

# Recommendations of the White House Conference on Children and Youth

THE Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth met in Washington, December 3-7, 1950. More than 5,000 delegates and some 250 observers from other countries attended. Notable features of this fifth White House Conference were the extensive advance preparation and widespread citizen participation in planning for the Conference and the direct participation of young people themselves in all phases of Conference planning and activity. More than 400 youths attended the Conference as delegates.

The purpose of the Conference, as stated by the national planning committee, was "to consider how we can develop in children the mental, emotional and spiritual qualities essential to individual happiness and to responsible citizenship, and what physical, economic and social conditions are deemed necessary to this development"; the Conference goal: "a society in which every child will have a fair chance for a healthy personality."

The Conference had before it the summarized results of an extensive advance fact-finding program.<sup>1</sup> It listened to speeches by a number of outstanding specialists and leaders. And through panels and work sessions, its members participated in the development of recommendations and plans for future action. The following platform and recommendations were adopted by the Conference at its final plenary session.

## Platform and Recommendations

*Believing in the primacy of spiritual values, democratic practice, and the dignity and worth of every human being, and recognizing that these are essential to individual happiness and responsible citizenship, we have come together to inquire*

—how the necessary mental, emo-

<sup>1</sup> See Melvin A. Glasser, "Fact-Finding for the White House Conference on Children and Youth," *Social Security Bulletin*, November 1950.

tional, and spiritual qualities may be developed in children, and

—how the physical, economic, and social conditions favorable to such development may be assured

*and having found that children require, for their fullest development,*

—regard for their individual worth and sensitive respect for their feelings, from all who touch their lives

—loving care and guidance from mothers and fathers, who have a sense of the privilege and responsibility which parenthood involves, and who have confidence in their own capacity to rear a child

—a secure home that is free from want and dread of want, and provides all family members with a satisfying physical, aesthetic, social, and spiritual environment

—a community whose citizens are dedicated to establishing the values and practices that make life meaningful and abundant for children of all colors, creeds and customs, and to cooperating in an endeavor to express these values and practices in daily living

—full access to health, educational, recreational, social, and religious services and programs, directed toward the well-being of all they serve

—concern on the part of all citizens for all children

—devotion to the pursuit of knowledge and the wide application of that which is known

*if they are to grow in*

—trust in themselves and others

—independence and initiative coupled with a true sense of being related to others

—satisfaction in bringing individual and shared tasks to completion

—a sense of personal destiny in the responsible roles they will eventually play as parents, workers, citizens

—the capacity for the love that underlies the family and that ideally comes to embrace all mankind

—creativity that brings into being new life, new relationships, new values, and new things of beauty and usefulness, and cherishes them for their worth

—integrity that sees each life as personally meaningful within the period of history in which it is lived, and in relation to enduring values

*we therefore recommend with respect to*

I. *Furthering healthy personality development generally in children and youth*

1. That research on child development and adjustment be expanded and that such research include longitudinal studies in relations and factors that affect behavior and adjustment, so that a continuing understanding of infants, children, and youth and a sound basis for practice will be provided; that public and private agencies give support to extending research pertaining to healthy personality with attention to the synthesis, interpretation and dissemination of the findings.

2. That greater emphasis be placed by the various professions on utilizing methods and seeking new means of bringing the parents into thinking and planning with and for their children.

3. That education for parenthood be made available to all through educational, health, recreation, religious and welfare agencies maintaining professional standards and staffed by properly qualified individuals.

4. That specialists and agencies take every opportunity to foster and increase parents' feelings of satisfaction and self-confidence in their ability for child rearing; that material concerning the growth and development of children be made as reassuring and nontechnical as possible, and that false standards of perfection not be held up.

5. That elementary, secondary, college and community education include

such appropriate experiences and studies of childhood and family life as will help young people to achieve the maturity essential to the role of parenthood.

6. That there be further study of the underlying causes of broken homes and the increase in divorce.

7. That children be provided with opportunities that are wide in range and challenging in nature, emphasizing exploration, participation, and social experience in an environment that is rich and stimulating; and that expectations of achievement be in harmony with each child's ability and growth.

8. That all professions dealing with children be given, as an integral part of their preparation, a common core of experiences dealing with fundamental concepts of human behavior, including the need to consider the total person as well as any specific disorder; the interrelationship of physical, mental, social, religious, and cultural forces; the importance of interpersonal relationships; the role of self-understanding; and emphasis on the positive recognition and production of healthy personalities and the treatment of variations; and that lay people be oriented through formal or informal education to an understanding of the importance of the foregoing concepts.

9. That steps be taken at national, State, and local levels to improve the facilities and increase the output of professional schools preparing persons for services to children.

10. That more energetic efforts be made by both public and private organizations for support of selective recruitment and training of professional workers and for an extensive program of scholarships.

11. That professional workers be trained in such a way that they will understand and respect other professional skills and contributors so that they may work together to further community growth. Some of the ways this might be achieved are:

a. In all levels of undergraduate education, students should receive broad preparation in the knowledge of human growth, behavior, and motivation which ought to be common knowledge for all students. This would

also serve as a background for professional education.

b. In schools preparing for professional work, there should be included in the curriculum through both the classroom and field experience opportunities for cooperative work on problems common to all professional interests, including study in human growth and change and in family counseling.

c. The practicing professional worker should further his training by seeking, utilizing and promoting opportunities to relate to and participate with other professional and citizens' groups in resolving problems of the individual and the community.

d. Orientation programs should be planned for all professional persons and interprofessional groups in the community.

12. That ways and means be found for the formal and informal in-service education of professional people and that information on promising practices be widely disseminated.

13. That an inquiring attitude be maintained toward all services, with appropriate provision at all levels for continuous scientific study of needs, objectives, alternative methods, and effectiveness of programs.

## II. *Furthering healthy personality development through the family, the church, the school, and other social institutions*

14. That prompt action be taken at the national level to provide funds supplementing those of States and localities for the early development of adequate local health service throughout the country, such action being particularly needed because of the physical and mental effects of mobilization and war on mothers, children, and youth.

15. That all States establish standards for the hospital care of mothers and children, in order to assure the quality of care which modern science knows how to give; and that these standards take into account the importance of avoiding unnecessary distress and anxiety.

16. That further Federal aid be provided to the States for educational services, in tax-supported public schools, without Federal control, to

help equalize educational opportunity; the issue of auxiliary services to be considered on its merits in separate legislation.

17. That racial segregation in education be abolished.

18. That it be made possible for qualified youth to obtain college or university education which would otherwise be denied them because of inability to pay.

19. That as a desirable supplement to home life, nursery schools and kindergartens, provided they meet high professional standards, be included as a part of public educational opportunity for children.

20. That school lunches be provided and that children unable to pay for their lunches be furnished them free, without being differentiated from the children who pay.

21. That local boards of education accept full responsibility for planning and providing adequate educational programs and services, including special services, to meet the needs of children with physical and mental limitations and that State departments of education accept responsibility for leadership service in realizing this objective.

22. That guidance and counseling services in schools, employment offices, and youth-serving agencies be strengthened and extended, and that such services take into account emotional factors involved in vocational adjustment and aptitudes for specific jobs.

23. That, recognizing that knowledge and understanding of religious and ethical concepts are essential to the development of spiritual values, and that nothing is of greater importance to the moral and spiritual health of our Nation than the work of religious education in our homes and families, and in our institutions of organized religion, we nevertheless strongly affirm the principle of separation of church and state which has been the keystone of our American democracy, and declare ourselves unalterably opposed to the use of the public schools, directly or indirectly, for religious educational purposes.

24. That the churches of various faiths coordinate, strengthen, and expand their religious services and ac-

tivities with particular respect to rural areas and areas of special economic need.

25. That youth have an equal chance with adults to participate in planning and carrying out recreational activities, and that as a practical aid to such planning, States be encouraged to establish official State recreation agencies to provide counseling, information, and assistance to communities, particularly small towns and rural areas.

26. That more emphasis be put on the effects of recreational and creative activities on the personality of the individual, and that in all neighborhoods where children and youth reside, recreation centers be provided under professional and voluntary supervision.

27. That, as an aid to the economic stability of children and their mothers, the old-age and survivors insurance program be further extended to cover workers not presently included, and benefits made more adequate; and that similar improvements be made in State unemployment insurance laws.

28. That Federal grants to States for public assistance be varied with the financial ability of the States but made sufficient to protect children's personalities from the ill effects of inadequate income.

29. That restrictive eligibility provisions be eliminated from public assistance programs so as to provide assistance to all children in need.

30. That there be a comprehensive study of the present body of law relating to children and families and the methods implementing such laws; the study to include laws that impede the progress of Indians in fields of social and cultural advantage.

31. That law schools include courses on family law and the relation of the law to other professions, and that schools of social work include courses on the law and its philosophy.

32. That, in accordance with State-wide standards, courts of superior jurisdiction, having judges qualified in the law and with an understanding of social and psychological factors, and having qualified probation staff and auxiliary personnel, be available for all cases involving children with

problems that require court action in rural and urban areas.

33. That standards be developed for juvenile services in police departments.

34. That the preventive and treatment functions of social agencies, police, courts, institutions, and aftercare agencies be coordinated so as to insure continuity of service.

35. That States and other appropriate public bodies establish and enforce standards covering the employment of youth in all occupations, such standards to include minimum age and wages, as well as hours of work, night work, protection from hazardous occupations and provisions for workmen's compensation; and that, under these conditions, employers, in cooperation with labor, be urged to provide appropriate work experience for youth on a part-time basis.

36. That one department in each State government, whether it be welfare, health, or education, working in close conjunction with the other departments concerned, set up all-inclusive minimum standards for all day-care centers, nursery schools and kindergartens.

37. That appropriate public bodies establish minimum standards for licensing or authorization with respect to plant, program, and staff, for all child care and preschool groups.

38. That a continuous program of education regarding the role of social service in adoption be carried on for the general public and for the professions involved, to the end that effective safeguards be achieved for the protection of the adopted child, his natural parents and his adoptive parents; that existing legislation be strengthened and, if need be, new legislation enacted to assure such protection; and that qualified adoption agencies, local and State-wide, voluntary and public, be strengthened and developed to further assure such protection.

39. That appropriate public bodies set minimum standards for agencies and institutions providing foster care for children, whether foster day care or full-time care, and provide for authorization or licensing and supervision to maintain these standards.

40. That all programs for children and youth with handicaps be ex-

panded to provide for physical, mental, emotional, and occupational needs.

41. That children of migrant and seasonal workers be given all the protections and services available to other children, with special regard to transportation, housing, sanitation, health and educational services, social benefits, and protection under labor laws.

### *III. Furthering healthy personality development in relation to the influence of certain social and economic forces*

42. That all groups concerned develop and maintain programs for protecting the healthy personality of children living under the stress of defense preparation.

43. That the sacrifices demanded in the present emergency be shared by all individuals and groups in the population and that the services of men with physical and other disabilities be utilized in some capacity without the use of categories, such as 4-F.

44. That more and better educational and recreational opportunities be made available for young adults in civilian and military life.

45. That schools, labor, industry, and other community agencies and the military services improve and expand their personnel, evaluation, placement, vocational guidance and counseling activities to serve the interests of young people and to promote the over-all development and efficient utilization of our human resources.

46. That adequate allowances be provided for wives and children of servicemen.

47. That the participation of children and youth in community activities during times of stress be in accordance with their stage of development and designed to minimize their anxieties.

48. That governmental and voluntary agencies work to meet the needs of the wives and children of personnel in the armed forces moving to new communities in order to insure their absorption into community life and to provide adequate housing, health, educational, recreational, and spiritual services to meet their needs.

49. That specific efforts be made to bring lower income groups up to a higher income level and to increase

their real income by providing a greater variety of community services; such expansion of services to include children in all the States and Territories and the District of Columbia.

50. That there be authoritative exploration of methods of improving the economic situation of children in families with inadequate incomes, with particular attention to family allowances, tax exemptions for children, and expenses for working mothers.

51. That the full program recommended by the President's Commission on Civil Rights be supported because it represents our faith in and practice of democracy, and further, that prompt steps be taken to eliminate all types of racial and religious segregation, and that this conference through its most appropriate channels appeal immediately to the Federal Government to abolish segregation in the Nation's Capital, making Washington an example to the world of a truly working democracy without discriminatory practice on the basis of race, creed, color, or national origin.

52. That to insure the welfare of all children the following specific measures be taken to provide a well-rounded comprehensive housing and community development program:

a. Maximum emphasis should be placed on maintaining standards adequate for health, comfort, and decency in both private and public housing.

b. The construction of 810,000 low rent public housing units should proceed at full speed in order to provide much-needed housing for low-income families now living in slums.

c. A cooperative housing program should be developed, specifically geared to meet the needs of middle-income families who are ineligible for public housing.

d. Our national housing program should meet the requirements of families not only in every income group, but also in every type of community, rural and urban, and of every size from the largest to the smallest.

e. The slum clearance and urban development and redevelopment program, now getting under way with Federal assistance, should be supported as an integral part of over-all community planning.

f. Adequate housing for families of defense workers of middle and lower income should be regarded as an essential criterion in providing defense housing facilities in a period of mobilization.

53. That development of new housing facilities give special attention to health, recreation and social needs; and, to the extent that private industry does not provide suitable housing for low-income families, such housing continue to be developed by governmental agencies.

54. That, in view of television's unprecedented growth and its potential as a medium for mass education, the television industry and all educational, health, and social agencies seeking to use this medium accept their great social responsibility, and further that this principle apply also to the other media of mass communication.

55. That the Federal Communications Commission reserve television channels for noncommercial educational television stations so that some part of the limited number of frequencies to be allocated by the Commission may be reserved for educational uses and purposes which contribute to healthy personality development.

#### *IV. Furthering healthy personality by mobilizing citizens for the improvement of conditions affecting children and youth*

56. That community groups and community leaders reexamine their attitudes and procedures in the light of this conference, and make appropriate adaptations and changes.

57. That in order to insure proper assessment, creative planning, and appropriate action with respect to meeting the needs of children and youth, communities undertake the following tasks on a continuing basis:

a. Developing broad community interests.

b. Obtaining the broadest possible community sponsorship.

c. Obtaining where necessary technical assistance in planning and carrying out the program.

d. Initiating or organizing studies and gathering facts that are focused

on specific problems according to priorities.

e. Interpreting the facts, and informing the community as to their significance.

And that since goals and methods are closely intertwined, in undertaking these tasks the methods used be based on the following principles:

a. People as individuals and as groups should be helped to help themselves; professional workers should find their role in giving this kind of help.

b. Differences and stresses that may be present should be recognized and utilized positively.

c. Broad-based participation of all groups without discrimination as to age, sex, race, creed, national origin, or economic level should be developed.

d. Fact-finding should be used as a part of a total educational process.

e. Channels of communication between individuals and groups should be provided for the purpose not only of furthering common social objectives but also of improving relations between groups.

f. Since the community is served by both public and private agencies, which have a common concern for meeting the needs of children and youth, the endeavors of both should be utilized in planning, assessment, and financing.

58. That the citizens of every community accept responsibility for providing and maintaining adequate programs and facilities with professional personnel for education, health, and social services, and that, in the development of such programs, full and appropriate use be made of all voluntary and public resources.

59. That participation in planning in the community begin in the schools and in other institutions, in order that children, youth, and adults learn the importance of voluntary participation and responsibility for community leadership.

60. That all interested groups work in partnership to recruit, train, and use volunteer leaders for community programs, with special attention to using young people in appropriate ways.

61. That, since citizen participation is essential for effective community

services for children and youth, citizen advisory boards and similar groups representative of the community, when not already provided, be established for public as well as private services, and that every effort be made to enable and secure participation by a cross section of the citizenry; and further that educational institutions and other groups emphasize the importance of participation by volunteers as a basic factor in citizen responsibility.

62. That communities foster cooperative community bodies representative of all community interests to study and advance better conditions and opportunities for young workers.

63. That citizens be encouraged to

support adequate appropriations and qualified staff to administer and enforce basic legislative standards of States, and Territories, and other appropriate public bodies, covering the employment of youth.

64. That, recognizing that youth has rights and responsibilities for better community living, progressive opportunities be provided for young people to participate vitally in community activities and planning in order that they may have early preparation and experience for leadership and community service; and further, that the professional workers accept their responsibilities to stimulate the community to see that these opportunities are provided for youth.

65. That youth representatives be placed on community boards of various agencies, in order that they may participate in the planning, developmental and operational phases of the total community programs.

66. That, in recognition of the importance of cooperative work in behalf of children and youth among the governments and peoples of the world, full support be given to voluntary efforts and governmental programs of an international character.

67. That immediate, vigorous, and continuing work be undertaken to provide for the organization and financing of national, State and local programs which would put the Conference recommendations into action.

## Notes and Brief Reports

### Initial Effect of Amendments on Average OASI Monthly Benefits

Comparison of the data on benefit amounts newly awarded or currently being paid both before and after the conversion of benefits to the higher rates under the 1950 amendments to the Social Security Act shows definite changes in the benefit pattern. For the most part, such changes had been anticipated.

### Average Monthly Benefits in Current-Payment Status

On September 30, monthly benefits were being paid at a rate of \$114.0 million, an increase of 85 percent over the \$61.6 million being paid at the end of August. Most of this increase was attributable to the liberalization of benefits; only about 4 percentage

points represented growth in the beneficiary rolls. The following tabulation compares the average monthly amounts paid for September with those for August, by type of benefit.

Type of benefit	Average monthly amount in current-payment status		Percentage increase
	Aug. 31	Sept. 30	
Old-age.....	\$26.36	\$46.62	77
Wife's.....	13.98	24.50	75
Child's.....	13.28	28.04	111
Widow's.....	20.98	36.63	75
Mother's.....	21.23	35.22	66
Parent's.....	13.56	36.73	165

The percentage increase for wife's benefits is smaller than that for old-age benefits, as had been expected. Award data have consistently shown that the average primary benefit amount awarded to retired married

men exceeded the corresponding average amounts awarded to nonmarried men and to women. The dollar amounts of liberalization in primary insurance benefits, resulting from the use of the conversion table, become proportionately smaller for successively larger amounts of primary benefits (an increase of 100 percent for a \$10 primary insurance benefit, 80 percent for a \$30 benefit, and 60 percent for a \$40 benefit).

The figures for child's benefits are a composite of two different benefit-rate categories: (1) children of old-age beneficiaries, whose benefit amount is equal to half the old-age insurance benefit, and (2) surviving children of deceased workers, whose benefit amount is equal to half the primary insurance amount of the deceased worker, increased by one-fourth the primary insurance amount divided equally among the children. The converted average benefit was about \$20.25 for the first category and about \$28.50 for the second. The small difference between the average benefit for survivor children and that for all children (\$28.04) is accounted for by the fact that survivor children comprise about 95 percent of the total number.

The smallest proportionate increase in average benefits took place in the widowed mother's group. The increase for this group was held down by the combination of two factors—the operation of the maximum family benefit

Table 1.—Average monthly amount of benefits newly awarded, by type of benefit, July, October, and November 1950

Type of benefit	Average monthly amount newly awarded in—			Percentage increase over July awards for awards processed in—	
	July	October	November	October	November
Old-age.....	\$29.13	\$29.96	\$30.37	3	4
Wife's.....	15.17	17.96	18.06	18	19
Child's.....	14.23	20.48	19.55	43	37
Widow's.....	21.81	36.65	36.19	68	66
Mother's.....	22.56	35.28	34.09	56	51
Parent's.....	14.91	39.06	36.85	162	147