

*Future Citizens All: A Report on Aid to Dependent Children**

The American Public Welfare Association, because of the widespread and growing interest of the general public in the aid to dependent children program and the need of data not otherwise available, began early in 1950 to develop plans for an intensive survey of the program through the cooperation of its agency members. The major objectives of the study were to describe in considerable detail the families that have received aid to dependent children and to evaluate what has happened to the children in these families. This article summarizes the report; its presentation is intended solely as a service to readers of the Bulletin.

AID to dependent children in the late years of the depression of the 1930's and throughout the past decade has been a means of keeping together the families of an estimated 6 million children. Early in 1950 the American Public Welfare Association began developing plans for an intensive survey of the program. It was recognized that the real tests of the efficacy of aid to dependent children are the degree to which it has fulfilled the objectives embodied in the Social Security Act and the extent to which the needs of children are being met through the program.

Information was obtained in the fall of 1950 and early in 1951 on more than 6,500 families who had been receiving aid to dependent children for at least 6 months and for whom payments had been terminated in the survey month. These families included nearly 19,000 children. The public welfare departments of 40 States participated in the survey.

The children's community and home environment were studied, as well as the nature and duration of the crisis that brought the family

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to the need for financial assistance and the characteristics of the mother or homemaker who cared for the children while the family was receiving aid to dependent children. Information was also collected on family income, housing conditions, health care, education, social behavior, and employment.

One of the major findings of the survey was that the great majority of the children have made remarkably good adjustments as they have progressed toward adulthood and full citizenship. More substantial income, increased educational opportunities, and social casework services could alleviate many of their remaining problems. The indications of anti-social behavior among these children were slight; the evidence of real accomplishment in the face of great handicaps was strong.

From Family Crisis to Termination of Aid

The status of these families that had been receiving aid to dependent children was examined with particular attention to three periods that were significant for the purposes of the survey. These intervals were identified as (1) the crisis period (from the date of the crisis that led to the dependency to the date of the first assistance payment), (2) the assistance period (the time during which the family was receiving payments), and (3) the period at or following termination of assistance.

The children helped by the pro-

gram have been needy children who were deprived of parental support or care by reason of the death, continued absence from the home, or physical or mental incapacity of one or both of the parents. Most often (in 25 percent of the cases studied) the families became dependent because of the father's incapacity. Nineteen percent of the families were in need because the father had deserted. In 18 percent of the families the father had died, but death of the father has come to be the cause of crisis for fewer and fewer families as other income-maintenance programs have become available to meet their needs. In 11 percent of the families studied, the mother was unmarried.

Desertion and the birth of children out of wedlock were reported as the crisis causing the need for assistance much more often among nonwhite families than among white families; death and incapacity were more common crises in the white families. Death or incapacity precipitated the family crisis more often in small communities; the larger the community, the more likely it was that family conflict caused the problem. The preponderance of Negroes in the sample for large urban areas and the greater availability in cities of other resources—such as general assistance, old-age and survivors insurance benefits, and child placement services—account for part of the difference.

More than half the families began receiving aid within less than a year following the family crisis; only 1 out of every 6 families received their first assistance payment more than 4 years after the crisis. Most of the families in the study were young families when the crisis arose; in 35 percent the oldest child in the home was under age 6, and in 31 percent the oldest child was between the ages of 6 and 12. In 18 percent of the families the oldest child was under age 6 when the assistance payment was discontinued, and in nearly

half the families the oldest child was under age 12.

The composition of the family constitutes an important element in the social environment of the dependent child. Two families out of 5, at the time of the crisis, were made up only of the homemaker and one or more children; in 1 case in 5 there was also a spouse in the family. The family circumstances were practically the same at the time aid to dependent children was first received, and they had changed only slightly when assistance was terminated. Slightly more than 1 in every 5 families had both homemaker and her spouse present in the home on all three dates. One family in 3 was made up of some other combination of relatives, and only rarely were there nonrelatives in the home. Between the crisis period and the assistance period there was a change in the family makeup in 23 percent of the cases studied.

The occupation of the father is, of course, an important determinant of the family's socio-economic status. Fathers in the families receiving aid to dependent children were most often in the lower-ranking occupations at the time of the family crisis; only 1 percent were professional and semiprofessional workers and only 6 percent could be called white-collar workers. About a fifth were craftsmen or foremen. The fathers of these families, more frequently than employed men in the general population, were farm laborers, sharecroppers, or other unskilled laborers. About half the mothers had a usual occupation at the time of the crisis; a relatively large proportion were in white-collar clerical and sales positions and in domestic service.

It is clear that aid to dependent children has generally not created an attitude of continuing dependency among these families by keeping them on the program for a long time. One family in every 5 was separated from aid to dependent children before the end of the first year; only 11 percent had received aid for as long as 7 years. The median length of time assistance was received was 25 months; it would have been less if the study had included the families that had received assistance for less

than 6 months. Families broken by the death of a parent more often required a relatively long period of assistance; unmarried mothers required it for a slightly shorter period than the median period for all the families studied.

The various reasons why assistance was discontinued indicate the nature of the families and the extent and methods of their recovery from the period of family crisis. Three-fourths of the families were no longer in financial need, as determined by agency budgets, when separated from aid to dependent children. For those families that had become self-supporting, the most frequently reported reason was employment or increased earnings of one or more members of the family other than a parent. In 1 case in every 5 the family had become independent as the result of support from a returned parent or of the reemployment of an incapacitated parent or the remarriage of the mother. In a few cases, receipt of old-age and survivors insurance benefits by some member of the family made the termination of aid to dependent children possible.

Twenty-five percent of the families were still in need of assistance when aid was terminated. For this group the reasons for termination centered around the fact that the family no longer met eligibility requirements set up by State or Federal legislation.

Homemakers and Homes

Since one objective of aid to dependent children is to keep needy children deprived of parental support in their own homes with their mother or other close relative, an evaluation of the program rests partly on a knowledge of the homes the program preserves. In three-fourths of the families receiving aid, the homemakers fell in the age range 25-54. Forty percent of them were married and living with their husbands, many of whom were disabled. The proportion who were widowed, divorced, deserted, or separated was high, since these situations were often the crises that made the families dependent. The homemaker was the mother of the dependent child in 91 percent of these families; for white families the percentage was 93, for

Negroes it was 86, and for other races, 89.

The employment status of many homemakers changed between the crisis period and the assistance period. Of 682 homemakers employed full time in all or part of the crisis period, two-thirds were able to devote full time to the task of homemaking during the assistance period. More than a thousand homemakers had part-time jobs all or part of the crisis period, but less than 700 had this employment status in the assistance period. About 87 percent of those who had not worked in the crisis period did not have employment later. Generally there was considerable shifting from employed status to unemployed; there was slightly less shifting from unemployed to employed status and from irregular, part-time work to more regular, full-time work. In 31 percent of the families with the homemaker employed, care during the assistance period for children under age 13 was provided by the homemaker while she was employed in the home.

The median size of families considered in the study was 4.1 members for white families and 4.0 for nonwhite families, while the median size of the assistance group on the basis of which the payments were determined was 3.1 for white families and 2.7 for the nonwhite families.

While physical aspects of housing may not be determining factors in normal family living, they are conditioning factors. To measure the physical adequacy and comfort of housing, the survey considered the number of persons per room and the possession of selected housing conveniences. The homes of the assistance families were less crowded than might have been expected for a low-income group. The median number of persons per room for all families in the study was 1.0, for white families it was 0.9, and for nonwhite families, 1.2. The nonwhite families had more than 1.5 persons per room—the dividing line between adequate and crowded housing—about twice as often as white families. For both white and nonwhite families, crowded housing occurred less often in the large communities.

The housing conveniences considered were electricity, inside running water, and private inside flush toilet. Only slightly more than half the families had all three major conveniences; one-fifth of the homes had only one. The proportion of families with each of these conveniences was higher in the cities than in small communities and was higher among the white households than among the nonwhite families.

Income

When aid to dependent children was not realizing its primary purpose, the reasons appeared to be essentially economic. Methods of determining the amount of the assistance payment vary considerably from State to State and in several States from county to county. Standard budget requirements according to size and composition of family have been set by State departments of public welfare. There are State variations also, though to a limited extent, in the needs included in the budget and wider variations in the amount allowed for specific budget items.

The financial resources of a family, such as earned income, old-age and survivors insurance benefits, and contributions from relatives, are deducted from the standard budget requirements of the family. The resulting deficit determines the assistance payment to the family, with certain exceptions growing out of the general financial ability of the State and its willingness to support public welfare. At the time of the survey, between one-fourth and one-third of the States did not meet the deficit in full but made payments sufficient to bring a family's total income up to a certain percentage of its budget requirements. Furthermore, about half the States have maximums for payments to each eligible individual, and several States have maximums for total family payments.

Families in the cities fared better than those in the small communities; the median assistance payment per family ranged from \$80.20 in cities of 500,000 or more to \$36.45 in communities of less than 300 persons.

Just before the termination of assistance, the median income per person of the families in the sample

(income from all sources, including the assistance payment) was approximately \$30 a month; on this basis, a mother with two children had to manage on \$90 a month. The range in median income per person, regionally, was from \$21.76 in the Southwest to \$39.33 in the Far West.

Families that had relied entirely on the assistance payment had a lower median income per person than did all other families receiving aid to dependent children. This difference was particularly evident in regions where the income level of the assistance families was generally low. In these areas the ratio of families relying solely on aid to dependent children to all other families in the study was also low, which suggests that there was a necessity in these localities for the assistance families to secure outside income of some sort—possibly at the expense of adequate child care by the homemaker or of essential schooling for older children. Since the families that relied entirely on the assistance payment did not differ significantly from the other families on the rolls as to size of family, size of community, and age of children, it appears that the income differences cannot be explained on the basis of variations in these factors. Higher budgeted maintenance cost for employed individuals in the assistance group is a partial explanation.

About 90 percent of the families in the sample had yearly incomes (assistance payment and income from all other sources) of less than \$2,000 at the time assistance was terminated. For some of these families the income may have been larger than it had been during all the period they were receiving aid to dependent children. Seventy percent of the families had incomes of less than \$1,500 a year, and about 40 percent had less than \$1,000 a year.

Lower incomes per person tended to be associated with large families in which no employable adult or older child was present rather than with small families. Incomes per person were lower also among rural families, families with young children, and families living in regions with comparatively low per capita income for the general population.

Families in which the mother had a skilled or white-collar occupation received higher income per person; the income per person was lower in families in which the mother had no usual occupation. The presence of an incapacitated father in the family tended to lower the monthly income per person since some States do not include the needs of the father in the budget and since the necessity of caring for him may sometimes have prevented the mother from holding a job.

The median monthly income per person, as well as the median assistance payment, was smaller with each additional child included in the payment, to the point that the median income per person in families with six to nine children in the assistance group was only \$19.16. This situation was the effect of such factors as relatively fixed costs of rent and utilities, of maximum limits on the assistance payments in some States, and of possible resistance of public opinion to family payments that equal or exceed wages.

Associated with lower incomes per person receiving aid to dependent children were such factors as overcrowded housing, lack of housing conveniences, inadequate schooling of children, and retardation of children in school.

Educational Progress of the Children

In general, it was found that young persons who had formerly been receiving aid to dependent children and who were aged 18 or over at the time of the study had not made the same progress, educationally, as those in the general population. More significant was the finding that educational handicaps were associated with certain undesirable factors in the social situation of the families. More than two-thirds of the children had not been graduated from high school; only about half of all children in the country had so limited an education. The children aged 8-17 in the families receiving aid to dependent children also had failed to make as good progress in school as other children. Twenty-five percent of the boys aged 8-17 were educationally retarded 1 year, and 27 per-

cent 2 years or more; of the girls, 24 percent were 1 year behind the average, and 19 percent, 2 years or more. Successful achievement in school was found to be associated with urban residence, better housing, higher occupational status of older children, more awards and recognition for the children, less delinquency and child neglect, and better health care. The children on the rolls who were retarded in school or who had left school after completing only a few grades were found more often in rural areas, were more poorly housed, were concentrated in the unskilled or semiskilled occupations if they had an occupation at all, had fewer awards and other types of community recognition, were more apt to be delinquent or neglected, and had received poorer health care.

Indicators of the Children's Welfare

The survey examined certain other factors that reflect the extent to which aid to dependent children affects the welfare of these children. It cannot relate all significant causes to specific effects, but it can point to significant relationships and to areas for concentration of further study and effort in finding ways of preventing dependency.

More than 85 percent of the children on the assistance rolls—91 percent of the white children and 69 percent of those of other races—were reported to have been born to legally married couples. Eleven percent of the children had been born out of wedlock before the family began receiving aid to dependent children, but only 3.4 percent since the family began receiving assistance. Four percent of the children were born out of wedlock of a stable, nonlegal union and 10.5 percent of a nonstable, nonlegal union.

More of the illegitimate children than those born in wedlock were born in large urban centers and in overcrowded housing conditions; they received assistance for a longer time and more often have been still in need when assistance was terminated, lived in homes where the homemaker was employed, and were educationally retarded.

Only 1 percent of the children on the aid to dependent children rolls had been involved in a child-neglect hearing before assistance payments began, and only 2 percent since the receipt of aid. The program's success in keeping children in their own homes is indicated by the fact that fewer than 7 percent of those under age 18 were not residing in the family home at the time assistance was terminated.

Vaccination for smallpox is a fundamental protective procedure that is widely accepted as essential for a child before his first birthday, but 57 percent of the children aged 1-5 in the survey group and 13 percent of the children aged 6-11 had not been vaccinated. A relatively high incidence of diphtheria was reported for the children in assistance families; the annual rate per 1,000 under age 18 appears to be 17 times the average national rate for all children. Fewer than half the children aged 6-17 had had dental care during the preceding 12 months, in comparison with an estimated two-thirds of all children of school age. Unmet medical needs during the preceding 9 months were reported for about 10 percent of the children under age 18, and more than half of those aged 1-5 had not had four well-child medical examinations during the first year of life.

The incidence of delinquency among children in assistance families has been surprisingly low in view of the fact that these children come from the most deprived stratum of American society and have been living in broken homes or homes with an incapacitated father or mother—factors that might be expected to be associated with delinquent behavior. A roughly computed annual rate for juvenile delinquency among the children aged 7-17 in this group shows that they compare favorably with the children in the general population in this respect—9 per 1,000 as compared with 12 per 1,000.

Delinquents among the children receiving assistance, compared with the other children in the survey group, were more frequently children without a father or other adult than the mother in the home. More of them were boys, nonwhite, and residents

of a large urban center; they had had a child-neglect hearing, were employed, and were educationally retarded.

More than half the children in the assistance group between the ages of 12 and 15 were members of community youth organizations; of all those aged 6-17, 37 percent were participating.

One in every 10 of the children aged 6-17 had received an award or some type of special recognition at school or elsewhere. These children, more frequently than the others in the group receiving aid to dependent children, had the father in the home, though incapacitated; more often had a homemaker who was employed; were less often separated from assistance while the family was still in need; less often lived in overcrowded housing conditions; were less often educationally retarded; and less often had left school before age 18 without graduating from high school. More often than the others they were participating in some community organization activity.

After Aid to Dependent Children

In some ways the facts regarding young persons who had been on the aid to dependent children rolls at some earlier time can reveal more about what the program has meant to children than can information about the younger children. The median length of the period in which assistance was received for those over age 19 at the time the family was separated from assistance was slightly more than 7 years, and aid to dependent children can be considered much more of a factor in their lives than in the lives of younger children.

The proportion of this older group still living in the home was 63 percent for those 18 or 19 years of age and 28 percent for those aged 20 and over. A few lived with relatives, some were in the Armed Forces, but only 1 percent were in educational institutions and 1 percent in mental or correctional institutions. Girls more often than boys had left the parental home. More than half the children aged 20 or over who were still living with the assistance family

were contributing to its support. Of those still in the home who were employed, 80 percent were contributing to the family's maintenance.

Few of the boys married before age 18, but many of the girls had married at age 16 or 17. Among the members of the group aged 21 and over, 1 boy in every 2 was married and 3 girls in every 4.

Fully half the group aged 16 or over were trained or experienced in some occupation—boys more often than girls. The occupations extended over much of the range of jobs available in the typical American community. Eleven percent were white-collar workers; 7 percent, skilled craftsmen, foremen, or protective service workers; and 31 percent, skilled and semiskilled operatives and unskilled workers. Forty-three percent—a group including homemakers—had no usual occupation, and the occupation was not reported for 8 percent. More girls than boys were in the white-collar group, and fewer girls than boys were in skilled operative jobs.

There has been a tendency for many of these young persons to fall in their father's occupational grouping. Half of those who had an occupation had moved neither upward nor downward in relation to the father's occupation. On the other hand, 25 percent were in an occupation with generally higher income levels and social prestige and requiring educational attainment, and 23 percent had moved downward.

Girls were more successful than boys in achieving an occupation higher than that of their fathers or mothers. Differences from the parents' occupation were more noticeable among white children than among nonwhite children, and among those in large communities.

The young persons who had attained a higher occupational level than that of their parents were more often contributing to the support of the family, more often had been awarded some recognition for achievement, and were better educated, in general, than the others in the group. Achievement of an occupation relatively high in the socio-economic scale seems to have been aided by education. If the family had required aid to dependent children over a relatively long period of time (more than 4 years) the chances were less that the child would have a white-collar or skilled trade occupation.

Information was collected on criminal convictions for children aged 16 and over, to obtain an indication of possible failure in social adjustment. Few of the children who had formerly been receiving aid to dependent children were reported to have been convicted of a criminal offense—4 percent of the boys and 1 percent of the girls. Those convicted of criminal offenses were, in comparison with others in their age group who had been receiving aid to dependent children, more often living in cities of 100,000 or over and in families with lengthy crisis and assistance

periods, had a record of delinquency, and were in a low-ranking occupation, if any. They had received awards less frequently, and their families had more often been separated from aid to dependent children while they were still in need.

One in every 10 of the former recipients aged 20 and over had received some significant type of award or recognition in school or elsewhere. Graduation from high school and further education were positively associated with their chances of having received such an award. They were young persons who had a white-collar job more often than others in the group and had more likely moved above their father's occupational ranking.

Conclusions

In many areas of the country children who are receiving aid to dependent children are not being given the support that they need—in financial assistance, education, housing, health care, casework services, and simple community neighborliness. Increased support is needed if they are to develop their potentialities in a manner that is their rightful heritage and that will enable them to make the greatest contribution to the Nation's welfare. Despite inadequacies in the program, it is believed that the great majority of these children are growing into useful citizens. Much progress has been made since the inception of the program. Opportunity for further advance lies ahead.

EARNINGS OF AB RECIPIENTS

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absence of programs in States that did not report any recipients in sheltered work. Among States with at least 75 recipient-earners, New York had the highest proportion in sheltered workshops (70 percent). They appeared to be concentrated in New York City, where there are several well-established facilities of that nature. Iowa was next with approximately 30 percent.

The 4,438 recipients of aid to the blind who were employed in Septem-

ber 1950 represent a selected group of blind workers in the sense that every one of the group was eligible for public assistance under the standards established in the State from which he received aid. Obviously, only visually handicapped workers who could not be self-supporting would be found on the rolls of the aid to the blind program.

The blind workers who are not dependent, however, doubtless differ from those receiving assistance in a number of important respects. As a group they are probably younger, better educated, and engaged in more

remunerative employment. One can expect to find more persons who have been rehabilitated through vocational rehabilitation programs among the self-supporting blind workers than among blind workers who receive assistance. The marginal character of the employment of blind recipient-earners and the limited amount of their earnings are therefore not surprising. They reflect, however, some of the past failures to provide positive rehabilitative services directed toward the best utilization of the productive capacities of these blind people.