

Children From Public Assistance Families Who Receive Child Welfare Services

by HELEN R. JETER*

The Social Security Act provides for the protection of the Nation's children through several programs, and some children benefit from more than one of these programs. A child can receive aid to dependent children, for example, and also a dependent's benefit under the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program. Child welfare services under the Social Security Act are also provided for some children who are in families receiving public assistance. The characteristics of children who were receiving such services in the spring of 1961 and who were identified as members of assistance families are reported in the following pages.

IN THE SPRING of 1961 the Children's Bureau undertook a study of the characteristics of children receiving child welfare services from public and voluntary child welfare agencies in the United States. For the purposes of the study, the definition of child welfare services developed by the Advisory Council on Child Welfare Services¹ was used—

Those social services that supplement, or substitute for, parental care and supervision for the purpose of: protecting and promoting the welfare of children and youth; preventing neglect, abuse and exploitation; helping overcome problems that result in dependency, neglect or delinquency; and, when needed, providing adequate care for children and youth away from their own homes, such care to be given in foster family homes, adoptive homes, child-caring institutions or other facilities.

Reports were received from all the States except Alaska. The sample represented 377,000 children receiving services from public welfare departments in the early months of 1961.

One of the questions asked in the study was whether the child receiving service from a public welfare agency was living in a family receiving a public assistance payment or, if he was in foster care, whether he had been placed from a family on

* Division of Research, Children's Bureau. The report is based on preliminary data from the Bureau's 1961 study of the characteristics of children receiving child welfare services.

¹ *Report of the Advisory Council on Child Welfare Services, Eighty-sixth Congress, second session, Document No. 92, page 3.*

the assistance rolls. The public welfare departments indicated in their replies that about 98,000 children, or 27 percent of all those for whom this information was given, were identified as members of families receiving some type of public assistance (table 1). About 65,000 or 18 percent were members of families getting aid to dependent children.

Children identified as members of families receiving other types of public assistance represented much smaller proportions of the total. For those whose families were on the general assistance rolls, the number was fairly substantial (26,000); 2,000 belonged to families receiving aid to the permanently and totally disabled; and 1,400 were members of families with old-age assistance payments.

A similar study of children receiving child welfare services was made in 45 States in 1959. At that time only 19 percent of the children were identified as members of public assistance families and only about 14 percent as members of families receiving aid to dependent children.

For the 41 States reporting in both years, the number of children whose families were receiving aid to dependent children rose 59 percent—from 27,546 to 43,745 (table 2). Increases in child welfare services for such families were reported, moreover, in all these States except the District of Columbia and Kentucky.

STATE VARIATIONS

There was wide variation among the States in the proportion of children reported to be receiving child welfare services who were members of public assistance families—from 2 percent in the District of Columbia to 58 percent in Idaho (table 1). The median percentage was between 24 percent and 25 percent, and the States nearest the median were North Carolina, Iowa, Vermont, Arizona, Ohio, and Wyoming. Idaho, Montana, Michigan, and Washington had the highest percentages, and the District of Columbia, Mississippi, South Dakota, and Massachusetts had the lowest percentages.

WHEREABOUTS OF CHILD

At the time of the study, 35 percent (or about 23,000) of the 65,000 children identified with families receiving aid to dependent children had already been removed from their homes and were in foster care. Most of them were in foster-family boarding homes.

TABLE 1.—Number of children receiving child welfare services from public child welfare agencies and percentage distribution by family receipt of public assistance payments, 1961

State	Total number of children receiving child welfare services from public welfare agencies	Percentage distribution ¹				
		Members of families not receiving public assistance	Members of families receiving public assistance, by type of assistance			
			Total	Aid to dependent children	General assistance	Other
United States ² ...	377,117	73	27	18	7	2
Alabama.....	11,505	68	32	29	(³)	3
Arizona.....	2,966	77	23	19	3	1
Arkansas.....	2,172	83	17	13	2	2
California.....	7,810	42	58	46	10	2
Colorado.....	4,238	72	28	23	5	2
Connecticut.....	6,200	68	32	18	14	(³)
Delaware.....	1,637	66	34	23	9	2
District of Columbia.....	4,580	98	2	2		
Florida.....	4,232	78	22	18	2	2
Georgia.....	5,065	81	19	12	4	3
Hawaii.....	1,286	81	19	13	4	2
Idaho.....	298	42	58	54	2	2
Illinois.....	6,348	71	29	14	13	2
Indiana.....	12,751	86	14	9	4	2
Iowa.....	3,153	67	33	18	13	2
Kansas.....	2,497	83	17	9	7	1
Kentucky.....	5,915	69	31	23	2	5
Louisiana.....	8,786	85	15	12	1	2
Maine.....	3,580	59	41	19	17	5
Maryland.....	10,384	82	18	15	2	1
Massachusetts.....	5,870	93	7	4	2	(³)
Michigan.....	2,952	51	49	7	40	2
Minnesota.....	21,285	66	34	19	14	(³)
Mississippi.....	16,435	83	17	13	(³)	4
Missouri.....	5,269	54	46	40	1	5
Montana.....	1,136	50	50	34	14	1
Nebraska.....	1,840	64	36	15	19	2
Nevada.....	510	88	12	11	(³)	1
New Hampshire.....	2,224	59	41	5	35	2
New Jersey.....	8,440	84	16	8	7	2
New Mexico.....	2,515	73	27	22	1	4
New York.....	40,740	72	28	18	8	3
North Carolina.....	20,445	75	25	21	2	3
North Dakota.....	3,392	81	19	14	4	1
Ohio.....	28,248	77	23	13	9	1
Oklahoma.....	3,167	78	22	21	(³)	1
Oregon.....	7,172	55	45	29	14	3
Pennsylvania.....	24,437	66	34	15	17	2
Puerto Rico.....	10,096	64	36	25	6	5
Rhode Island.....	1,779	54	46	35	8	4
South Carolina.....	6,076	80	20	16	3	2
South Dakota.....	1,057	84	16	13	2	1
Tennessee.....	6,017	66	34	31	1	3
Texas.....	2,724	81	19	11	6	1
Utah.....	1,953	62	38	32	4	2
Vermont.....	2,103	74	26	11	10	5
Virgin Islands.....	549	89	11	8	3	1
Virginia.....	13,535	89	11	7	2	1
Washington.....	8,181	53	47	37	7	2
West Virginia.....	8,020	70	30	25	3	2
Wisconsin.....	13,160	71	29	18	9	1
Wyoming.....	387	73	27	11	13	3

¹ Percentages rounded independently and may not add to totals.
² Excludes Alaska; no report received.
³ Less than 1 percent.

The remaining 65 percent were in their own homes or in the homes of relatives. About 10 percent were living with both parents, 38 percent with the mother only, and 2 percent with the father only. The proportion living with one or with both parents was considerably larger among families receiving

TABLE 2.—Number of children receiving child welfare services from public child welfare agencies who were identified as members of families receiving public assistance payments, in 41 reporting States, 1959 and 1961

State	1959	1961
Total, 41 States ¹	27,546	43,745
Alabama.....	2,489	3,302
Arizona.....	356	512
Arkansas.....	69	249
Colorado.....	598	974
Delaware.....	129	362
District of Columbia.....	623	50
Hawaii.....	20	168
Idaho.....	65	160
Indiana.....	715	987
Iowa.....	360	526
Kansas.....	86	224
Kentucky.....	3,560	1,251
Louisiana.....	274	1,029
Maine.....	232	600
Maryland.....	844	1,459
Michigan.....	125	192
Minnesota.....	1,691	4,052
Mississippi.....	1,399	2,236
Missouri.....	1,248	2,075
Montana.....	96	383
Nebraska.....	188	273
Nevada.....	27	53
New Hampshire.....	7	104
New Mexico.....	157	515
North Carolina.....	2,990	4,143
North Dakota.....	106	466
Ohio.....	1,126	3,379
Oklahoma.....	346	656
Oregon.....	1,201	1,991
Puerto Rico.....	2,017	2,303
Rhode Island.....	155	582
South Carolina.....	549	944
South Dakota.....	125	141
Tennessee.....	1,016	1,827
Texas.....	217	291
Utah.....	143	579
Vermont.....	130	220
Virgin Islands.....	12	42
West Virginia.....	1,233	1,950
Wisconsin.....	809	2,354
Wyoming.....	13	41

¹ States reporting in both years.

TABLE 3.—Percentage distribution¹ of children receiving child welfare services from public child welfare agencies, by whereabouts, 1961

Whereabouts	All children receiving services	Children from ADC families
Living with parents.....	37	50
Both parents.....	17	10
Mother.....	17	38
Father.....	3	2
With independent living arrangements.....	1	1
Living with relatives.....	7	11
In adoptive home.....	6	2
In foster care.....	47	35
In foster-family home.....	35	26
In group home.....	(²)	(²)
In institution.....	12	9
Elsewhere or not reported.....	1	1

¹ Percentages rounded independently and may not add to totals.
² Less than 1 percent.

aid to dependent children—50 percent—than it was for all children receiving child welfare services—37 percent (table 3). Eleven percent of the children who were identified with families receiving aid to dependent children were living with relatives other than a parent, and 2 percent were in adoptive homes.

MARITAL STATUS OF PARENTS

For children in families receiving aid to dependent children, the marital status of parents differed considerably from that for all children receiving child welfare services (table 5). Only 15 percent

had parents married and living together; and 47 percent had parents who were divorced, separated, or deserted. The comparable proportions for the entire group receiving child welfare services were 27 percent and 35 percent.

The proportion whose parents had died was, however, the same for both groups—14 percent. The proportion with parents not married to each other was also the same—24 percent.

PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS

The outstanding problem reported for the children from families receiving aid to dependent

TABLE 4.—Number of children receiving child welfare services who were identified as members of ADC families, by whereabouts and by State, 1961

State	Total	Living with parents			With independent living arrangements	Living with relatives	In adoptive home	In foster care			Elsewhere or not reported
		Both parents	Mother	Father				Foster-family home	Group home	Institution	
United States ¹	65,229	6,667	25,065	1,464	519	7,256	955	16,754	85	5,546	914
Alabama.....	3,302	457	1,578	114	10	488	31	373		217	31
Arizona.....	512	77	276	28	4	81	4	32		4	4
Arkansas.....	249	28	101	9		32		65		10	5
California.....	3,495	310	1,455	130	30	370	45	1,085	5	50	15
Colorado.....	374	375	425	8		133		33			
Connecticut.....	1,084	34	79			62	6	651		158	96
Delaware.....	362	18	119	3		21		169		33	
District of Columbia.....	50		20							20	10
Florida.....	728	32	176	72	8	80		336		24	
Georgia.....	575	55	125	10		125	10	165	5	80	
Hawaii.....	168	14	4	2	4	16	16	104		6	2
Idaho.....	160	2	153			3		2			
Illinois.....	828	24	88	4	8	44	40	520		88	12
Indiana.....	987	19	304			285	19	190		133	38
Iowa.....	526	88	251	21	11	49	4	50		51	4
Kansas.....	224		32	4		8	20	84		72	4
Kentucky.....	1,251	131	634	26	16	99	5	136		183	21
Louisiana.....	1,029	54	223	23		69	38	576		47	
Maine.....	600	47	200	7	7	87	20	214		21	
Maryland.....	1,459	170	708			127	14	368		56	14
Massachusetts.....	250	10	40			20	40	120			20
Michigan.....	192	16	64	4		36	8	56		8	
Minnesota.....	4,052	309	2,937	60	20	289	30	339		50	20
Mississippi.....	2,236	487	1,339	77	11	321					
Missouri.....	2,075	173	1,273	59	30	312	59	129	20	15	5
Montana.....	383	21	127	1	3	33	16	26		4	2
Nebraska.....	273	32	125	1	5	39		16		48	7
Nevada.....	53	1	6		9	18	2	14		3	
New Hampshire.....	104		12			12	8	56		16	
New Jersey.....	580		120	10	30	20	20	260		120	
New Mexico.....	515	20	170	15	15	70	25	170	5	5	20
New York.....	7,041	356	575	55	27	164	110	4,191		1,506	54
North Carolina.....	4,143	442	1,539	91	20	805	80	583	30	533	20
North Dakota.....	466	40	251	5	5	65	5	65		20	10
Ohio.....	3,379	402	1,398	40	40	342	40	603		421	90
Oklahoma.....	656	50	483	11		72		38			
Oregon.....	1,991	93	1,163	9	37	335		326		27	
Pennsylvania.....	3,170	294	693	84		189	21	1,323		546	21
Puerto Rico.....	2,303	484	705	221	21	273		85	11	401	107
Rhode Island.....	582	66	204	3	9	63		147		75	15
South Carolina.....	944	136	357	10		315	10	63		42	10
South Dakota.....	141	9	64	2	2	37		14		3	10
Tennessee.....	1,827	254	885	56		179	66	226	9	132	18
Texas.....	291	54	147	12		30	15	21		9	3
Utah.....	579	66	315	6	6	42	6	126		6	6
Vermont.....	220	12	108			64		28		4	4
Virgin Islands.....	42	5	23			5		7			2
Virginia.....	934	31	145	21		52	31	582		73	
Washington.....	2,899	169	1,398	50	71	320	36	767		66	24
West Virginia.....	1,950	390	900	90	10	160		300		70	30
Wisconsin.....	2,354	310	541	10	50	391	50	911		80	10
Wyoming.....	41		7			4	5	14		11	

¹ Excludes Alaska; no report received.

TABLE 5.—Percentage distribution¹ of children receiving child welfare services from public child welfare agencies, by marital status of parents, 1961

Marital status of parents	All children receiving services	Children from ADC families
Married and living together.....	27	15
Divorced.....	16	24
Separated or deserted.....	19	23
Father dead.....	6	8
Mother dead.....	6	5
Both parents dead.....	2	1
Parents not married to each other.....	24	24

¹ Percentages rounded independently.

children was neglect, abuse, or exploitation (table 6). For 40 percent, or 26,000 children, one of these situations was reported to be the principal problem. This is probably the explanation for the high proportion who were no longer in their own homes and had been placed in foster care. If second and third problems were to be tabulated for this group, the proportion of those neglected, abused, or exploited would be even higher, as in many cases neglect was reported as an additional problem.

Twenty-nine percent of the 26,000 children who were reported as neglected, abused, or exploited had separated or deserted parents. More than one-fifth were the children of parents who were not married to each other. Although 24 percent of the children had parents who were not married to each other,

TABLE 6.—Percentage distribution¹ of children receiving child welfare services from public child welfare agencies, by principal problem presented, 1961

Principal problem	All children receiving services	Children from ADC families
Neglect, abuse, or exploitation of child....	36	40
Conflict in parent-child relationship.....	5	7
Parents not married to each other.....	7	5
Pregnant girl or unmarried mother.....	2	2
Child in need of guardianship.....	8	5
Emotional or behavior problem of child....	9	9
Child in conflict with law.....	4	3
Child's adjustment after return from foster care.....	1	1
Illness of parent.....	9	10
Illness of child.....	1	1
Financial need.....	5	7
Unemployment of father.....	1	1
Employment of mother.....	(2)	(2)
Inadequate housing.....	1	(2)
Mental retardation of child.....	4	3
Physical handicap of child.....	3	2
Child of agricultural migrant.....	(2)	
Other problems, not specified.....	6	4

¹ Percentages rounded independently.

² Less than 1 percent.

this was the principal problem, according to the reports, for only 5 percent of the children. About 2 percent or 1,300 were themselves unmarried mothers.

PRINCIPAL SERVICES

For about a third (21,000) of the children identified with families receiving aid to dependent children, the principal child welfare service given was casework service related to problems of the child's behavior, parent-child relationship, or other problems of the child's adjustment to himself, his family, and his community (table 7).

TABLE 7.—Percentage distribution¹ of children receiving child welfare services from public child welfare agencies, by principal service given, 1961

Principal service	All children receiving services	Children from ADC families
Adoption service.....	10	3
Foster-care service.....	35	27
Other casework service:		
Related to problems of child's adjustment	21	33
Protective service.....	12	20
For youth in conflict with law.....	2	1
For unmarried mother.....	2	2
Other services.....	7	7
Purchase, payment, or legal custody only.....	12	5

¹ Percentages rounded independently.

The principal service for about one-fifth (13,000) was related to the neglect, abuse, or exploitation of the child—that is, protective service. For approximately 27 percent (18,000) of the group, the principal service reported was casework service to a child in a foster-family home, a group home, or an institution. An additional 2,000 children who were in foster care were receiving other services.

The distribution of child welfare services to the entire group of 377,000 children and to the 65,000 children who were members of families receiving aid to dependent children is shown in table 7. The proportions receiving adoption services and foster-care services were smaller for children belonging to assistance families than for the entire group, as might be expected, and the proportions receiving casework services related to problems of the child's adjustment and to protective services were larger.