

# Provisions for the Protection of Children in Sweden

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*In the fall of 1957, under a reciprocal exchange program sponsored by the United Nations, the author spent some time in Belgium and Sweden studying the provisions in those countries for the protection of children. This article continues the presentation, begun in the June issue, of the information on protective legislation for children thus collected; it is concerned specifically with the details of Sweden's provisions.*

**P**UBLIC programs for the protection of children are in operation in most European countries. The provisions of two nations—Belgium and Sweden—were surveyed by the author in 1957, under the United Nations Reciprocal Exchange Program for the study of social work. The first of two articles reporting the results of the survey appeared in the June issue of the BULLETIN<sup>1</sup>; it gave background information on the programs in both countries and described the Belgian provisions in some detail.

The survey showed that, although the Swedish and Belgian programs are alike in some respects, they differ markedly in the method of approach. Belgium, as reported in the earlier article, depends primarily on court procedures, and Sweden provides protection for children almost entirely through administrative agencies and without court procedures. Sweden's provisions are summarized below.

## Administrative Responsibility

The central authority in Sweden for the administration of social legislative measures for the protection of children is the Royal Social Welfare Board in the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, and Housing. County or provincial boards represent the Royal Board within each of the 26 counties. County councils, which are elected bodies, are responsible for administering certain facilities—such as children's institutions—that serve an entire county. The local child welfare committees in each of the 1,037 local districts (cities and rural districts) carry the basic, mandatory responsibility for the protection of children.

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Emery, "Provisions for the Protection of Children in Belgium," *Social Security Bulletin*, June 1958.

The protection of children is one of several responsibilities carried by the Royal Social Welfare Board. It is responsible for relations between employers and employees—that is, questions concerning the right of association and negotiation, labor agreements, collective agreements, and labor disputes; social welfare—public assistance, child welfare, juvenile protection, general children's allowances, maternity assistance, social domestic assistance, housewives' holidays, the care of inebriates, and temperance welfare; and other questions of an essentially social character, including collection of statistics concerning wages and the cost of living.

The Board is presided over by a director-general and is made up of seven members, each one the head of a separate bureau. In addition, there is a Conciliation Office, which handles labor disputes.

One of the seven bureaus is the Child Welfare Bureau. In general, the functions of this Bureau are (1) to provide advice, guidance, and stimulation to local child welfare committees in improving their programs for the protection of children, (2) to administer grants (subsidies) for specific purposes, (3) to inspect all children's institutions and camps, and (4) to serve as the administrative unit of highest appeal in certain situations, such as those involving maternity and children's allowances or disputes between a local committee and a county board with respect to taking children for "protective upbringing" against the wishes of the parents.

The Child and Youth Welfare School Bureau is another bureau of the Board. It is responsible for the direction of the 22 child and youth welfare schools for juvenile delin-

quents set up by the Swedish Government under the Child Welfare Act, as well as the boardinghomes for after-care of children placed in these schools. The head of the Bureau serves as the Government inspector of the schools, and he must approve the application of the local child welfare committee for a child's admission. The Bureau supervises the care, education, and training given in these schools and homes, distributes the State grants among them, and reviews their administration.

## County Boards

The county board, subject to the authority of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, and Housing, is responsible for the proper administration of services for the protection of children. In carrying out its child welfare responsibilities, each board has a public assistance and child welfare counselor (also referred to as social welfare consultant) and a child welfare assistant. The counselors are appointed jointly by the directors of the social welfare and child welfare bureaus of the Royal Social Welfare Board. There is one child welfare assistant for each county, but a counselor may serve more than one county.

The duty of the counselors is to assist the county boards with the administration of public assistance, child welfare, and juvenile protection measures on the local level, primarily by rendering advice and information during inspection visits in the local districts. The child welfare assistants are principally responsible for the supervision of children's institutions and the care of foster children.

In most counties there is a child welfare worker, assigned by the Child Welfare Association, which is a national voluntary agency. These workers locate foster homes for all children for whom the local child welfare committees request this service. After placement, the child is supervised by the local committee.

The elected county council is responsible for developing and submitting to the Central Government a plan for organizing the care in child

welfare institutions within the county. The plan must contain provisions for children's homes in such a number and of such nature that the requirements of various kinds of institutional care within the area will be supplied in a suitable manner. Not only public institutions but voluntary institutions that are receiving public funds come under the plan. In most counties, the public institutions are usually county institutions.

The local child welfare committees in each of the 1,037 local districts are responsible for the care and protection of children. They handle, without judicial procedure, the functions usually performed by juvenile courts in the United States.

Even though many local committees have no paid staff, the evaluation of trained social workers is usually brought to bear with respect to three major types of decisions made by the committees:

1. Whether to take a child for "protective upbringing" without the consent of the parents. The county board is required to review each decision of this kind made by a local committee and may order the committee to take different measures.

2. Whether to place a child in an institution. Before admitting children, all institutions must notify the child welfare assistant of the county board, who reviews the placement plan for each child and may suggest one that is more suitable. The assistant works closely enough with the institutions to be able to suggest removing the child when such an action is indicated. All institutions must report regularly on the children receiving care.

3. Whether to place a child in foster-family care. Children are usually referred to the child welfare worker of the Child Welfare Association for such placement.

### Day Care

Three types of day care are used—play schools for the care of children aged 4-7 for a few hours each day, day nurseries for children aged 3 months to 7 years whose mothers are employed, and afterschool homes for children of school age whose mothers are employed.

Government funds to help finance day care are available to local dis-

tricts, foundations, voluntary associations, and industrial concerns. The requirements for receiving the grants are approved premises, special training of the superintendent of the institution, approved regulations, approved plan of activities, continual medical supervision of personnel, and continual medical supervision of the institution. The Government pays one-third of the basic salaries of qualified personnel (to qualify, 2 years' special training in work with preschool children is required). At present the Government pays no part of the building costs in this program.

The number of day-care facilities as of July 1, 1957, and the auspices under which they operate are shown below.

Type of facility	Total	Number operated by—		
		Child welfare committee	Industry	Private individual
Total.....	965	861	33	71
Day nursery.....	193	172	20	1
Day nursery and play school.....	69	67	1	1
Day nursery and afterschool home.....	14	13	1	-----
Day nursery, play school and afterschool home.....	31	31	-----	-----
Play school.....	587	507	11	69
Play school and afterschool home.....	43	43	-----	-----
Afterschool home.....	28	28	-----	-----

On July 1, 1957, the day nurseries had space for 644 infants (aged 6 months to 1 year), 1,500 children aged 1-2, about 3,440 children aged 2-4, and 10,460 children aged 4-6. The play schools could take care of 31,300 children, and the afterschool homes could take care of 2,500.

At present, the Government grants pay about 10 percent of the actual cost of day-care facilities; local funds, about 70 percent; and fees from parents, about 20 percent.

Special day-care programs are provided in Lapland and in South Sweden. Lapland's special problems arise from the fact that crops grow rapidly in its climate and the entire community must join in the work at harvest time. The need for day nurseries is great, particularly as families tend to be larger in that area than in other parts of Sweden. To meet this need, the Central Government pays 60 per-

cent of the cost for about 60 day nurseries, which are in operation for 6 weeks each summer. The standards for these nurseries are more flexible than for those that operate throughout the year. A similar plan is carried out in South Sweden, in the sugar-beet area, during periods in both the spring and the fall when women help with the sugar-beet work.

### Institutional Care of 'Normal' Children

For the past century Sweden has had a considerable number of children's homes, most of them privately endowed and managed by independent societies, voluntary organizations, or foundations. In recent decades a number of homes have also been established by local authorities.

A law was passed in 1945, designed to provide a uniform system and higher standards for the institutional care of children. Under the legislation, each county council area must have a plan for the institutional care of normal children, and the county councils have been made responsible for this care. The plans must provide for an adequate number of different types of children's institutions.

The county councils are responsible for establishing and running the homes under the plan, unless some other authority or organization undertakes to do so. The county councils must also provide the funds, if no money is available from other sources, for maintaining the voluntary homes that come under the plan and that serve the entire area.

The plans for children's institutional care are approved by the Government. Similarly, the establishment of a children's home requires the permission of the Royal Social Welfare Board; the location, accommodations, and equipment of the home must meet standards that will ensure the satisfactory care and upbringing of the children. With respect to space, minimum specifications are set for sleeping rooms, playrooms, and dining rooms. Isolation rooms for sick children must be provided, with at least 1 bed for every 7 children in the home. The quality of the management and staff, as well as the finances of the home, are taken into consideration to ensure an adequate standard of operation.

The comprehensive plans include homes for infants less than a year old, maternity homes, reception homes for children aged 1-16, and homes for permanent care for children aged 1-16 who cannot or should not be placed in a private family. The infants' homes usually accommodate 20-30 infants; the maternity homes, about 15 mothers with their newborn infants; the reception homes, 20-30 children; and the homes for permanent care, 10-15 children. In October 1956 the infants' homes in Sweden had space for 1,085 children; the maternity homes could accommodate 433 mothers with their infants; the reception homes, 2,488 children; and the homes for permanent care, 662 children. When the maternity homes are excluded, the three types of homes for children had places for a total of 4,235 children. Almost ten times that number (about 39,200) were receiving foster-family care in 1954—the latest year for which the data are available.

The supervision of children's homes is carried out by the local child welfare committee, by the county government, and by the Royal Social Welfare Board. Local committee action is restricted to protests and eventual reports to the county government. The county government can prescribe necessary improvements or prohibit the continued care of a special child in a special home when this care does not seem consistent with the child's well-being. The Royal Board is empowered to revoke the operation permit given for a home.

Grants-in-aid towards the cost of building and equipping children's homes are based on a stipulated amount per child (at present 9,000 kronor).<sup>2</sup> Operating grants, related to the number of days of residence and the number of children (at present 1.50 kronor per day and per child), are made towards the maintenance of the homes.

Most of the children placed in these institutions are in the care of a local child welfare committee, which pays 3 kronor per day for each child. The rest of the running cost is covered by the owner and/or the county council. The money paid by the child welfare

<sup>2</sup> The value of the kronor in United States money is about 20 cents.

committees is later collected from the children's parents in those rare cases when they are economically able to pay for their children's care.

A child welfare committee may take on the care of a child for many reasons, including the mother's illness, undesirable home conditions, neglect, moral danger, and delinquency. In infants' homes and in reception homes the children stay only a short period (4 months, on the average, and at most 1 year), until the responsible authority has been able to decide if the child can be returned to his own home. If the child cannot be returned to his family in the near future, another placement must be made. The placement is generally with a private family; only those children who for various reasons cannot be placed in foster homes are received in homes for permanent care.

The number of children's homes of various types that were in operation on July 1, 1956, is shown below.

Type of home	Number operated by—			
	Total	County council	Local area committee	Society or foundation
Total.....	207	91	56	60
Infants' homes....	35	19	12	4
Maternity homes..	25	11	7	7
Maternity and infants' homes..	7	4	2	1
Reception homes..	96	42	29	25
Reception and infants' homes..	1	-----	1	-----
Homes for permanent care....	43	15	5	23

### Treatment of Delinquent Youth

The local child welfare committees have responsibility for the care and protection of all children, including delinquent youth. Many of the measures taken by these committees are preventive in nature. Frequently the committees are actively responsible for work in youth centers, clubs, afterschool homes, and other establishments for recreation and leisure-time activities. In some cities, Government subsidies have been used to set up child guidance clinics. Important preventive measures may take the form of admonition to the parents or a warning to the child, medical treatment, vocational guidance, job place-

ment, and encouraging membership in organized group activity.

In most cases where preventive measures are prescribed, the committee also provides direct supervision of the child. This supervision corresponds to probation in the Anglo-Saxon countries; however, the supervisor is often a nonprofessional person, who assumes responsibility for the case on a volunteer basis. A committee usually applies preventive measures under supervision before deciding to take a child into its custody for protective upbringing.

Delinquent children under age 12 are usually placed in foster-family homes. The majority of juvenile delinquents over age 12 who need institutional care are placed in one of the 22 "youth welfare schools," operated by the Royal Social Welfare Board.

Although the committee makes the formal decision on protective upbringing, it must apply to the chief inspector of the youth welfare schools to secure admission for a child. The request for admission is reviewed by a special committee in the Child and Youth Welfare School Bureau of the Royal Social Welfare Board. This committee consists of the inspector, a psychiatrist, and a social welfare officer.

Each youth welfare school has a local board, responsible for the care and treatment of the pupils and for administration and finances. The staff consists of a director, one or more educators, several teachers, therapists, and wardens, and clerical and domestic personnel. Every school has a visiting psychiatrist.

Each child coming to a youth welfare school is very closely observed during the first 3 months to determine his needs and appropriate treatment. After this observation period the local board, the director, and the psychiatrist report to the chief inspector, who studies their suggestions and decides on the child's final placement. Most children remain in the school to which they are originally sent, but occasionally it may be necessary to transfer them to another school, a hospital, or a specialized institution (for epileptics, for example, or for mentally retarded individuals). An investigation may also show that there is no need for institutional care,

and the child may therefore be sent back to his own family or to a foster home. The local board makes the decision on the conditional or final release of the pupils.

For children under age 15, there are six school-homes for boys and one for girls. The maximum number permitted in any home is 50, though most homes have from 20 to 30 pupils. The classes are small, with an average of 10-15 boys or girls. The final certificate is equivalent to that given in ordinary schools. Although no mentally deficient children are accepted in these schools, there are always some backward children and children with certain serious reading or writing difficulties; such children are taught in special classes. Boys with high intelligence are sent to a special school, where they are helped to complete their education in higher schools in the neighboring town.

The eight schools for boys over age 15 have from 30 to 50 pupils, who live in cottages (2-4 in each school). Lovsta, the specialized school for psychopathic boys, receives 80 boys of all ages, who are housed in several cottages. The boys go through the same regular training that is offered by public vocational schools. Instruction is given in metalwork, carpentry, tailoring, farming, and gardening, and some schools also have special repair shops for automobiles or for farm and forestry machinery. One school trains boys to become cooks. For the many who are unable to benefit from vocational training, the work is organized more along the lines of occupational therapy.

Each of the seven schools for girls is concerned with a special category of problem. These schools are smaller than those for boys, averaging from 20 to 30 pupils. Only one, Ryagarden, which is the school for the most difficult cases, is equipped for as many as 60 girls. The training is similar to that given at the rural schools in home economics—that is, general instruction in domestic science, sewing, dressmaking, gardening, and laundry-work. All the schools teach various handicrafts, such as weaving, needlework, painting, and ceramics, mostly in the form of occupational therapy. One school trains girls to become bakers, and another—to which the most gifted girls are sent—offers an

academic course corresponding to that given in the first year at adult continuation schools, as well as a commercial course. In addition, special shorter courses—in typing or child care, for example—are given in some schools.

Most of the older children (aged 18-20) are referred to special schools, qualified to deal with certain problems more peculiar to this group, such as vagrancy, "work shy" behaviour, alcoholism, and general antisocial conduct. Pregnant girls or young mothers for whom care in ordinary maternity homes is not advisable because of delinquency are referred to a special establishment. In addition to vocational training, provision is made for the general education of the pupils and for a large variety of leisuretime activities.

All corporal punishment is forbidden. If necessary, a pupil may be confined to his bedroom or to a special isolation room for no more than 3 days if he is over age 15, and for 6 days at most if he is over age 18. Other disciplinary methods are restrictions on various privileges, such as furlough or pocket money, that are otherwise granted.

To improve the treatment of the most difficult cases among children aged 15-18, four of the schools have recently started to operate secluded cottages, each housing eight boys. Although the time limit for the stay in such a cottage is 2 months, most boys are transferred to the other cottages after a shorter period. Ryagarden, the special school for girls, also has a small secluded department for short-term treatment.

At the present time, the Child and Youth Welfare School Bureau has about 1,800 children under its care. About 1,300 are boys, and 500 are girls. About 750 are in the schools operated by the Bureau. The remainder are under supervision in other types of care.

The Bureau also operates 11 hostels, all of them for boys. There are 10 boys in each—half of whom are receiving "aftercare" following a stay in one of the youth welfare schools. The other boys come voluntarily and live in the hostel while working or attending school.

The Bureau has a staff of five after-care consultants; all of them are so-

cial workers and previously worked in one of the Bureau's schools. These consultants are assigned to geographical districts and supervise the hostels in their district and the youth who are placed for aftercare in boarding homes or wage homes or for whom other arrangements have been made. Each child has a "supervisor," most of whom are volunteers. These supervisors report to the consultant concerning the particular child.

### *Recreation for Mothers and Children*

The Child Welfare Bureau and the local child welfare committees participate in carrying out measures to provide recreation for mothers and children. Since 1946, Government funds have been available for travel to summer camps or on a privately arranged holiday for children and their escorts. Similarly, expenses are paid for housewives traveling on a privately arranged holiday or to holiday centers approved by the Royal Social Welfare Board; they may receive payments to facilitate their holiday arrangements. Government funds also go toward the operation of children's summer camps and the holiday centers for housewives. In addition, grants are made to special organizations that place children with private families for vacations.

Major changes have taken place in Sweden's program for summer recreation for children since 1946, the first year this program was regulated by the Government.

One of the most significant developments is the great increase in the use of family homes for vacations for children. In 1946, slightly more than 2,000 children were placed with private families for vacations, and in 1956 the number had increased to almost 19,000. Government grants for this purpose totaled 100,000 kronor in 1946 and 850,000 kronor in 1956. This development represents a change in philosophy, closely related to the increase in the number of employed mothers during these years. It is believed that many children, especially children of working mothers, receive greater benefit from a vacation in a family home than in group care.

Summer camps are not included in the "institutional plan" that each

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**Table 2.—Contributions and taxes collected under selected social insurance and related programs, by specified period, 1941-58**

(In thousands)

Period	Retirement, disability, and survivor insurance				Unemployment insurance		
	Federal insurance contributions <sup>1</sup>		Federal civil-service contributions <sup>2</sup>	Taxes on carriers and their employees	State unemployment insurance contributions <sup>3</sup>	Federal unemployment taxes <sup>4</sup>	Railroad unemployment insurance contributions <sup>5</sup>
	Retirement and survivor	Disability					
Fiscal year:							
1941-42	\$895,619		\$190,498	\$170,012	\$1,093,900	\$119,944	\$84,738
1942-43	1,130,495		334,278	208,795	1,217,737	158,361	102,710
1943-44	1,292,122		445,951	267,065	1,353,272	179,909	121,518
1944-45	1,309,919		486,719	285,038	1,251,958	184,544	131,993
1945-46	1,238,218		528,049	282,610	1,009,091	179,930	129,126
1946-47	1,459,492		481,448	380,057	1,001,504	184,823	141,750
1947-48	1,616,162		482,585	557,061	1,007,087	207,919	145,148
1948-49	1,690,296		553,461	563,833	988,965	222,850	9,816
1949-50	2,106,388		662,262	550,172	1,094,406	226,306	18,855
1950-51	3,120,404		684,343	577,509	1,364,590	233,537	24,681
1951-52	3,594,248		722,850	734,990	1,431,997	258,945	25,734
1952-53	4,096,602		744,646	619,959	1,367,806	276,557	25,066
1953-54	4,589,182		464,363	603,042	1,246,230	285,135	27,656
1954-55 <sup>6</sup>	5,087,154		469,856	600,106	1,142,009	279,986	23,720
1955-56 <sup>6</sup>	6,442,370		808,207	634,323	1,328,722	324,656	34,043
1956-57 <sup>6</sup>	6,539,849	\$337,199	1,171,155	616,020	1,537,127	330,034	77,858
1957-58 <sup>7</sup>	7,268,709	924,680	1,258,730	575,307	1,500,397	335,878	99,891
1957							
June <sup>6</sup>	471,013	65,737	53,437	52,048	12,409	1,586	8,577
July	365,882	38,768	51,752	19,359	173,916	754	765
August	829,053	112,664	75,757	83,581	283,805	882	11,065
September	433,600	54,899	102,791	53,858	10,495	623	12,650
October	341,408	34,791	118,472	30,740	116,175	726	810
November	626,362	80,422	100,782	68,796	195,684	739	10,173
December	345,063	42,822	123,493	49,177	12,067	687	13,830
1958							
January	267,657	36,189	121,885	18,721	78,772	53,272	532
February	886,581	119,443	113,282	77,722	136,658	269,024	7,935
March	598,151	74,963	103,610	42,977	8,651	4,691	15,176
April	747,075	83,350	121,330	17,051	179,064	1,685	810
May	1,128,413	154,760	107,369	70,197	296,553	1,651	9,883
June <sup>7</sup>	699,462	91,609	118,205	43,129	8,559	1,143	16,263

<sup>1</sup> Represents contributions of employees, employers, and the self-employed in employments covered by old-age and survivors insurance, and beginning January 1957, disability insurance; beginning December 1952, adjusted for employee-tax refunds; beginning May 1951, includes deposits in the trust fund(s) by States under voluntary coverage agreements; beginning January 1951, on an estimated basis, with suitable subsequent adjustments.

<sup>2</sup> Represents employee and Government contributions to the civil-service retirement and disability fund.

<sup>3</sup> Represents deposits in State clearing accounts of contributions plus penalties and interest collected from employers and, in 3 jurisdictions, contributions

from employees; excludes contributions collected for deposit in State temporary disability insurance funds. Data reported by State agencies.

<sup>4</sup> Represents taxes paid by employers under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act.

<sup>5</sup> Beginning 1947, also covers temporary disability insurance.

<sup>6</sup> Except for State unemployment insurance, as shown in the *Final Statement of Receipts and Expenditures of the U.S. Government*.

<sup>7</sup> Preliminary.

Source: *Monthly Statement of Receipts and Expenditures of the U.S. Government* and other Treasury reports, unless otherwise noted.

**CHILDREN IN SWEDEN**  
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county council must submit annually. About half of them are operated by public authorities, and half by voluntary organizations or individuals. There are special camps for deaf, spastic, and asthmatic children. Some of these are new camps, and others are long-established camps that have changed their programs to provide specifically for one of these groups of children. One factor in the 1946-56 drop in the number of camps is that some of the camps operating in

1946 were unable to meet the new standards that went into effect that year.

Anyone who wishes to start a camp must notify the Royal Social Welfare Board. The Board provides information and advice at this stage but has no authority to require the meeting of standards before the camp is in operation. If the camp does not meet standards after it starts operating, however, the Royal Board can close it.

The local child welfare committees are responsible for inspecting camps in their respective local districts.

They have no authority to require change in the camp's program. If they believe change is needed, they report this to the county board, which can order the camp to improve. If improvement does not take place, the situation is brought to the attention of the Royal Board, which can close the camp if necessary. The Royal Board develops standards and makes available information and advice, but it does not supervise the camps directly except when problems arise concerning a camp's continued operation.