

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF BRANT

Report of a Study Made at the Request of

The Board of the Society

by

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I. Introduction

This study was undertaken at the request of the Board of the Children's Aid Society of Brant. The terms of reference were set out by the Board at a meeting on April 2nd, 1959, as follows:

- "1. An assessment of present services in terms of need, extent of services, quality of services, and efficiency of planning and operation of program.
2. A special assessment of Protection services, their need, and extent having regard to other services in the community.
3. Long term planning around
 - Developing needs
 - Staff requirements
 - Receiving Home accommodation
 - General Office accommodation
4. Administrative organization of Society's services."

At the request of the consultant, the Board set up a special Committee to work with her, with Mr. C. B. Gladman as Chairman, and Mr. J. W. Passmore (President), Mr. A. L. Binkley, Mrs. H. A. Cowes, Mrs. W. B. Hall, Mr. T. J. Johnson and Mrs. J. O. Trepanier as members. This committee has contributed greatly to the study, in its discussion of tentative findings and in its direction to the consultant on numerous points. The consultant also wishes to convey her sincere appreciation

to all the staff for their full and wholehearted co-operation, and particularly to the Director, Mrs. Fox, the Supervisor, Mrs. White and the Office Secretary, Miss Muir. Every request for information or discussion has met with immediate co-operative response, although the time and energy demanded to meet the requests have imposed a heavy burden on very busy people. Officials of other organizations, such as the Provincial Child Welfare Branch, The Brantford Community Welfare Council, and The Brantford and Suburban Planning Board have provided valuable assistance on certain points.

II. Major Findings Regarding Present Services

The study made of the Children's Aid Society of Brant shows that the organization is providing a very valuable service to the community, and fulfilling adequately the functions for which it has assumed responsibility. The over-all picture is probably above the average of all the Societies in Ontario, if this can be judged by those services in which a numerical comparison is possible.

The findings include recommendations to improve the administrative organization and to raise the quality of service to a level even higher than that at present offered. No major changes are suggested. Most of the recommendations are formulations of the staff's own thinking and planning in their desire to improve continually their own work; some of them have already been considered by the Board in its similar desire. This summary only includes the major recommendations: others are incorporated in the report, in which will also be found the reasons for the suggestions.

A. Findings requiring action by the Board.

Staff:

1. That the staff be increased by 1 assistant supervisor and 1 field worker.

The assistant supervisor is required to relieve the present supervisor who is seriously over-burdened. It is suggested that he should supervise two or three of the field staff, and, under the direction of the supervisor, be the Intake worker. This would also relieve field workers who now share Intake duty. This position requires a

41. That a room in the office building be furnished suitably as a playroom for the "showing" of children for adoption.
42. That a second adoption worker be appointed and that each be given a defined geographic area, giving probationary supervision to children placed in the homes studied by her.

E. Indian Services.

The agreement to give child welfare services to the Indian Reservation was made in November, 1957, and became effective in practice on January 1st, 1958. One worker is assigned to take the major responsibility and is the liaison with the Indian Council. He also works closely with the Indian Health Services and with the regional staff of Indian Affairs. When unmarried mothers are referred to his attention, the unmarried mothers worker gives the service, and the same procedure applies to adoptions. Although the worker continues to carry a few cases of non-Indian boys whom he had in his previous caseload, this has in each instance been done for a special reason.

This organization of the work is quite satisfactory. It provides on the Reservation one person who is known in the community as the child welfare worker and hence does here what has been suggested for the county work. The public relations in this new service is of course of the utmost importance in determining the ability to give service and seems to be building up satisfactorily. The choice of a worker for this particular position has been good.

During the last year the worker has, in addition to providing child welfare services, been responsible for the investigation of families requiring financial assistance, and recommendations regarding this to the Indian Council. This function has been an advantage in helping him establish his position on

the Reserve. With the new arrangements with the Province for the provision of financial assistance, this function has been assumed by a relief officer. The effect of this change upon the work of the Society's worker is not yet evident, but it is realized that it may affect the acceptance given him, particularly in protection services.

At the beginning of 1958, 16 children placed in foster care as non-wards by the federal authority, were transferred to the supervision of the Society and all have remained in non-ward care since that time. This has had the effect of increasing substantially the statistics of the Society for the number of non-wards, the total days care, and the average length of stay of children in care. Other children have been admitted during the year, and 24 were in care on January 1st, 1959. Indian children were given a total of 6,391 days care during the year. On June 1st, 1959, 29 Indians were in care, 2 of whom were permanent wards, 7 temporary wards and 20 non-wards. Some children who are in non-ward care would have been made wards if they had not been Indians: the Society has hesitated to take the cases to Court because of the attitudes of the Indians to such action. The staff are concerned that the lack of wardship gives less control to the Society and that the foster parents do not understand that the Society has the control over the children: it is an open question whether Court action and the taking of wardship would in itself change the concept of the foster parents of their role with the children and in relation to the Society. It is more likely that this can only be accomplished through patient, time-consuming demonstration of what Society control and supervision means.

The problems faced by the Society are reported to be further complicated by the experience of the Indians with the Mohawk Institute, which seems to have a different philosophy of child welfare, and of the practices of the R.C.M.P. on the Reserve in regard to juvenile delinquents, which seems to differ from

those of the local police in the non-Indian community.

The culture of the Indians gives a connotation to "family" and "community" different from that in the non-Indian cultures; it gives a different value system which is reflected in their concept of child welfare. Indian experience has built up certain attitudes to law, the Courts, and authority which must be recognized in providing child welfare services. At the same time, children in need of care outside their own homes and for whom foster care is the desirable plan, should be placed, as at present, in Indian foster homes in their own community. The Society must be content to work slowly and carefully on the problems of adapting its services to the needs of the Indian children, realizing that if the community is antagonized no service will be helpful. Its work would be simplified if the various non-Indian groups whose work affects the welfare of the children were presenting to the Indians a common concept of child welfare and were working co-operatively towards this end. Discussions initiated by the Society between the various groups would be helpful in accomplishing this purpose.

The Society as a whole and the workers involved in providing the services will require an extensive knowledge of the culture and attitudes of the Indians on the Reserve. The particular worker is conscious of this need, and is seeking to develop his knowledge. The Board has wisely brought Indian representation into its membership. The federal workers have also been helpful in this. It would be valuable for the Board to appoint a special Committee to study and evaluate the progress made and to bring into its deliberations at suitable points representatives of the other non-Indian groups. The Indian representatives on the Board should of course be regarded by the Board and the workers as one of their chief sources of greater understanding.

Recommendations:

43. That the Board consider the appointment of a special Committee to study and evaluate the services to Indians, and to bring into its deliberations at suitable times representatives of other groups providing child welfare services on the Reserve.