the child should be credited with providing the service. The other participating services have been regarded as community resources. However, there were still cases in which more than one agency shared the responsibility for the care of the child.

#### (1) The Reporting System

It is felt that the children reported by the county children's services should not be included in the count of the children in foster care. The duplications occurring in the 9 cases in which the inclusion of the children's

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<sup>38</sup> In this sense, care is limited to provisions for the physical needs of the child.

services reports in the records caused duplication,<sup>39</sup> have therefore been considered to be produced by the reporting system.<sup>40</sup> The county children's services program is technically not a foster care service, but rather a casework service available to children in foster care. The children's workers neither place children nor provide care for them. They recommend boarding homes to parents and, in carrying out such of their duties as constitute a protective service, they offer casework service to children in boarding homes, to their parents and to the boarding home parents. But this service does not entail responsibility for the care or placement. Further, each child in foster care who is served by a children's worker ought to be reported by the boarding home parent or agency responsible for his care or placement. The fact that only one-third of these cases is reported<sup>41</sup> does not nullify the argument that the children's services cases

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<sup>39</sup> The county children's services participated in 10 cases of duplications, but were involved in 13 relationships (in the sense described on page 43). In 9 of the 10 cases there would not have been duplication if the children's services reports had been omitted from the foster care records.

<sup>40</sup> Since the State Department does not prepare a comprehensive total of the children in foster care, it may be argued that the situation repudiated above does not exist. However, the children's services cases are regarded as part of the foster care population and if a total of this population were to be estimated, the children's services cases would be included in the count. Indeed, all of the duplications being studied are those which would occur if a comprehensive total of the children in foster care were computed by adding together all the cases reported by the 5 different services generally considered to be foster care services.

<sup>41</sup> See Table 2, p. 38.



should not be incorporated in the foster care records. In giving service to a child in an independent boarding home, the children's worker is required to see that the home is licensed, if licensable, and that the foster parent sends in a report to the State Department on a BH-3 form. If the home is not licensable, it is the worker's responsibility to have the child removed to a more suitable place. There would be duplication every time a children's services case is counted if this procedure were followed. Accordingly, the 13 relationships in which the children's workers participated have been accounted against the reporting system.

However, in the present state of affairs, it is perhaps advisable to continue including the children's services cases in the foster care records if a more complete picture of the volume of the foster care population is required. There is little doubt that many of the foster care cases are not reported, and the duplications which the inclusion of the children's services cases produce are necessarily few because of the small number of children's services cases.

The 14 cases in which private agencies obtained custody of children from the juvenile court in order to establish stable, legally defined relationships with parents need not have produced duplications if the reports from the court regarding these children were excluded from the foster care records. Provided that parental rights have been re-

stricted, the court maintains an interest in the child and reports him as an active case. But such interest does not include responsibility for his care and, according to the point of view expressed earlier, is not foster care service. Hence, juvenile court cases of children in the legal custody of private agencies ought not to be counted with the foster care cases.

Also credited to the reporting system were 6 cases of duplication due to the inclusion of reports received from both the juvenile court and the state institutions in connection with children released on parole from the institutions and placed in foster homes supervised by the court.<sup>42</sup> The reasons why such children should be reported twice do not seem to be valid. When a child is committed to a state institution by the court, he ceases to be a ward of the court, but instead becomes a state ward. It should be possible for the situation to operate in reverse. On release from the state institution the child should become the ward of the court. Both public agencies should not continue reporting the same child for the years that he may be on parole.

To modify this situation would require the amendment

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<sup>42</sup> If directly placed in a foster home from the state institution, the parolee is supervised by the county children's worker (if a boy) or by the Michigan Children's Institute (if a girl). However, parolees returned to their own homes come under the supervision of the juvenile court, through the county welfare agent, and may afterwards be placed in a foster home by the court.

of the law. In the present circumstances, the reports submitted by the state institutions should be excluded from the foster care records. As was pointed out in connection with the children's services cases, it is incorrect to regard service to a child as foster care service unless it entails responsibility for the care of the child. In providing aftercare supervision for state wards the juvenile court accepts the main responsibility for the care of the children and consequently is the resource really offering the foster care service.<sup>43</sup> Hence, only the reports submitted to the State Department by the juvenile court should be included in the foster care records.

## (2) The Foster Care Services

By far the majority of the duplications have been regarded as resulting from the practices of the foster care services. Ninety-six of the 150 agency relationships in the cases of duplication have been so classified. In Table 8 on page 57 the reasons for the duplications in this category are given in detail. They include Administrative Practices, Lack of Public Facilities, Inadequacy of Service

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<sup>43</sup> The relationship between the juvenile court and the state institution regarding responsibility for parolees of the institution is not clearly defined in the law. Ultimate responsibility for the parolee rests with the institution, but this responsibility is limited to determining the legal status of the child. The juvenile court is not permitted to discharge the parolee nor (if he is over 15 years old and commits a felony) to waive jurisdiction of his case to the circuit court. But the juvenile court is responsible for his care, including the selection of the type of care, the provision of funds and returning him to the institution.

Table 8. Relationships Causing Duplications Attributed to Foster Care Services

Agency Relationships	Number
Total .....	<u>96</u>
1. Administrative Practices .....	56
a. Catholic Social Service (Intake) - St. Vincent Home (Care) .....	56
2. Lack of Public Facilities .....	27
a. Juvenile Court (Funds) - Private Institution (Care) .....	22
b. M.C.I. (Funds) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	4
c. Juvenile Court (Funds) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	1
3. Inadequacy of Service .....	6
a. Independent Boarding Home (Care) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	4
b. Juvenile Court (Placement) - M.C.I. (Placement) .....	4
4. Professional Practice .....	4
a. Private Institution (Care) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	2
b. Private Institution (Care) - M.C.I. (Placement) .....	1
c. Private Agency (Placement) - Private Agency Branch (Placement) .....	1
5. Competition for Service .....	1
a. Private Agency (Placement) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	1

### Professional Practice and Competition for Service.

Most of the responsibility for these duplications has been attributed to the special administrative practices employed by some of the services. The Catholic Social Service-St. Vincent Home relationship, occurring in 56 instances, was the source of these duplications. Nothing further need be said of this relationship.

The cases subsumed under the heading, Lack of Public Facilities, are those in which either the juvenile court or the Michigan Children's Institute provided funds for the placement or institutional care of their charges by private agencies. It is not within the scope of this study to discuss the tenuous question of the expenditure of public funds by private agencies. However, it seems uneconomical for two agencies to be engaged in providing a service that can be, and is generally, performed by one. The mere practice of keeping two sets of records seems cumbrous.

Whether this situation can be remedied at the present time is another matter. The Michigan Children's Institute has already discontinued the practice, but the juvenile court which deals with a much larger section of the foster care population may not be in a position to end the plan with such dispatch.

Under 'Inadequacy of Service' have been listed the cases in which the service provided by one resource was replaced by similar service of reputedly superior quality from

another resource. In every instance, the latter resource was used because the former could not provide adequately for the case. Four of the cases were independent boarding home placements that were superseded by private agency placements, and a similar number involved juvenile court placements that were transferred to the care of the Michigan Children's Institute. In both examples, it is felt, the duplication could have been avoided if the children were properly placed from the start.

In four cases the reason for duplication was regarded as being due to standard professional practice. Three of these cases represented the removal of a child from an institution into a foster home as a step in the process of returning him to his own home, or preparing him for adoption. The other was an adoptive placement entailing the removal of a child from the custody of his natural parents and preparing him for adoption in another county. These practices were both consistent with recognized professional principles. It is the general feeling that institutional care, though necessary in some cases, should not constitute permanent care for the child. Efforts should be made to help the child to adjust to normal family living, and so a child is as a rule not kept for a prolonged period in an institution, but is removed to a foster home as he becomes better adjusted. As regards adoption, many agencies, because of the legal and emotional implications, do not place children for

adoption in the same district where the natural parents reside.

Only one case gave evidence of a competition between agencies for service. In this case, a large share of responsibility for the duplication should be placed on the parents of the child who were in conflict. However, it seemed that the agencies failed to get together for a while, thus allowing themselves to be used as a battleground for parental warfare.

### (3) Problems with Families

All of the cases of duplication could not be classified as resulting from the reporting system and the practices employed by the foster care services. It is felt that the familial circumstances and the individual needs of the children necessitated 21 of the agency relationships producing duplication. In the majority of these situations the parents of the children presented the problems experienced in providing foster care. In this category have been included cases in which the parent for his own reasons removed his child from one boarding home and placed him in another; and cases where the parent removed his child from an independent or agency home for the summer and returned him in the autumn when school began again.

Foster care agencies cannot afford to treat lightly their relationships with parents. Children do not, as a rule, give up their parents, even when they hate them. Thus,

Table 9. Relationships Causing Duplications Attributed  
to Circumstances and Needs of Children

Agency Relationships	Number
Total .....	<u>21</u>
1. Familial Circumstances .....	13
a. Independent Boarding Home (Care) - Independent Boarding Home (Care)	7
b. Same Independent Boarding Home (Care) Twice .....	3
c. Private Agency (Placement) Twice .....	3
2. Individual Needs .....	8
a. Juvenile Court (Custody) - M.C.I. (Observation) .....	4
b. Juvenile Court (Placement) - State Institution (Care) .....	3
c. Private Institution (Care) - State Institution (Care) .....	1



agencies must be prepared to put up with most of the whims of parents.

#### (4) The Children's Needs

There were cases served by more than one agency in which the main reason for duplication was undoubtedly the needs of the children. When children show signs of mental deficiency or severe emotional disturbance, the juvenile court usually refers them to the local child guidance clinic for diagnosis before disposing of their cases. However, in cases in which an evaluation is considered advisable before placement away from their parents, children are usually referred to the Michigan Children's Institute diagnostic center, though still in the court's custody. Other children with strong delinquent habits which make them unmanageable in a foster home or children's institution are often taken to the court in order to be committed to a state institution.

It may be argued that the latter group of children should have been sent to the state institution in the first place; or perhaps, that suitable placement might have obviated referral to a state institution if the cases were properly diagnosed. These reasons do not seem to be very substantial, in view of the unpredictable nature of most problem children.

The duplications caused by the referral of children to the Michigan Children's Institute by the juvenile court were not credited to the reporting system, because

in these cases the care of the child was only the temporary responsibility of the Institute. This care would revert to the court after diagnosis. As shown in Table 9 on page 61, only 8 of the 150 relationships have been considered to be caused by the needs of children. This is a consequence of the angle from which the relationships are observed. The duplications are the result of agency relationships, most of which, it is felt, can be avoided by changes in practices.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSIONS

The duplications in the records tell a fascinating story about the foster care services. They are objective evidence of the relationships made by agencies in carrying out the services for which they were established. These relationships may be examined, as has been attempted in this study, from various standpoints. For the purposes of planning and supervision the results of such examination are always valuable.

However, this study has been given a bias which must be kept in view. One of the main reasons for undertaking it was to throw light on a method for obtaining an unduplicated count of the children in foster care. What conditions must be observed in achieving such a count? It has been shown that only some of the duplications may be attributed to the reporting system - those resulting from the inclusion of certain reports in the foster care records. In this group are the 9 children's services cases, the 14 cases in which the juvenile court awarded legal custody of the child to a private agency and the 6 cases in which the court supervised parolees of the state institutions.

What of the remaining 97 cases? These have resulted from the practices employed by the foster care

services in response to administrative limitations of funds, personnel and facilities, to professional theory and to the special needs and circumstances of the children in need of foster care. It is not possible to eliminate these duplications from the statistician's desk. Perhaps a central authority possessing absolute control over all the services could so order the administering of foster care as to prevent all the duplications. To effect such centralization for the sake of eliminating the duplications would be to magnify the problem of duplication far beyond its deserts. The focus of foster care is the child, not the records. It would be a violation of accepted professional and administrative principles to impose a central control over the foster care services. Consequently, in looking for a way of obtaining an unduplicated count, one must turn in other directions than to changing the system of administering foster care services.

This does not mean that some modification of agency practices is not worthwhile. Table 6 on page 49 clearly illustrates this need. More of the agency relationships seem to be undesirable than to be valid. It must therefore be concluded that the number of duplications would be greatly reduced if more desirable administrative conditions prevailed. But there will still remain a fair number to be considered, and the aim of unduplicating is to obtain a figure that is free of all duplications.

It has been shown that changes in the records or in the foster care services do not provide the answer to the problem of duplication. And surely, the needs and circumstances of the children in care are not subject to arbitrary control and modification by the State Department. Therefore, one must seek a device that unduplicates the records after the reports from the foster care services have been received. To attain this it must be possible to identify all the children reported.

Is the information currently obtained from the report blanks prepared by the State Department sufficient to identify each child in foster care? This seems to be so. Each of the blanks calls for the name of the child, his birthdate, sex, race and religious affiliation. The name of his father and mother as well as that of the person possessing legal custody are also solicited. Moreover, information concerning referral to the agency offering service - the date of admission, source of referral and reason for referral - is requested. With all these data relating to the characteristics and circumstances of the child, it is possible to identify each child and to detect each case of duplication. Further, the reports from some of the services contain even more details than those listed above.<sup>44</sup> It would seem that a method could be devised for unduplicating

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<sup>44</sup> All reports except the EH-3 give the address of the child and the marital status of his parents.

the records without requesting more information from the foster care services than they already provide.

However, the reports have other functions to fulfill besides accounting for the children receiving service. They are expected to provide information useful for evaluating agency service and offering consultation. How well are these latter functions accomplished? The reports tell the type of home or institution in which the child is placed and the source of support. Along with the other data this information seems sufficient for purposes of evaluation and consultation.

The discussion above does not imply that changes in the report blanks are not to be desired. 'Streamlining' would probably improve the reporting system and make for easier processing. More thought should be given to the use made of the records and the way data is classified. However, these changes are not necessary as far as the purposes of reporting are concerned.

A major obstacle encountered in carrying out the study was the lack of a definition of foster care that was precise as well as adequate. This made classification difficult.

The usefulness of quantity statistics for community analysis depends to a large extent on a system of classification which groups agencies according to an overall design of basic problems and services....To a large degree this problem of classification stems from a lack of clarity within the services themselves about basic concepts, objectives and functions.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Esther M. Moore, "Service Accounting and Its Role in the Community", an address delivered at the National Conference of Social Work, 1951.

For the purposes of research, foster care must be rigorously defined in terms of its objectives, functions, services and responsibilities.

Research projects usually indicate new areas to be investigated. This study is no exception. The numerous unanswered questions connected with agency practices and relationships conceal a great portion of the story behind the duplications. Only by further study will the whole tale be known.

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## APPENDIX

Table A. Total Cases Reported to State Department by Child Caring Facilities and Number in Foster Care, Ingham County, 1954.

CASES	Reports Submit- ted (1)	Undupli- cated Count (2)	Dupli- cations (3)	Per Cent of Total (4)
1. All cases	1,689	1,406	215	15.3
2. Foster Care cases	1,031	882	126	14.3

Table B. Foster Care Duplications, Showing Times Reported and Agency Relationships

DUPLICATIONS	Number (1)	Reports (2)	Agency Relation- ships (3)
Total .....	126	276	150
1. Reported 2 times	103	206	103
2. Reported 3 times	22	66	44
3. Reported 4 times	1	4	3

Table C. Types of Boarding Care in Independent Boarding Home Program, Showing Per Cent of Duplications

TYPE OF CARE	Cases (1)	Dupli- cations (2)	Per Cent of Total (3)
Total .....	237	17	7.2
1. Day Care - Paid .....	168	10	6.0
2. Full-time - Paid .....	64)	7)	10.4)
	)	)	)
3. Full-time - Free .....	2)	-)	- )
	)	)	)
4. Full-time - Work or Wage ...	1)	-)	- )

Table D. Types of Agency Relationships in Cases of Duplication

Relationships		Number
Total .....		150
I. Collaboration between Agencies .....		127
1. Catholic Social Service (Intake) - St. Vincent Home (Care) .....	56	
2. Juvenile Court (Funds) - Private Institution (Care) .....	22	
3. Juvenile Court (Custody) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	11	
4. State Institution (Parole) - Juvenile Court (Supervision) .....	6	
5. County Children's Services (Casework) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	6	
6. Juvenile Court (Custody) - M.C.I. (Observation) .....	4	
7. Juvenile Court (Placement) - M.C.I. (Placement) .....	4	
8. M.C.I. (Funds) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	4	
9. Juvenile Court (Placement) - State Institution (Care) .....	3	
10. Juvenile Court (Custody) - Private Institution (Care) .....	3	
11. Independent Boarding Home (Care) - Children's Services (Casework) .....	3	
12. Private Institution (Care) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	2	
13. Children's Services (Casework) - Juvenile Court (Placement) .....	2	
14. Juvenile Court (Funds) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	1	
II. Succession of Service .....		23
1. Independent Boarding Home (Care) - Independent Boarding Home (Care) ....	7	
2. Independent Boarding Home (Care) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	4	
3. Same Private Agency Twice .....	4	
4. Same Independent Boarding Home Twice	3	
5. Same Children's Worker Twice .....	2	
6. Private Institution (Care) - State Institution (Care) .....	1	
7. Private Institution (Care) - M.C.I. (Care) .....	1	
8. Private Agency (Placement) - Private Agency (Placement) .....	1	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study of the duplications in the Ingham County foster care records has left a number of impressions which may be presented in the form of recommendations. Some of these recommendations represent action to be taken and others problems to be studied. All are not related to the question of obtaining an unduplicated count of the foster care population. A few are on the subject of the practices employed by the foster care services. Nevertheless, it is felt that achieving an exact count of the foster care population throughout the state should be an important concern of the State Department of Social Welfare. Further, that such a comprehensive figure could be obtained without affecting the figures currently computed of the children in the care of the various types of services.

(1) Already mentioned in the chapter on conclusions in the study is the need for a rigorous definition of 'foster care' which would make clear the distinction between foster care service and service in foster care. To do this might require a break-down of foster care into the number of functions considered to be essential components of this type of service.

The State Department is interested not only in the children in foster care, but also in the agencies providing

services for their welfare. In fostering the development of these agencies, a classification of the types of services offered and of the variety of relationships formed is of great importance. However, unless an adequate definition is realized, there is little validity in classifying the various services rendered by the child welfare agencies. If an agency has not accepted responsibility for the care of a child and does not directly offer or supervise such care, it should not be regarded as performing foster care service.

In accordance with the suggestion above,

a) The County Children's Services cases should not be included in the foster care records, because the service offered by this program does not include responsibility for the care of the child in foster care.<sup>1</sup> In all cases an agency or home independent of the county children's services provides the care.

b) The Juvenile Court should not be credited with the foster care of the child for whom all it does is to provide funds or award legal custody, while a private agency undertakes his care.

c) On the other hand, the Juvenile Court and not the state institution should be regarded as the agency providing foster care to the parolee from the institution

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<sup>1</sup> An exception should be made, as is explained later, in regard to the cases of parolees from state institutions placed and supervised by the children's services. At present such cases are not credited to those services.



whom the court supervises and places in a foster home.

d) Similarly, the County Children's Services and Michigan Children's Institute should be credited with providing the foster care in cases of parolees from the Boys' Vocational School and the Girls' Training School placed directly in foster care on release from the institution.

In these cases, the county children's services and the Michigan Children's Institute are responsible for finding the foster homes and supervising the parolees. All that the institutions furnish are the funds. However, the practice employed at the present time in recording these cases is the reverse of the one recommended. The care of parolees under the supervision of the county children's services and the Michigan Children's Institute is credited to the state institutions. This is because parolees are not discharged from the institutions and technically are still wards of the institutions. The definition recommended in the study determines foster care in terms of responsibility for actual care rather than responsibility for providing funds or for ultimate control. However, a different definition would be acceptable, provided that it lends itself to application in classifying the services rendered to children in foster care.

(2) Apart from being uneconomical, it seems to be poor administration and harmful to the child for two agencies to perform a service that can be adequately rendered by one.

All of the agency relationships which are responsible for the duplications in the records ought to be examined from this viewpoint. The service rendered by the juvenile court in deciding legal custody of the child cannot be performed by a non-judicial body. But the cases in which the court provides the funds and a private agency the service violates good administrative practice. As long as a public agency is financially implicated, it must maintain records and prepare reports concerning the expenditure of the funds it provides. In the cases in question, if the court had its own services or transferred its cases to another public agency, or completely to a private agency, there would be no need for duplicate recording.

In Ingham County the juvenile court operates its own placement service, but often finds it convenient to place in institutions children who are difficult to place.

a) When placed in a private institution the child is apt to be 'forgotten' by the court and placement with a foster family is unduly postponed. This is a situation likely to occur whenever a child is placed in an institution, private or public. The placement service of the juvenile court should be stimulated to remove as early as possible children placed temporarily in institutions.

b) However, the main problem is developing more public facilities to provide foster care services. The Michigan Children's Institute should be expanded in order to be of

more assistance to the courts in placing children needing care apart from their own families. Further, it should relieve the juvenile court of the necessity of making its own adoptive placements. It is unlikely that the court can perform its function of impartial arbiter in processing adoptions if it is itself implicated in arranging the adoptive placements.

(3) The relationship between the Catholic Social Service and the St. Vincent Home for Children is not very clearly defined and seems to be changing in the direction of a merger. This is a desirable trend and should be encouraged by means of consultation. There are many examples in the state of sectarian agencies offering both placement service and institutional care for children. It is the general feeling that better service can be given by such agencies and for less cost.

(4) The county children's services should make it a rule to advise all independent boarding home parents with whom they have contact to report the children in their care to the State Department. As has been pointed out, all the children in foster care reported by the children's services would also be reported by an agency or boarding home, if this rule were strictly observed. It appears that in Ingham County more than two-thirds of the children in boarding care served by the county children's services were not reported by the boarding parents.

(5) The study has drawn attention to one of the differences in results between agency care and independent boarding home care, a question which is already the source of some concern. There is considerably more duplication in the private agency records than in the independent boarding home records. The reasons for this can be discovered only by further study. A comparative study of private agency care and independent boarding home care would be very useful for future planning and would perhaps make a significant contribution to the administration of foster care service. In carrying out such a study,

a) The children served by the two types of services should be examined with regard to their characteristics, the problems which they present, and their familial relationships.

b) The types of care offered by the two services should also be studied. 'Care' should be examined in terms of its variety, standards, the relationships with natural parents, foster parents and the child. The information obtained should be correlated with observations secured from the study of the children.

c) The use of community resources by these services should be investigated. It is important to know how many resources are used, what types, how they were used, and what responsibilities were accepted by the resources and what by the agency providing the care.



It is considered good practice when one agency assumes responsibility for the care of the child but uses the services and facilities of other resources in the community in order to enhance this care. If this practice were always employed, a child would not be reported more than once in the same year, except in cases where care from one source succeeded care from another source. However, most of the duplications in the records were not a result of a succession of service, but rather of a collaboration between agencies. Does this mean that responsibilities are not clearly defined when more than one agency gives service to the same child?

#### An Unduplicated Count

The need for an unduplicated count of the children in foster care in Michigan has already been explained. For purposes of interpretation, planning and consultation, such a count is of great importance. However, the way to achieving it bristles with difficulties. In the first place, the child welfare agencies and the boarding homes which report to the State Department of Social Welfare render a variety of services to children in foster care. Deciding which of these services are foster care and which are ancillary resources is no simple matter. Whichever decision is made would require a number of adjustments both in the method of reporting and in the method of processing the reports. Secondly, the current reporting system of the State Department

does not account for all the children in foster care and it is perhaps impossible to obtain a complete count. An unduplicated count is of little value unless all the children to be accounted for are included. The reporting by the independent boarding homes, even when licensed, is known to be incomplete. Since the number of children in independent care is considerable, this laxity on the part of the independent boarding homes may not be overlooked.

In the recommendations which follow, methods for dealing with the two problems described above are outlined. The questions of defining foster care and of obtaining adequate reports from independent boarding homes affect the procedures for securing an unduplicated count of the children in foster care. They must therefore be given prior attention.

The Child Welfare League of America in its studies of foster care agencies makes a distinction between primary and secondary service. Primary service constitutes responsibility for actual care, that is, for meeting the day to day needs of the child in care outside his own home. Secondary service includes a variety of supplementary activities, such as casework counseling, providing funds, responsibility for determining legal status and work with natural parents. This distinction is useful for the present study. If adopted, it would prevent the care of any child in a foster home or institution from being credited to more than

one agency. The resource providing the home and responsible for the care within the home would be regarded as the agency rendering the foster care service.

In such case, the following change would have to be made in the blanks prepared by the State Department for reporting by the child welfare agencies. A new item 'Type of Service Given' should be included. As is customary, this item should be further broken down into the main types of services rendered by the agencies, such as furnishing home, providing funds, etc. In ~~the~~ processing the reports, the agency responsible for providing the home should be credited with rendering the foster care service. The introduction of a new item may not be possible on the IBM card currently used without further alteration of the report blanks.

In connection with reporting by the independent boarding homes, it is suggested that at the end of each year a circular letter should be sent to each home licensed by the State Department requesting that the boarding parent name any foster child in the home at December 31. This type of cooperation from boarding parents should not be very difficult to obtain.<sup>2</sup> However, the help of the

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<sup>2</sup> When the foster care studies were being carried out by the Joint Legislative Committee between 1949 and 1951, 95 per cent of a sample of 611 boarding homes replied to questionnaires distributed to them. Of the remaining 5 per cent the majority represented homes that were already closed by the time that the information was needed. Thus, only 2 percent did not respond.



county children's workers could be enlisted in securing the needed information from boarding homes that did not respond to the circular. It should not be too great a task to the children's workers to find out by means of telephone or home visit the whereabouts of children in the independent boarding homes in their districts at the end of the year. Indeed, this contact may result in the establishment of a beneficial relationship.

The present reporting system as far as independent boarding homes are concerned provides for reporting of children on admission to and at removal from the home. Reporting on admission is not always done; at removal it is very often not done. The result is that the whereabouts of many children who have been in independent boarding homes are not known until or unless they are reported as being admitted to another home. Reports that are incomplete are of little use. The circular letters recommended above should improve the situation considerably and may be put into effect immediately without much trouble, even if the methods for obtaining an unduplicated count described below are rejected.

The method that seems best for obtaining an unduplicated count of the children in foster care seems to be a central registration of all children reported. In this system, each child reported would be listed and given a number before other information contained in the report is

processed. Should the same child be reported more than once in the same year he would be given the same number. In order to identify the child, his other stable characteristics besides his name, such as birthdate, sex, race and name of natural parents would also be listed. Lest difference of spelling should prevent recognition, phonetic spelling should be used in recording the name. Any of the numerous phonetic systems that have been invented may be employed.

The introduction of central registration is perhaps inevitable in the long run. It would require the employment of an additional clerk. While it would give an exact count of the number of children reported and of the number in foster care, it would not solve the problem of determining the number of children in foster care by various agencies. Further, the inadequate reporting by the independent boarding homes and the juvenile courts would ruin the accuracy of the count obtained.

In the circumstances, and until central registration is attempted, it is felt that the present method of finding out the whereabouts of children on the last day of each year can be put to good use in assessing the number of children in foster care at any time during the year. An investigation of the number of children in foster care in Ingham County on the last day of each month in 1954 revealed that the foster care population was relatively stable

throughout the year.<sup>3</sup> Figures from four agencies were used - the juvenile court, Michigan Children's Aid Society, Catholic Social Service and the St. Vincent Home. These agencies catered for well over 90 per cent of the children from Ingham County reported as being in foster care by child welfare agencies. The independent boarding home reports were considered too unworthy for investigation. There was a gradual increase of the number of children in care from January to December, with the average monthly figure for each agency falling somewhere between May and August. It seems reasonable therefore that the figure taken at December 31 is representative of the foster care population as well as indicative of the trends in the service.

However, if this figure is to be used, it would be necessary to insure more definitive reporting on the part of the agency of the whereabouts of the child at December 31. In the present system any of the reporting agencies which gives service of any type to a child in foster care would report the child as being in foster care and would be credited with providing this service. It is suggested that when the annual listing is sent out the child welfare agency should be asked to state whether the child reported is in the agency's own home or institution, or in the home or institution of another agency. If this is done and the count is made of only those children reported by the agencies

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<sup>3</sup> See Tables 1 and 2 on pages 14 and 15.

as being in the agencies' own homes or institutions, a reasonably accurate total of the children in foster care on the last day of the year would be achieved. This figure would be as useful for purposes of interpretation, planning and consultation as any that could be obtained by the use of a central registration system introduced at the present time. Moreover, it would truly represent the trend in the foster care population.

Table 1. Children from Ingham County in Foster Care  
at the End of Each Month of 1954.

By Agencies in Ingham County

MONTH	Agency		
	Juvenile Court	Catholic Social Service - St. Vincent Home	Michigan Children's Aid Society
Average	181.5	61.5	74.75
1. January	160	50	73
2. February	169	60	73
3. March	176	62	75
4. April	176	61	75
5. May	177	63	81
6. June	176	62	79
7. July	185	66	77
8. August	181	61	75
9. September	190	60	77
10. October	185	64	74
11. November	200	66	74
12. December	203	63	67 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> The drop in the M.C.A.S. total at December 31 is due largely to the discharge of a family of 5 children during the month. This is not a usual occurrence. As may be observed, the M.C.A.S. caseload is relatively stable throughout the year.

Table 2. Children from Ingham County in Foster Care  
in Four Quarters of 1954, by Ingham County Agencies

Quarterly figures represent mean of totals for  
3 months

AGENCY	Quarter			
	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Total	299.3	316.6	323	332
1. Juvenile Court	168.3	176.3	185.3	196
2. Catholic Social Service - St. Vincent Home	57.3	62	62.3	64.3
3. Michigan Chil- dren's Aid Society	73.6	78.3	75.3	71.6





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